

Battle in the Canopy (S4, E33)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Jake: I spent last evening at a Dave & Buster's.

Rev: Wait, is this another Jake gym hack?

Jake: Almost the antithesis.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: Did you fall through a portal to 2004, or something?

Jake: Yes, I did. It was — it was one of my friend's birthday celebrations, and he wanted to go to Dave & Buster's. Which was fun, actually. I can't remember the last time I went to a Dave & Buster's, but it was super fun.

Rev: Yeah?

Jake: But I wanted to do the stuff that I can't just, like, do at home. You know, Dave & Buster's has, like, virtual reality.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I've got an Oculus at home.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: They've got, like, sit in the thing and do like a rail shooter. I could play video games at home. So I want to do, like, the carnival games type shit. Where like, you're throwing a ball, or you're shooting a ball, or you're ... Hitting a ball.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: He's like, I can't throw balls at home. My dog is very sad about it.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I don't have a yard. But they had a bunch. Like, me and one of my friends in particular, we just started like hitting all of the contests of sport games that they had. Like there's one where you're throwing a baseball as hard and as fast as you can down this, like, laneway. And it's got speed sensors on the side and it's got a bull's eye, and it's giving you a score based on how fast you throw it and how accurate you throw it. And then they had like a simulated axe throwing thing, where it's got like a bunch of like plastic kind of spikes coming out towards you, and so you throw like a rubber axe and it sticks between those spikes somewhere in the bull's eye, and it gives you points. And they've got like a basketball Connect Four, where it's just a huge Connect Four board and you're shooting basketballs, and you're trying to like get four in a row before the other person. And it was super fun. I burned through all of my — I got \$25 with game credits, they were gone in two hours. We were supposed to be there for like four. But, I'm in pain. I've hurt myself. And I think it's a great reflection of a 30th birthday party at Dave & Buster's, that my tendinitis in my elbow has flared up, and I hurt myself doing athletics at the arcade. Also, got a grand total of 364 tickets for my trouble. Got a plastic cup. [Laughs] That was the only thing I could afford.

Megan: I thought you were gonna say, I'm in terrible pain because a bunch of kids jumped me for my tickets.

Jake: Oh, no. I carried the fake axes all night, just in case anybody caused any trouble.

Tass: That's where he got the tickets.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I robbed him the smallest kids who would put up the least threat, but they also had the least tickets.

Rev: I have not thought about this in forever, but as you were talking about Dave & Buster's, I remembered that that's how Banana Split teleports.

Tass: [Laughs] Oh, yeah.

Rev: He can only teleport to Dave & Buster's locations.

Megan: I've never been to one before. I've only ever seen them on TV, but they look very fun.

Rev: Well, I guess we know what we're doing for Megan's next birthday.

Kim: Yes!

Rev: You've got a year to prepare.

Megan: [Laughs] You've got a year to get ready.

Tass: Our montage to not be sore at Dave & Buster's.

Megan: We gotta go to Costco, and lift so many ... So many Cokes.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: Back on Mother Hen, ranger Dave Garmesan, on his belt, a little radio makes the bloop bloop sound.

Wallace: Hey, is this the ranger?

Rev: And you all hear Wallace's voice coming out of this walkie talkie.

Wallace: I got Aiden, and we're on our way out of here. Right now I'm just off-roading my way back out of this nature preserve, but we need to go somewhere with a lot of people. So there's a Costco like 15 minutes south of here. You guys wanna meet me over there?

Megan: I think I would head up to Everett.

Rev: Yeah, you go up to Everett, and he is starting to turn the chopper around, as you see all of the folks from the fire department arriving, starting to deal with the flames.

Megan: Looking across the nature preserve, do I see the vehicle at all?

