

A Devil's Deal (S4, E35)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So Jake, I think everybody wants to know: how many cans of Coke deep are you into that 36 pack?

Jake: Uh ... Either there's one left, or they're gone. I actually don't remember now.

Megan: Oh my gosh.

Rev: OK.

Kim: Is that a normal-sized can of Coke in your hand right now?

Jake: Yes. Yes, it is.

Kim: It looks like miniature in your giant hand.

Megan: Tiny Coke?

Kim: Yeah, it looks like a tiny Coke.

Megan: Oh my gosh, I think we have tiny cans of the space Coke.

Jake: I love the tiny cans, because I do feel like Andre the Giant when I'm holding them.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: I love that you're just palming this can of Coke. Like you're refusing to hold it, like — like it looks like a Barbie Coke.

Jake: I will not engage my thumb any longer.

Megan: It's glued to your hand.

Tass: He's Spider-Manning this.

Rev: Oh, because he's kissing it upside down?

Tass: Yeah.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Hold on, I'm gonna make a real syrupy mess on this recording table.

Megan: Actually, not too long ago, we ... [Laughs] We went to Costco for lunch before we came to recordings, and I was like, "Hey, while we run in there and get our \$1.50 hotdog and Coke, can I get one of those packs of — 36 packs of Coke?" And Jake was like, "My arms are so tired. I don't know if I can carry it."

All: [Laugh]

Megan: And I was like, "No, please." Because I really want to get a picture of you carrying them, and then Tass carrying one, but he's trying to — he's like, "Yeah, I'll drag it behind."

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: Does this picture exist?

Megan: No, because we got there, and they were completely out. Jake bought them out of — no, I'm kidding.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: No, no. Everybody just heard the intro and they made a run on the Costco, because they had to get these 35 packs.

Megan: Everyone's trying to get in shape for the summer, so ...

Jake: It's beach season.

Kim: You're welcome, Costco.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: We just sent out our first cycle of the all-digital swag on Patreon. We had four mysteries, we had some wallpaper of Anastacia, we had some music made by Jake about or kind of in tune of Anastacia — in the tune of Anastacia. [Laughs]

Jake: Yeah, man. In the key of Anastacia.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: If you have not yet received that, we posted it on our Patreon. So you can go there to access it at any time, if you are of that tier. But that also means that this is the month, if you want to jump in and get in on the next swag or T-shirt cycle, you can go to Patreon.com/TheCritshow and get in on the next cycle. This next cycle will be physical swag once again, before we try another of the digital swag.

Jake: This cycle will be of the motored variety.

Rev: The motorcycle tier.

Jake: Next one will be the bi variety.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And then the spin cycle.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Kim reminded me the other day that Like, I realize that we're coming up on our four year anniversary, but it's like a month and some change from now.

Megan: Uh-huh.

Rev: But that about this time last year we announced like, "Oh, what are we going to do to celebrate?"

Kim: So what are we going to do to celebrate?

Jake: Yeah. He just like shut down. Like he said that, and then he just looked down at the table and closed his mouth. Like ... Go on, tell us!

Kim: I missed my cue. Sorry. Rev, what are we going to do to celebrate it?

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So you know, in the past we've done art contests, we've done cosplay contests, but we realized that we have an enormous creative community out there. They make all kinds of different stuff. So for our four year anniversary — and Megan came up with this name, it's very charming — the Critshow Creations contest. It can literally be anything you want to make. And we will draw four winners at random. It could be cosplay, it could be a story, it could be cookies based around what Borbauk makes. It could literally be anything that you enjoy creating that you want to share with us. So you can submit m— if it's writing or if it's photos or whatever — you can send that to the cast at thecast@thecritshowpodcast.com, or post it on Twitter and hashtag it with [#CritshowCreations](https://twitter.com/CritshowCreations). And the deadline for this is going to be May 28th, and we will announce the winner the next Monday on our live stream, which is going to kind of be like our hey — our four year anniversary stream. And we'll announce it on the episode in the beginning of June. So just to get the ball rolling, if you were gonna make something, like a skill that you have fun doing. What would you make for this contest?

Megan: I've already made so many things actually, like based around the show. Like back when I was just a fan, like before I was sitting at the table.

Rev: That's true.

Megan: I did a whole embroidery of the logo.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah. I think going off of what Megan would say, back before I was a cast member, I did a cross-stitch of the vrykolakas.

Megan: I also did a ... Like a felt embroidery thing of Bagenthal from Perilous Tides, for ... I think it was the Secret Santa swap. We've done so many swaps in the Discord.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And even a crafting swap at one point. That might have been it. I'm not sure. One of those. But the person that I drew asked for something related to the show Perilous Tides, and so I made a cute little Bagenthal felt thing.