Rev: Yeah. As you watch out over the preserve, you saw the large blue and white draugr starting to head back in. And you can still see the tops of their heads, just above some of the trees, and you notice that they're no longer heading straight. They have turned. And your eyes start to follow the direction that these two draugrs have turned, and in the distance you see this green Jeep bouncing through the field, as it off-roads towards the nearest road. The white and blue draugr start to drift apart as they run in that direction, and from between them rises the black draugr. And it is massive. It's standing 25 feet high, moving very slowly, but covering a lot of ground with each step. You see the three of them starting to close on Wallace and Aiden.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Wallace, you are behind the wheel of this Jeep, tearing through the field. You have just gotten off of the phone with the crew inside of Mother Hen. And behind you the earth starts to shake, as you see, in the rearview mirror, Hawkens and Aldrixy starting to move in your direction. They split, and up from the earth rises Kallista, standing 25 feet high, this bile running out of her mouth, burning the ground wherever it touches. And the three of them are starting to close on you. What are you doing?

Jake: I think I'm looking in the rearview mirror, and I'm reaching over to, like, check the seatbelt on Aiden, to make sure that he is sufficiently buckled in.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And then I'm gunning it, if he is. Like, I'm tearing for this road and I'm trying to look for an alternate route or a shortcut or something I can use to lose these things, to get them off my tail.

Rev: And Aiden turns around as you check his strap, and glances out the back window of the Jeep and sees these three draugrs.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: That's not good. That's not good. Does this go faster?

Wallace: We're gonna find out.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: Please go faster.

Jake: Yeah, I put the pedal to the metal.

Rev: So Jake, as you are trying to gun it away from these three, why don't you Act Under Pressure to outmaneuver, outpace?

Jake: Eight.

Rev: All right, so you're gonna be able to avoid them for the time being, but it's gonna cause some wear and tear on this Jeep. You're gonna hit some large pieces of rock, run into some holes, and it's gonna ultimately slow the vehicle down. Or, your evasive maneuvers are gonna make it hard for your team to be able to spot you easily. Or, you're gonna lose some stuff. Like all of these runs through these ditches and popping up, you're just gonna rattle some stuff loose of your own person and the Jeep.

Jake: [Chuckles] I'm gonna make it harder for the rest of the squad to follow me.

Rev: OK.

Kim: [Giggles]

Rev: So you are able to start weaving and bobbing this Jeep through trees and through brush, making it harder for the three pursuers to nimbly keep up with you, as they try to catch up with you and reclaim Aiden. Back inside Mother Hen, Megan, you see that Wallace has started to veer off from the path, and he vanishes into a copse of trees.

Megan: I think I'm trying to keep eyes on him as much as I can, and direct Everett to get as close as possible to where we saw him go through. And then I'm probably reaching out telepathically, to see if I can connect with him even though I can't see him.

Rev: I think this is gonna be an Investigate a Mystery, but you're gonna have -1 to it, because he has made evasive maneuvers to try and get lost.

Megan: Seven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Megan: Where did it go?

Rev: Yeah. You are able to keep track, I think, using your telepathy to kind of ping him and get a sense of the direction that they are in. You are able to get Everett to continue on a path that is almost directly above them.

Megan: "Hey everyone, we got a ... We got a situation, here."

Kim: "What's up?"

Megan: "They spotted him. They're following him."

Tass: "Wow. We really can't see much through this, can we? What the hell do we do? Do we just stay above him and stay in contact? Should I ... Oh god, should I go down there?"

Megan: "I don't know. Do you think we can try to get ahead of him, and can we pick them up? That black one is so tall and it's really fast, and I don't know how we could stand a chance against fighting it if we couldn't even take on that one smaller one."

Tass: Is there enough room, with Jake's car in here already, to get a Jeep in this?

Rev: With Jake's car in here? No.

Jake: [Silence]

Rev: I wish everyone ... I wish everyone at home could see the dead stare that Jake is giving Tass, across the table.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: I sigh heavily and run to the back. "Jake?"

Jake: "What?"

Tass: "I'm sorry, man. I think we gotta ditch your car and see if we can get ahead of Wallace and get him into the rig and take off."

Jake: "No, I just got this one! Come on. There's not even that many of this car that still exists in the world, Tass!"

Tass: "We'll come back for it."

Jake: [Groans] I hit the button to start opening the hatch on Mother Hen. As it slowly opens, I'm like leaning down and, like, laying my face on the hood of the car and petting it and apologizing.

Megan: Awww.

Tass: "I love you, buddy. I'm sorry. It'll be okay." And I'm gonna run back up to the cockpit and get the walkie back out and click it on, so that hopefully Wallace can hear me as I'm spouting off to Everett. "OK. Guys, here's what I think we need to do. Those things are catching up fast, Wallace. We're gonna ditch Jake's car and try to get ahead of you, so that you can drive right up into Mother Hen and we can fuck off."

Wallace: This is greatly exceeding my quota of daily car stunts. Are you positive that this is a good idea?

Tass: "100%, yes."

Wallace: Whatever. The last one worked out pretty good, and I don't think I got a lot more options, so let's do it.

Tass: "OK. We're about to drop the car, and then we'll try to find a good clearing that we can get ahead of you and get into. OK?"

Wallace: All right. I'm just gonna keep on this path.

Tass: "That works."

Kim: I will grab the walkie talkie from Tass. "It's all gonna be okay, Wallace. If it makes you feel better, I had a vision about this."

Jake: [Laughs]

Wallace: I don't totally understand the scope of that at this point, but yeah, sure, that makes me feel a little bit better. Thank you.

Megan: We can still see the monsters pretty well, right? I know we lost visual a little bit on Wallace before. But we can see them, right?

Rev: Oh, yeah. And they can see you, because you are flying above Wallace. You know, they're running through this copse of trees, just knocking them down as they go. And I think that you see — you all don't really know their names — but you see Aldrixy and Hawkens, the white and blue draugr, like cupping their hands and spitting different things into it and kind of wadding it up, like they're getting ready to throw something.

Jake: Oh my god.

Rev: Yeah. And Kallista, the black draugr, her eyes have not broken away from where Wallace is. And you can see that, like, stuff is churning and bubbling around her mouth and teeth, like she's getting ready to spit something out in their direction.

Megan: Oh, no. Can I Jinx that one?

Rev: Sure.

Megan: OK. I'm so nervous. Eight.

Rev: All right, you get a hold 1.

Tass: "OK. It looks like they're, uh ... They're gearing up for something. Jake, you ready to drop that car? We gotta get ahead of them."

Jake: "Give me just a sec. I'm trying to time this out."

Tass: "For what?"

Jake: "If I'm gonna drop my car, then it's gonna go out with a purpose. I'm gonna clock one of these things."

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Yes!

Rev: All right. So Jake, I think this is gonna be ... Like, what's your intent here? Are you trying to damage them? You trying to trip them up? You trying to give Wallace a better route?

Jake: I'm just trying to slow one of them. You know, I'm trying to give one of them a headache, give one of them something else to think about so that they're not so well on the warpath here.

Rev: And which one?

Jake: Man, they're all — it sounds like they're all gearing up to do some pretty heinous shit.

Rev: I think specifically, Kallista is the one that you think is aimed towards Wallace.

Jake: Then Kallista.

Rev: OK.

Jake: Plus, she's the tallest. So, you know, it's gonna get to her head the fastest.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Jake: And she's got the farthest to fall.

Rev: So I think this is gonna be Protect Someone.

Jake: OK.

Megan: Hey, Jake?

Jake: Yeah?

Megan: Go and take a +1 on this.

Jake: Oh, OK.

Megan: From my Jinx.

Jake: Booyah. That is a nine.

Tass: Oh, I might regret this. Can I try to help him out, to hopefully get him up to a ten?

Rev: Yeah. How so?

Tass: I think that I realize what he's doing and, you know, being up in the cockpit, I'm tracking where we are. So I'm straight up doing the William Wallace thing. I'm just going, "Hold, hold ..." And then give him the now, when I think we're right in the perfect spot.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Help Out.

Tass: That's a three.

Megan: Oh, no.

Jake: Yay.

Kim: Mark your experience.

Tass: And I level up.

Kim: Hell yeah!

Megan: Retire this character.