Jake: I would invent a new rip stick trick, based on the stunts featured in the program. Such as the car — the flip.

Rev: Tass is so furious that you took his. I can see it on his face.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: All right. I'll go to my backup, then. Spicy fanfic.

Rev: Oh, yeah.

Kim: Oh, shit. Yes. If you are planning on submitting any spicy fanfic, you can just send that directly to my email.

Rev: [Laughs] I think I would do ... Like if I was not part of the show, I think I would make like a new trailer for it. Like either with like clips of the show, or just like myself talking about it. But like make a little sizzle reel for it or something.

Tass: Nice.

Kim: Nice.

Rev: So yeah, this really can be anything that you want to create. We just want to see all the creative skills out there of our listeners, because we see them every day in the Discord, so ...

Kim: And Rev, I have a question.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: For our Critshow Creations. Not that I can submit, but just asking on behalf of the listeners. Is it Critshow Creations that only have to do with the main show?

Rev: That's a good question. I think this time around, because it is such a wide scope of abilities — we're asking you anything it is that you enjoy to do. You put together a fiddle piece, you can weave a —

Megan: What'd you just call me?

Jake: Is that a musical composition played with the fiddle, or is that a gun disguised as a fiddle?

Rev: Yes. That we are gonna keep it to the main show. So anything in these four seasons of the show — any moment, any character, any setting, any whatever — however you want to kind of weave in your crafty, creative ability into something to share with us. So again, the deadline for that will be May the 28th, and we will draw four winners and announce them on the stream the following Monday. And then that information will also be in the intro on that next Wednesday.

Tass: OK. Four winners because of the fourth anniversary?

Rev: Correct.

Tass: Oh, this is going to get rough on our like 50th anniversary.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: 50 winners!

Jake: None of us will be alive by then.

Rev: Not at this rate.

Megan: Is that a threat?

Kim: I plan on living forever. Thank you.

Jake: It's a promise.

Megan: If my portrait has anything to say about it, I will definitely be here in 50 years.

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

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Tass: "Wait. So back up. What just happened, exactly?"

Rev: STROHM: Oh, I had the idea that, past me, we do love knowledge. And 100 years worth of knowledge would be very much worthwhile. And so I sent back — I don't want to say my personality, who I am. We are the same Strohm. I'm just 100 years more experienced. But I sent it back inside of the crystal and had a little conversation with myself, and we agreed that this was the best course of action for both of us.

Tass: "OK."

Kim: "So you're you? You remember — you remember everything?"

Rev: STROHM: I remember everything up until the time that I handed you the crystal. Anything good happen after that?

Tass: "We did throw Aiden out a window."

Rev: STROHM: How'd that work out?

Tass: "Got us back here."

Kim: "The only thing that I can think of is that when we last spoke, you said that you had plans, an idea of what you were going to do on the day that Nash was visiting. And then I told you a piece of information that changed your plans. The piece of information that I told you was that I had a vision of this timeline in the near-ish future of people gathered in a circle doing a ritual very similar to the ritual where Death was sealed away. And Megan was standing where the gods were, and I was standing off to the side wearing your necklace, Strohm. And Jake was next to me. And upon telling you the details of that vision, you changed your plans and chose to do something else. I don't know if you can think of what other decision you might have made?"

Rev: STROHM: I haven't thought about that ritual in a very long time. I don't have a whole lot of spaces in my memory where there are gaps. There is an ancient purveyor of knowledge that I know knows a good deal about that ritual. I imagine I would have went to her to have a conversation about it, to try to remember what I had forgotten.

Kim: "And this purveyor of knowledge, who is she?"

Tass: "I have to assume it's Baba Yaga."

Rev: She nods.

Tass: Oh, good.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So we're all kind of broken up here, time-wise. If we say that this all kind of started on a Monday, Kim and Tass are kinda like Monday night, Megan is Wednesday, and Jake's thing is gonna kind of finish up on Thursday. What do you all want to do kind of in this interim to Thursday, when Jake's spell will be complete?

Tass: I think at least a substantial part of this day is actually filling in Strohm on any of the other peripheral stuff that we were afraid to say in the future. You know, the things that we were keeping close to the chest, and so on. I think with the exception of the Damien stuff in more detail. I think I'm holding on to that until everybody else is kind of done with

their stuff, so that Kim and I can talk about how we want to broach that subject. So I think I'm holding on to that for now. But beyond that, just, you know, staying out of the way. [Laughs] Letting her and Kim, you know, do whatever they gotta do. Maybe go hit up the Museum of Science and Industry, aquarium ... Oh, C2E2's this weekend. Yeah, I'll go.