Rev: [Laughs] So as Tass is standing by the edge looking out to give Jake the sign, Mother Hen is swerving around a little bit, trying to keep exactly above Wallace and Aiden in this moment. As he gives Jake the sign to drop the car, Kallista opens her mouth and this stream of bile starts to fly in the direction of the green Jeep. The car is released. And right at that moment, Everett makes another small adjustment, and we see the wheels of the car swerve and hit Tass and knock him out of the helicopter. Kind of like that moment in the trailer for Uncharted.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Box office smash.

Kim: This episode of The Critshow brought to you by ...

Rev: Tom Holland.

Jake: Yeah. Close personal friend of the show, Tom Holland. Tom, can't wait to get you on for a guest appearance.

Rev: And as Kallista is letting out this stream of bile, Megan's Jinx hits her and she stumbles on a very large rock and starts to go forward right as the car hits, and it knocks her head backwards, streaming this jet of bile into the car and Tass and the back of Mother Hen. Jake and Tass, you both take two points of damage, armor-defeating.

Jake: Out of curiosity, what ever became of Tass healing me? Because taking those two points — this will make a huge difference in what happens next.

Rev: Yes, that's very true. And we did state that Tass was healing you at the end of the last episode with all of you involved in the helicopter. So Tass, why don't you roll that? We'll apply this retroactively.

Tass: OK. That's a seven. So you heal 2.

Jake: OK.

Rev: Where does that land you?

Jake: I was at five, I was healed for two, and I was injured for two. So I'm at a tight five.

Rev: Nice.

Jake: And unstable.

Rev: So Tass, as you're falling through the air towards these three draugr, what are you doing with your level up?

Tass: Well, as I'm screaming in terror, falling through the air, I think instinct takes over and a set of draconic wings sprout out of my back.

Megan: Oh my god!

Kim: Yes!

Tass: I'm taking another Monstrous move. I can fly.

Jake: It's happening!

Rev: Nice. So as these wings sprout out of your back and you start to fly, I think give me an Act Under Pressure to get them under control and get moving in the proper direction.

Tass: OK.

Kim: Like a newly born baby horse, immediately trying to ...

Jake: Trying to fly?!

All: [Laugh]

Megan: I thought you were gonna say bird for sure.

Kim: Well, no! Baby birds can't immediately fly! But, like, trying to, like, figure out all of your — all of your motor skills at once.

Tass: Yeah. That's a twelve.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to instinctively use these new wings and right yourself and fly back into the open hatch of Mother Hen.

Jake: "Whoa!"

Tass: "We'll break this down later."

Kim: "Holy shit. I'm from a monstrous future, and the three of you are like the coolest people that I've ever seen."

Megan: "Damn straight."

Rev: When you stop flying, do your wings go away, or are they still there?

Tass: I think they go away.

Rev: OK.

Tass: It's like the show Lucifer. You know, it kind of poofs out.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: "OK. Everett, we gotta find the biggest clearing we can on that path and just — and get down. So I'll try to keep an eye on him and call it out, OK?"

Rev: So Tass, I think this is going to be a Read a Bad Situation to try and figure out how to do this, or the best way to do it.

Tass: Sure. Absolutely. Oh, Jesus. Seven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Tass: I feel like it's one of two things. I'm feeling it's a little closer to, what's the best way in? So like literally, best way into the forest, into a clearing, so that he has the best chance of surviving.

Rev: Yeah, absolutely. All right. So you do see a clearing coming up ahead. And it's another one of those drops, very similar to the little ravine that Megan helped push Wallace over before. And so you think that Everett could dip down inside of that and open the hatch, so that they could just ramp off of the edge of that ravine, into the back.

Tass: Outstanding. I'm immediately pointing that out. "Right there, right there. If we get down in there quick enough, he can just scoop right up inside."

Rev: EVERETT: All right.

Kim: "All right, Wallace. We're bringing Mother Hen down at a clearing that's a little bit ahead of you. There should be a ravine, and we're going to be right ... Right off of the ravine. I hate to ask you to drive off a cliff twice in one afternoon, but I'm going to."

Wallace: Why are there so many ravines in this nature preserve?

Rev: I think you realize it's the same one. You're just coming from the opposite direction.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'm still seeing smoke rising.

Wallace: OK.

Rev: All right. Wallace, this is gonna be an Act Under Pressure to hit this edge and land in the back of Mother Hen as Everett dives it down.

Kim: So over the walkie talkie, I shout out, "Make sure that you're going exactly 88 miles per hour!" And spend my hold from I Can See Through Time to give Wallace advantage.

Jake: Thank God. Oh, yes. That got me a ten. Thank you, Kim.

Kim: Holy shit!

Rev: Wallace, describe this to me.

Jake: I do a flip the opposite way of last time.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Somehow you flip the back tires under first?

Jake: Yep. Whee! No. I do exactly what she's recommended. I hit 88 miles an hour, and I just Thelma and Louise straight off this ravine, and I hope that I make it to the other side safely.

Rev: I thought you meant, "No." Like, "I will not describe this for you."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Yeah. So inside of Mother Hen, you have all cleared the entrance, and this Jeep comes slamming down into the helicopter. As it does, one of the axles breaks, and it comes sliding to a stop mere inches from where the crew is located.

Tass: "Yes!"

Kim: [Gasps]

Megan: "I cannot believe that worked."

Tass: I'm rushing over to the Jeep and pulling the door open. "Everybody okay?"

Jake: Yeah. I think I kind of tumble out of it, and then look back over to see if Aiden is still buckled in and doing all right.

Rev: He gives you a thumbs up, and he is just grinning ear to ear. And he looks back over his shoulder, seeing the three draugr growing smaller as Everett starts to increase the elevation of the helicopter. And you see that Aldrixy and Hawkens throw the handfuls of stuff that they have collected, and it is a ball of maggots and just a swarm of rats, but they do not connect with Mother Hen as it pulls off into the air.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: All right, so now it is time for end of session experience.

Tass: Woo! Woo!

Rev: So first off, did we conclude the current mystery?

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: Yeah.

Tass: Solid kinda.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: Stop underselling us!

Rev: Did Wallace solve the current mystery?

All: [Laugh]

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

Megan: For sure.

Kim: Yes.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: Who?

Tass: Not those guys following Wallace!

Megan: Wallace, Aiden, ranger Dave Garmesan.

Kim: Yeah.

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

Jake: We learned a new rung in Nash's chain of command, here. That he commands this hit squad of draugrs for the express purpose of basically torture.

Megan: And that he has not used them in a very long time for some reason.

Kim: Oh! We also learned that Nash is apparently already laying the foundation of the future that I came from, in terms of Anastacia mentioning that vampires and werewolves and ghosts have started working together.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

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

Kim: I can see across dimensions.

Tass: Yeah. Like you dead-ass learned a shitload about yourself in this one.

Rev: All right, so everybody gets two points of experience. Does anybody level up?

Kim: I do.

Jake: Does this include Wallace?

Rev: It does.

Jake: Then both mes level up.[Laughs]

Tass: Nice.

Rev: All right. So Kim, what are you gonna take?

Kim: I'm going to take another Seer move. I'm going to take The Precogs are Never Wrong: use +Weird instead of Sharp when you Read a Bad Situation.

Rev: All right.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: What about Jake?

Jake: For my level up as Jake, I am going to take another Combat Magic pick. I'm going to add "wall" as one of my bases, which is 1-harm, magic, barrier, close, 1-armor, obvious, loud. So I guess things that touch the barrier get hurt and things that attack through the barrier are reduced because of it.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And then for Wallace's level up, I'm going to retire this hunter to safety.

Megan: Aww.

Rev: Oh really?

Jake: Yeah. I think —

Kim: Aww ...

Jake: I think this is sort of like the ultimate culmination of Wallace's code, and he's been in the game too fucking long, and he's got, like, a purpose now. Like, I think he wants to look out for Aiden and make sure that he grows up and lives a life, and he's gotta get out of this life to do that.

Rev: OK. So while we were playing through this story, Tass and Megan and Kim never heard Wallace's side of the story, so their reactions every time that they interacted with Wallace were genuine reactions to what he had accomplished. Man, how was that? What was that like? That's something kind of new.