Rev: Oh, nice.

Kim: Yeah. I mean, if we have a couple of days free, then I'm just spending them with Strohm. You know, just in the penthouse and catching up with her, and just feeling more normal and more grounded in this timeline than I ever have before.

Megan: I want to take the time to check in with my grandpa. I know that the addition of the werewolf serum to the spell was kind of a last minute add on, kind of, "I hope this works, keep me alive" kind of thing. And yeah, I'm curious on what the effects of that were.

Rev: Wallace is also at the castle. What has Wallace been up to in the interim? I know that he's technically retired now.

Jake: Yeah, I think he is just like making contingency plans. Like he's assembling the go bags and making a list of, like, "All right, if this thing happens, we gotta run here. And if this thing happens, we gotta run here. And if we run there and then this thing happens, we've got to run there." He's just like ... A lot of red yarn on a corkboard.

Rev: But yeah Megan, you do find your grandpa up in what has now become the portal room.

Jake: Where he plays Portal.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: He just runs through one portal and out the other.

Megan: Never mind. I don't want to have a conversation. I want to do that.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: "Hey, old man. How you feeling?"

Rev: GEOFFREY NASH: Not too bad.

Megan: "How have you been feeling? Like I know we were gone for a little while, but kind of jumping through that portal and seeing you inject yourself with that werewolf serum stuff, like ... I got offered at once when we were kind of all in rough shape, and it sounded like it could have some pretty bad side effects. So I just was wondering, I mean, I'm glad it kept you alive, but how are you feeling?"

Rev: GEOFFREY NASH: Yes, my understanding is that it's highly addictive. There were some traces of it left in my body. Once the spell was done, I was actually able to isolate the magic and remove it.

Megan: "Oh, that's good. So everything seemed to kind of go off without a hitch, huh?"

Rev: GEOFFREY NASH: Yes. I won't lie. I had a good deal of fatigue, standing, casting the same spell for almost a month. Take you out of it.

Megan: "Yeah. If we gotta do anything big like that again, I guess we should probably set up some sort of, like, comfortable station. Spell casting station?"

Rev: GEOFFREY NASH: Yes. Actually, there's something about that in those notes you gave me, from ... Well, from myself and James. Quite a number of things in here about ways to make this easier, more secure. I'll be very interested to meet him again. Meet him? I'm not quite sure which.

Megan: "Yeah, hopefully it won't take too much longer, and he'll be in good shape to do this. But he's pretty — he's pretty neat. I think you're gonna get along. Again. I mean, I know you'll get along, cause you have. But yeah, it seemed like you guys had worked out a lot of neat stuff. And I mean, it looks like we're probably gonna be casting some pretty big spells here, moving forward. So yeah, maybe if you've learned anything from sustaining this for so long, anything we can do to make the experience easier going

forward, maybe make note of that, and we'll try and work it out next time." I think I'm just spending the rest of the time we have right now with my grandpa. In a time that, you know, we're not in the middle of a crisis, and just get to kind of be with him.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: We find ourselves in the Room of Magic, and Jake has just finished the preparation for this spell. Jake, part of the requirement for this was like trial and error. What was your week like? What did you do exactly, to try and test the spell?

Jake: Well first of all, there are scorch marks everywhere.

Rev: [Chuckles]

Jake: It was not a linear progression, let me put it that way.

Rev: Reeves is a very hazy blue now, instead of a clear, translucent blue.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: It was like, you know, attempt number one was like a ... Like a 7/10 success, you know? I was like, OK, I'm close. But then attempt number two was like a 1.5. Like, I could not — it took me a long time to hone in on what I actually should be changing to make it work better.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Jake: So you know, days one and two, a lot of throwing spaghetti at the wall. Day three, started to figure out, like, OK, this is the actual part that makes a difference in a positive or negative way, and honing that. You know, like sitting there at the metaphorical ham radio, twisting the dials very, very gingerly. And then day four was like ... I don't want to say like performing the spell, exactly.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: But like getting up to like the final step and like seeing, OK, how can I make this the most efficient? What of these steps are necessary? Which of these are redundant? Like trying to streamline this out, to make sure that it's going to go off without a hitch when I basically put the last piece into place.

Rev: Yeah, kind of like NASA's pre-launch test, where they literally do everything up until —

Jake: Up until sending the rocket into space, yes.

Rev: OK. So everybody is gathered here. We have Ori and Maliah, Wallace and Selina and Aiden, Megan and Tass and Kim and Jake and Ferguson.

Jake: I'll walk up to Aiden and kind of kneel down in front of him. "All right, bud. You ready to go through with this?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: I think so. Between you and me?

Jake: "Yeah?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: Is this gonna hurt?

Jake: "No."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: Is that like a doctor's no, or like a real no?

Jake: "Uh ... I'm 99% confident this isn't gonna hurt."

Rev: He glances over at Wallace. And I take narrative control of Wallace and say Wallace gives a nod.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: And Aiden smiles.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: All right, let's do it.

Rev: Roll Use Magic.

Jake: That is a nine. But I got the +1 because Megan helped me, right?

Rev: Correct.

Jake: So that is a ten.

Rev: All right. So what does this look like as it severs the magic? Or I guess maybe that's not even — severing the magic around him isn't exactly right. Is it putting a barrier around him? Is it ... What exactly is it doing to shield him from these things? Is it cutting something away? Is it adding a new layer of defense?

Jake: So I have Aiden stand in the middle of this circle. And I have him stand a sort of Vitruvian Man-esque — like arms out and like legs kind of out. And the way this works is I am sort of using, like, tracking magic-ish? Like, you know, I've got the ability to, like, observe another time and place, and like I am using magic. I'm watching for where it lights up, and then I am blocking it, you know? It's almost like chakras. Like in different parts of his body, what part of him activates when this magic effect is used on it?

Rev: Oh, OK.

Jake: OK. Close that door. What happens when I do this one? All right, close that door. And just like, one by one, I am, like, locking these points on him. And then once they are all locked, I'm just putting a general, like, clingfilm ward over him entirely, so that they can't be fucked with again except by me.

Rev: But I think that as you start to do this spell, something feels off.

Jake: Off in what way? Like, am I missing something? Or is it — is it just not working the same way?

Rev: I think as you're trying to suss this out in the middle of the spell, why don't you Read a Bad Situation?

Jake: OK. Oh, seven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 1.

Jake: I guess, what's the best way to protect the victims? I feel like as I realize something is going wrong, I'm not as specifically concerned with what it is as how do I bypass it? Like, how do I work around what's going wrong? I don't need to know — I don't care so much to know ... I'm not like, "Oh, interesting. What's the detail, what is causing this?" But I'm like, "Oh fuck, I need to damage control this and make sure this thing still works."

Rev: So I think the best way to protect the victims is that you're going to need a lot more energy input as you do this. It feels like there's a vacuum taking in the energy that you're pouring out, and you just need more output.

Jake: OK. I think as I'm doing this, I want to like hold out a hand towards Ferguson and point at his staff. "I need that. Right now."

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh.

Rev: He hands it to you.

Jake: And I want to hold it up. And, you know, the one hand that I'm trying to contain this with, in the other hand, I'm just going to drive the staff into one of the runes and try to channel that magical power that Elnore has been gathering to mega boost this.

Rev: Yeah. You feel that void filled.

Jake: I want to give him, like, raised eyebrows and, like, a questioning thumbs up. Like, "How you doing? Are you good? Did it hurt?"

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: It didn't. It's ...

Rev: And he looks at Megan.

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: It's quiet.

Megan: "Yeah. That's a little weird when that happens, but you'll — you'll get used to it."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: All right.

Jake: I want to reach into my pocket and pull out a little, like, wrapped gift and hand it to Aiden.

Rev: He takes it and looks at it for a moment, and then opens it.

Jake: "It's a set of earbuds. I recommend music or audiobooks or something. If it feels a little quiet in your head, just fill it up with something entertaining."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: And I ... What, I like, push these into my ears as far as they'll go?

Jake: "No, no, no. You just sort of — you're right. Boy, you've been gone a long time. Most people your age ..."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: Oh! Like Get Smart — like the phone. I swallow this, and then I can ...

All: [Laugh]

Jake: And then you punch yourself in the stomach to activate it. "No, you just put them you — just put them right in there, and we'll go ... We'll go through this."

Rev: AIDEN CHAMBERS: OK.

Jake: OK. This 85 year old child.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: The Internet is about to blow that boy's mind.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Yeah. I'm like, audiobooks. And he's like, the what now?

All: [Laugh]

Rev: All right. So I know that you were also working on this spell to keep Ori and his sister and Selina from being tracked by Nash. And I think that with the exception of that extra energy that you need for this spell, that you can just peel some parts away from this spell, and we can count that as the same kind of spell. Because you're really kind of doing the same thing, here.