Megan: [Laughs]

Megan: I love it.

Tass: Yeah. It was obviously just fun to go in not knowing, and getting those reactions. But like, my really pressing question is, why are the rest of us even here?

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: Yeah. Apparently, Jake is extremely effective just as a solo player. I feel like we're holding him back.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: I've long since established that I'm really good at video games, but it turns out I'm also really good at tabletop RPGs.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: It helped too, that you were all distracting two of the draugr as he was initiating his plan.

Jake: Yeah, I got away with a lot of horseshit because there were four people off-camera.

Tass: Fair.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So we find ourselves back in Mother Hen, about 15 minutes after the encounter with the draugr. Everett has turned on the intercom so that he can hear the conversation

that's being had, and it's Wallace and Margaret very gently explaining to Aiden that time has passed.

Wallace: Buddy, it seemed like you didn't really recognize me when I came and found you. Where you been?

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: I mean, it's only been a couple of days since I saw you last.

Wallace: No, Aiden. It's been about 40 years.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: That's why I didn't recognize you. You got 40 years on you.

Wallace: No, I understood that. As you may remember, I'm a pretty observant fella. So yeah, I kinda picked up on that. But the last time any of us remember seeing you was ... Was in that cave, and you disappearing in a blast. And buddy, we thought you were gone.

Tass: AIDEN CHAMBERS: I don't know exactly what happened. I jumped into that blast ... Well, to make sure that none of you took it. And everything for a minute was just sound and bright light. And then I woke up, and I was just laying in a field. I didn't know where I was. I didn't recognize anything around me. And then I heard this voice calling to me. Something in my mind, just tugging at me. And that's when I met Tessa. She ... I don't know how to describe it, but it felt like she was there to take care of me.

Tass: "Wait, who's Tessa?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: She was the red haired woman that I was traveling with.

Wallace: Yeah, she was a tough customer. That's what she did. That was her power, was putting out this, like, maternal love field.

Jake: I'm kind of like looking to everyone else as I confusedly explain this.

Wallace: That was the one who was leading all the folks in the caravan. Somehow she just sort of convinces people that she's looking out for 'em, or that she's gonna take care of 'em. Like a ... Like a matronly relationship. And they're just sort of drawn to her. And I

think that because Aiden's powers and his, you know, sort of sensitivity, that must have just hit you a lot harder.

Kim: "So were there other children with Tessa? Or was it just you, Aiden?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: It was just me.

Kim: "The thing that I can't work out is ... Did they somehow know that you were going to appear here, or ... In the future that I come from, you are an extremely important person. And I don't know if Nash was trying to seek you out specifically, or if it was just, uh ... Bad luck."

Tass: "Aiden, how soon was it after you woke up in that field that she was there?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: I don't know. I heard her calling out in my head, and I reached out towards her to let her know that I was lost. I just laid there and waited. Maybe the better part of a day? It's hard to say. I was kinda out of it.

Tass: "OK. I'm just wondering if Nash has people on this, waiting for these pings of power. You know, tracking something or someone they can use."

Wallace: I don't think so. Because she doesn't work for Nash, exactly. She had a conversation with those draugr about the terms of their deal, and it was not a subordinate's take on the matter.

Megan: "Aiden, when you say you reached out to let her know that you were lost, is it kind of like when I reached out to tell you we were on our way to save you? Or do you do it more with feeling?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: It sounded similar. Like, if I think back to her talking to me and you talking to me, it was just like being in the room with the person, and I just ... I felt this pull. And I don't know if it was my feelings that she felt or my words. They were kind of conveying the same thing.

Tass: "Well, you're safe now. Safe as we can make you for the moment. I'm not real sure what we do now."

Wallace: I mean, if you got any more questions for him, come up with them now. Because we gotta disappear.

Tass: "Oh."

Rev: MARGARET: What do you mean?