Jake: Yeah. I mean, the only difference is like there's kind of something to pull out first, and then it's just like the clingfilm.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: On them. So it's like half of the spell I'm already doing.

Rev: We're just gonna do one more roll Use Magic here for all three of them.

Jake: OK.

Rev: And I think you get an additional +1 from your information you got from Read a Bad Situation. I don't think that — the game tells us that.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I'm not being generous, here. So you have a +2 forward, essentially.

Jake: OK. Fourteen.

Rev: I think the one thing that happens throughout doing this to the other three is that, again, you need that extra energy, but not for Ori. But the other two do require it. But Ori ... Like you're prepped to kind of use that, and you don't need it. And as you're finishing up, everybody kind of breaks up into small groups to check on each other, and Ferguson comes over to you.

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, well done.

Jake: I hand him back his staff. "Thank you. I would not have been able to get that done without that help."

Rev: FERGUSON: Oh, yes, of course. That's what the magic is there for.

Megan: "What happened?"

Jake: "There's something on these three." And I point at Aiden and Selina and Maliah. "That it's not on Ori. It's like a ... It's like a power vacuum. Like it was eating a lot more magic than I expected it to eat, and I needed the boost."

Megan: "Like The Devourer."

Jake: I look at Aiden and Selina and like, I understand that one. But I think that I look at Maliah, pretty confused. Like, "Yeah, kind of like that. But why her?"

Megan: "Well, you know, with some of these powers, like we know that there are different people that have the capacity to wield them. And that's kind of the research that I was doing. You know, I was talking with Aiden, and some of the abilities that he has is very similar to what I do. And it's not like ... It's not like you being The Divine and being a champion for a god. For these ones that didn't make it, it's like their ... Their essence? Everything that made up who they were and what they could do, it's like that's the seeds, and we're all just the right sized flower pots. And it can go to multiple people. And that was part of the reason why in the future, if I didn't come back in time, I would have lost my powers because they'd find another flower pot. And so, yeah, I guess it seems like Maliah must also be capable of taking on The Devourer's gifts."

Jake: "Man. I mean this whole time, I was just under the impression that Nash had her as blackmail, but I guess maybe he saw something in her, too, and just was able to kind of play both angles and keep one hidden."

Megan: "I found something else out, too, that you all should know. I found out who the last god was."

Kim: "Fantastic. Who is it?"

Megan: "It was The Builder. It looked for people who had the potential to create, to build things that were way more advanced than what the world around them would expect. And I found different people throughout time, you know, that embodied this. And I found out that there doesn't seem to be anyone right now that has those abilities. There was." And I look at Jake and Tass. "I think it was TJ."

Tass: "God. That makes sense."

Megan: "I think something about the way he ... You know. It did something, and the powers didn't pass on."

Kim: "Well, that makes sense. If TJ was unmade in the fight against Koschei, then stands to reason that energy would have disappeared as well."

Megan: "Yeah. But then, I mean, how do we do this ritual?"

Tass: "I don't think we can answer that until we understand what it is exactly."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, maybe we can create a substitute? Like a passing energy that'll, I don't know, trick the ritual? Or maybe we go to a different world where that energy wasn't unmade and we're able to bring it over somehow? I don't ... I don't know."

Megan: "Well I mean, at least now we know what it is, and knowledge is power, so ..."

Kim: "Speaking of knowledge. Jake, I don't know if in your research about this tracking thing that you removed from Ori and Maliah and Selina, is this something where Nash will be able to feel that those tethers are gone now? Like, will he know that those threads have snapped?"

Jake: "I mean, he's gonna be able to tell that it's gone. He won't necessarily be able to tell why, without some further investigation. And it's possible when you're that powerful and you've got that many irons in the fire that you might not even be like actively paying attention to everything you're doing? So he might not even notice exactly what's up. You know, it might be like waking up with a tingle in the back of his brain. Something is

different, and it might even take him some time to determine what exactly has gone or changed. But that's ... That's optimistic. We'd be lucky if that was the case."

Tass: "So if they're all free and clear, what are the next steps? Wallace is taking Aiden, right? Disappearing? Ori and Maliah are still safe here, if they want to keep staying here. Selina, you can go wherever you want."

Rev: SELINA: I'm pretty partial to the castle. I think I might just stay there. Got my room all set up the way I like it.

Tass: "Nice."

Rev: SELINA: It's nice to have a room in a bed as opposed to a sewer.

Jake: "I mean, we still need to handle Damien, right?"

Tass: "Yeah, probably sooner than later."

Kim: "I think our chances of convincing Strohm to help us in that increased exponentially. Because your Strohm is now my Strohm — has all of the memories of the woman that I knew."

Jake: "Oh, perfect. How?"

Kim: "The piece of amber that I had, that contained Strohm's memory, that she gave me in order to convince your Strohm to trust me? Then turned into a scarab beetle and had a conversation with Strohm. And I guess that scarab beetle had all of the memories from my Strohm. And your Strohm agreed to accept those memories into her, because more knowledge is always good. And then she absorbed an amber scarab beetle, and then gained 100 years worth of knowledge that she otherwise would not have."

Jake: "That does sound like her."

Kim: "Yep."

Tass: "So I think we need to talk to her first, right? Like Damien has something I'm sure she very much wants back. She has something he very much wants back."

Kim: "Mmhmm."

Tass: "I'm feeling like we're in a good position for an amicable trade here."

Kim: "I agree."

Jake: "OK. Well, let's head back her way and take care of the thing with Damien first, and then maybe that'll answer some questions about where we go from there."

Megan: "Sounds like a plan."

Rev: All right. So we find ourselves back in Chicago. I noticed that everybody's IPT paychecks are substantially larger, because of the mileage reimbursement, now that Jake doesn't have Angel Wings.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: A lot more road time. And as you all approach, Al steps to the side.

Tass: We'll head up.

Rev: The elevator opens on the penthouse, and Strohm is standing there.

Tass: "So how far through the day did you get here? Do I need to give you my pitch?"

Rev: STROHM: Oh, come now. We had this conversation upon our first meeting. I prefer to have a conversation like a civilized person.

Tass: [Laughs] "Yeah. Well, I have to assume you are still fairly upset about Damien probably still having your ... Oh, I — what is it? Liver? Stomach? I forget."

Jake: "It was a liver."

Rev: STROHM: As opposed to this very charming pig liver that I find myself in the possession of?

Jake: "Yeah. I'll never — I'll never forget the way Damien said it was a pig liver. I'll always remember that it's the liver."

Tass: "Point being, I don't think I have to tell you now, with the memories that you have, that you sort of have something that he wants as well. And so we were hoping to approach you about an amicable trade."

Rev: STROHM: Because — and if I am to understand this correctly — you need what I have because of a bargain that you made with him?

Tass: "That is exactly right."

Rev: STROHM: So you're proposing the final piece to open the necklace, in exchange for my proper liver?

Tass: "Exactly."

Rev: STROHM: Well, this isn't much in the win category for me, but it does remove a rather frustrating loss. So I suppose I'll count those as cancelling one another out. Bring him here.

Tass: "Thank you."

Rev: And she turns and walks down the stairs, towards her vault.

Tass: I think I'm gonna go back down and out to the street, and give Damien a call.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: You got Damien.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "Yeah, I do. How's it going, buddy?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, man, not too bad. What's up? 'Sup, playa?

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I'm trying a new vibe today.

Tass: "Yeah, you are! I hate it, but I adore you."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, that's fair.

Tass: "OK. So I apologize about sort of disappearing there for a week or so, but we've been essentially doing our best to set up our end of the deal."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, the final energy?

Tass: "Yes."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Nice.

Tass: "So I'm gonna tell you a bunch of stuff here, and see what you think. Essentially, it isn't a piece of energy. It is more or less a ... I don't know exactly, even. A permission? A piece? Something that will open the amulet for you. And it is in control by someone that you have something that they want. So if you are up for a peaceful trade, they get something that they want that you don't particularly need, except for maybe in a situation of a bargaining chip — that seems like this. And they have something that you want desperately, that they don't really need. Meaning, this piece for the necklace."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Who is it?

Tass: "Strohm. It's Strohm."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, are you fucking kidding me?

Tass: "I'm not. I'm sorry. I know!"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Wait, there's something on the necklace that, like, it won't work unless she allows it?

Tass: "Yeah. But, she is on board. If she gets her liver back, it's yours. Trade, everybody's even, we go our separate ways. You get what you want, she gets what she wants. And the people rejoiced."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Well, at least now I don't feel so bad. I could not find another kind of magic that existed.

Tass: "Well, that makes sense."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: [Under his breath] Yeah, I guess so.

Tass: "What's that?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I said, I guess so.

Tass: "All right, man. We're at her tower."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: All right. I'm just pulling up.

Rev: And there's a plume of fire, and his car rolls out onto the street, behind the IPT Cruiser.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh sweet wheels, man.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: "Yeah. Thanks, I had it custom built."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: It's got the color change, and everything.

Tass: "Yeah, look at that."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I can tell the temperature out here. It's nice.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: "Yeah, that's good. Also, can you do this?" And I want to sprout my wings.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: No!