Wallace: You all are talking about how he's, like, some big shit and some monster future, right? Sounds like Nash ain't gonna stop looking for him. Somehow they got ways to track him, somehow they got ways to find him, they got ways to ensnare him. Look, I appreciate that you all are good at your jobs and everything, and we're making an honest go with this, and that's great. But I've had one key failure in my life, and it was losing this kid. If there is any single thing in my power that I can do to make sure that doesn't happen again, I'm gonna do it. And if there's one thing I've gotten very good at since, it's disappearing. So I'm gonna give Aiden a chance to live a normal life and grow up as a normal kid, and not have to be important. Because being important means there's a target on your back, and I don't want that for him.

Tass: "Is that what you want too, bud?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: I guess. What does that mean? Like we're going to go hide someplace? Or ... How do I know they're not gonna find me again?

Jake: I'll, like, take a knee and put my hands on his shoulders and look at him.

Wallace: I won't let 'em. I won't let 'em find you. I'll do everything I can to prevent that. And if I fail again, then I'll make sure that you can at least get back to these folks, so that they can do a better job than me. OK? But they're not gonna get you, I promise you.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: OK.

Megan: "And we'll do our part to keep them away from you as well. But I agree, if you have an opportunity to grow up without a target on your back, you should probably take it."

Wallace: And if you all do what you say you're gonna do when you pull it off, then, well you let me know. We'll come back home.

Tass: "Yeah, will do."

Rev: Margaret has been staring at Aiden this whole time, and she looks up to you, Wallace.

Rev: MARGARET: What are you going to do to prevent them from finding him again? I appreciate the dedication, but if they're able to track him wherever he is on earth, no amount of rundown apartments or small cities is going to stop them.

Wallace: You got anything in mind? Because all I can do is pay cash, use fake names, and keep us moving.

Rev: MARGARET: I don't. But I know that anyone here with enough information on Aiden could probably go back to the headquarters and build something in an hour or so to track him wherever he went. I don't imagine that Nash is any different.

Jake: "I mean, can we build some sort of magical Faraday cage? I know — I mean, that's kind of on the nose. Wallace, you built us a Faraday cage. Maybe I can return the favor. I mean, I've got the ability to suppress magic effects and magic fields. Maybe I could modify an item or an article of clothing or something that would just negate any magic in or out. You know, that way, whatever they're using to track Aiden, it wouldn't work. But also whatever Aiden does probably wouldn't work anymore, either. So, Aiden, you'd be a very normal kid."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: OK.

Jake: "All right. I mean, this is — this is a big thing. This is gonna take me a little bit of time. I need to do some research and probably collect some appropriate stuff. But I think I can do this."

Rev: I think about this time you all hear a throat being cleared from one of the side rooms, and it's ranger Dave.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

Kim: Oh.

Rev: DAVE GARMESAN: Are you all hiring? Or ...

Tass: I look at Margaret.

Rev: MARGARET: We are very short staffed. You want to head back with us? I've got to run this one through her paces.

Rev: And she gives a thumb to Kim.

Rev: MARGARET: I could put you through a test as well, see what your skill set is.

Tass: "He is, like, fearless. He just was strutting up to one of those 15 foot tall monsters, blasting at it. It was pretty cool."

Jake: "It was very early Tass."

Rev: MARGARET: Oh.

Tass: "Oh, yeah."

Rev: MARGARET: I do like early Tass.

Megan: When he used guns. [Laughs]

Tass: Yeah ...

Rev: MARGARET: I'm a big fan of early Tass.

Kim: Back when Tass used guns.

Tass: I liked him, too. Whatever happened to that guy?

Rev: MARGARET: What happened to early Tass?

Jake: The horrors of the world.

Tass: As my wings are twitching.

Rev: Like trying to come out of your back, and just ...

Tass: Stop it.

Kim: Yeah. Are there now holes in Damian's leather jacket?

Tass: No. This is some demon magic shit, come on.

Rev: The wings are now like an embroidered patch on the back of the jacket.

Tass: Hell yeah, they are!

Kim: I love that!

Tass: Yes! Yes.

Rev: Nice. All right, so I think we find ourselves back in Indianapolis. It seems like everybody's got something to do, kind of on their own or in pairs, here. Everybody talk to me a little bit about what it is you want to accomplish right now. I know that Jake obviously is setting in to do this Big Magic to try and create something to hide Aiden. And as he said, it is gonna take him a little bit of time. What's everybody else gonna be up to?