Tass: "Cool, right?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Tass: "I'm like — I'm like evolving, or something."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Wait, where do those go?

Tass: "Like sort of into the coat, kind of?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh. You got this whole ... Like, almost like you're cosplaying me, but somewhat like you're melting, vibe.

Tass: "Yeah, yeah, yeah. The future changed me, man."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. It looks good on you.

Tass: "Hey, thanks."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: The vibe, I mean.

Tass: "Yeah, yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: The jacket? Eh ...

Tass: "It's a little ... It's a little loose around the, you know, forearms."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Tass: "I need to work out."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Your forearms?

Jake: [Laughs] The forearms!

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: You gotta get that Wolverine pump on. Just get those huge forearms.

Tass: "Well, just look at the end of this. It's so baggy right at the end, around my little baby hands. Let's go upstairs."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, maybe you just need to work out your hands.

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: You probably been doing a lot of that. Yeah!

All: [Laugh]

Tass: He is a demon, folks.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Got 'im.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So the two of you head inside, up to the elevator. And I think by this point, Strohm has moved Kim and Jake and Megan down onto the lower floor where she would have, like, her galas and stuff. And there's a table set up, and she is sitting at it with the three of them as you and Damien come in.

Tass: "Hey, it's us. The two that got away."

Megan: "Hey, Damien."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Hey, how's it going?

Megan: "Pretty good. Good to see you."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, welcome back. Jake, is that your sweet right out there?

Jake: "Shut up. It's a loaner."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I could tell that it was 70 degrees because it was kind of purple, but heading into gold.

Jake: "It's a company car!"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Who's your friend?

Kim: "Hi, I'm Kim. You and I know each other 100 years in the future."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I gotta tell you, if that's a pickup line, that's the most baller one I've ever heard.

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: "Uh ... Definitely not a pickup line."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Well, fucking rude.

Kim: [Laughs] "No, it's nice — it's nice to re-meet you. I'd be lying if I said that you and I were on fantastic terms in the future, but ..."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh, god.

Kim: "I'm hoping that we can be better friends in this timeline."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Fucking what?

Jake: "Because they're on great terms." And I point to, like, Kim and Strohm. "And you two," and I point to Strome and Damien, "you know ..."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh yeah. Famously.

Jake: "Aren't so. But that's — none of this matters now, because none of that's going to happen. And right now we're all here to be friends. What if — let's hold hands. What if we all — can everybody just join. Let's all sit down around the table. Let's all join hands."

Rev: Strohm crosses her arms.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: STROHM: So my understanding is that you have brought something for a trade.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: My understanding is you brought something for a trade.

Jake: "This is going to be excruciating. Both of you just pull out the fucking things and let's hand them off and let's get this done."

Rev: There's a beat. And then Damien nods and holds his hand out and there's a small burst of flame, and the jar holding the liver is there. And he places it on the table. He then pulls the necklace out from his pocket, and lays it down on the table. Strohm picks up the jar with the liver and examines it and nods, and then reaches her hand over and places it on the center gem of the necklace and closes her eyes. Everyone in the room feels the wind pick up just a little bit, and then there is a snapping sound. And the center crystal starts to unfold, and at its center is a soul gem. And Damien looks at it for a long moment, his eyes just growing wide, and he very delicately reaches down and plucks it out of the necklace and holds it in his palm.

Tass: "OK, so ... So what now?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Now I'm gonna see if I can find a way to bring her back. Uh ... This has been a long time coming. I ...

Rev: And he kind of looks down at his boots, and back up to the crystal in his hand.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I gotta go. I'll talk to you guys later.

Jake: "Oh. OK. You okay?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: No, there's just some dust in my eye.

Jake: "Hey. Hey, man."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Jake: "It's all right. This is a big deal. This is a big moment for you. It's OK to feel about it. OK?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, I just ... There's so much about it I don't — I don't know. And there's, like, what's gonna happen when I ... When I fix it? And I never thought that this moment would, like, actually be here. That I would receive this. And it's got kind of a cascading effect. I have understood that, like, if I can bring her back, if I can save her, that my condition will be ... I'll be returned to normal."

Kim: "Sorry. Catching up. So your mom isn't a demon as well?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: No.

Tass: "I mean I get it though, man. Like, sometimes you get stuck on the goal, and it gets heavy when suddenly you have done it. And now you have to decide what to do with what you've got. So take a little time. But if you want help with this, you don't have to cut a deal with us for that."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: That's the thing. I mean, it wouldn't just affect me.

Rev: And he looks up at you, Tass.