Kim: It seems like I have some sort of test that Margaret needs to put me through. But after that, I desperately want to talk to Strohm.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Yeah, I'd really like to check in with Damien and help him out. But like, I know what this is gonna look like. I know what his request is, and I sort of already have the answer. I

feel like I need to go with Kim to talk to Strohm and sort of get a baseline on that, before we go talk to Damien.

Kim: That's probably good, yeah. We probably ... I think we need Strohm on our side first to get her to agree to this, and then kind of pitch it to Damien, once we already know that, like, Strohm would be cool doing this.

Tass: Exactly.

Megan: I think, having heard some of the explanation of what we do know about Aiden's powers and kind of getting a feel for the similarities between what he can do and what I can do and how that kind of relates to some Empath stuff? I think I'm gonna help Jake with this Big Magic.

Rev: All right. So for this Big Magic, explain to me exactly what you want this to do.

Jake: So I have Force of Will as a move, which is the ability to subdue or dispel magical effects, essentially. So what I want to do is basically enchant an item with that effect. Typically, I can enchant an item via Use Magic with like extra harm and magic, but I want to put this magic suppression effect on a thing — a piece of clothing or a trinket or something that Aiden can have with him all the time. That will just cancel out any magic effects. That anything that would be trying to come in at him to track him or to harm him wouldn't work. But also whatever he does is not going to work out, either. Like it's just ... It's going to make a void around him, basically. He will just be an empty spot on the map, as far as magic goes.

Rev: All right. So this is gonna be Big Magic. I think the things that it's gonna require ... You're gonna need to spend some time doing this, researching different magic rituals. I think you have to do some experimentation with this spell. And I think you're gonna need a rare or weird ingredient to add to this. Something that has part of what you're looking for. Like maybe you are enhancing the power of something that already exists, or you're making like your banish rune on something very tiny, something engraved, and then powering it. Like it's gotta be something ... Because it's almost casting this spell, ad nauseam.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: So I think those are the three requirements. So where are you looking, when it comes to doing research on this? Like what other kinds of similar effects or magic spells are you trying to research to get a sense of how to recreate this? I keep coming back to the idea of the arc reactor. Like, you're trying to take something that's really big, and how can I make it small?

Jake: Yeah. So I watch all the Iron Man films.

Rev: Perfect. And then Doctor Strange.

Kim: Oh, good.

Jake: Yes, I watch Iron Man and Doctor Strange back to back, and I ... And I get it.

Rev: Yeah. You have to watch them at the same time.

Jake: Oh, god. Just one in one eye, and one in the other eye. I mean, I think, you know, half of this at least, is stuff I already know how to do. I think I'm kind of consulting with Ferguson. You know, he was able to put this portal into an egg, basically. He clearly has some expertise in how to compress a potent magical effect into a smaller area that you can carry with you. So I think I am getting help from him and the texts in Elnore about how to ... How to do that, how to consolidate this powerful magic into a smaller item. But whereas his had to be like broken or utilized, like how I can kind of poke holes in the mesh, so that it's always leaking out of that thing, over and over.

Rev: So I think it sounds like we are going to break off into two teams, one of Kim and Tass and Margaret heading out with ranger Garmesan to kind of put them through a road test, and then Tass and Kim are going to head to Chicago. Jake and Megan are gonna stay in Indianapolis with Wallace and Aiden and try to get this Big Magic figured out. Jake, Megan, Wallace, and Aiden are gonna go ... Are going to ... And Aiden are gonna head to the castle and then onto Elnore, to start researching this Big Magic. But before we ... But before everyone splits off — and I think this is something that we sometimes gloss over as we go through things — I think we do have an evening gathered around a meal, with folks telling their side of the adventure that just happened. We see Everett, Margaret, and Wallace all hovering around Aiden, and the shared joy of his return is

palpable in the lair. It's a quiet evening, something that's kind of rare for you all. And it ends with something even more rare: a peaceful night's sleep.

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.