Tass: "Ah, right. I'm not worried about that."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, all right. I'll, uh ... I'll be in contact. I just need some time to think on this, and ... Yeah.

Megan: "Best of luck."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Thanks.

Tass: "Take care of yourself."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Kim: "It was nice to re-meet you."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Same.

Rev: And he continues up the stairs towards the elevator.

Jake: I pull out a comically large, like, Blue's Clues-esque spiral notebook and pencil, and mark another thing off our to-do list.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Strohm, during this, has taken the jar and gone deeper into the vault and returned.

Tass: "God, I hope that was the real ... That was the real one, right?"

Rev: STROHM: Yes.

Tass: "OK. Cool, cool, cool, cool."

Kim: "So what are the next steps for us?"

Jake: "I mean, it seems like a lot of threads tie back to Baba Yaga. So as much as it doesn't really excite me, it might be in our best interest to pay her another visit, here."

Megan: "It seems like she's the one that's going to have information on this ritual we're supposed to end up doing, so yeah."

Jake: "I will warn the two of you, it is not a pleasant encounter. Like it sounds — I get that it sounds very cool, and like it is pretty cool. Like, she is an impressive being. But she's not great to be around, and you should steel yourselves."

Megan: "The fuck does that mean? What do you mean, she's not great to be around?"

Tass: "She did try to eat us once."

Jake: "Yeah, like that's her default setting, is trying to eat you unless you convince her otherwise."

Tass: "She also makes herself into her own furniture coverings."

Megan: "What?"

Jake: "She's like taffy, with sharp metal teeth, and a lot of biting moral commentary."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: She's not great to be around, because she dressed us down once and now we're uneasy.

Jake: "She dressed us down and bit, and is just an incomprehensible form, so ..."

Kim: "To be fair, you all did kind of set Death free and then you guys talked about trying to take down Baba Yaga, so ..."

Jake: "Well ..."

Tass: "Did we tell her that? How is that in the file? I hate everything."

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: "I don't think we reported back on that. This seems apocryphal."

Tass: "Keep a seer around ..."

Rev: [Laughs] You try to keep secrets from a seer and a psychic.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Come on, Jake. Let's go punch stuff without the girls.

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: I don't need this. I don't need any of you.

Kim: "Strohm. So in your interactions with Baba Yaga, do you agree with what these two are saying, that she's not great?"

Tass: "I mean, don't get us wrong, she's still like a good guy. I mean, you know, she's on the side of life and existence and the world continuing. She's just creepy about it. Which, fair."

Megan: "Well, OK. You said that you had to convince her to not eat you by default, right?"

Tass: "Sorta. I mean, out of fairness, we did sort of interject ourselves into her home. So, I mean, you have the right to defend yourself." [Chuckles] "But, you know, before she was gonna give us anything, we had to prove that we were even remotely worthy of doing so."

Megan: "Prove how?"

Tass: "Kind of some trials."

Megan: "Is this like joining the IPT? Are Kim and I gonna have to do something, too?"

Tass: "Oh god, I don't know. We can't even pretend we're gonna know what she'll want for any of the information we're looking for."

Kim: "Strohm, something that I wanted to bring up with you before we left. Are you aware of any other currently active oracles, other than yourself and me?"

Rev: STROHM: No.

Kim: "I'm wondering if Kester and Tiresias are around in this timeline. I'm not — I'm not exactly sure when either of them ... Started existing, I guess. But it might be worth trying to track them down, or at least put some feelers out and see if either of them are in possession of any degree of prophetic ability. You know how useful they were to us in the House of Strohm. It would be disastrous if Nash found them first."

Rev: STROHM: I can't imagine that Kester, if he's around yet, has any abilities. But Tiresias was very powerful. He might be strong enough that perhaps he existed before all that extra magical energy started to flood into our world.

Kim: "Yeah. I never asked the guy, but my pet theory was always that he was the Tiresias. Like Oedipus, Tiresias."

Rev: STROHM: Yes. I have a feeling that if he's around, he may not be alive in a real way. I'm not sure. I'll have to do a little research on this.

Kim: "Yeah, sounds good."

Rev: STROHM: Well, it sounds like you all have quite a lot to do, still. Before you go, Kim, I did want to give you this. It occurred to me that you're not quite sure what you're going to encounter in this world. I grabbed this out of the back when I was putting away the jar.

Rev: And she holds out a leather bag, actually about the size of a dice bag.

Megan: Roll up your character.

Kim: I've been thinking of starting a home game. Are you free on Tuesdays?

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Yeah, I will take the bag.

Rev: The bag is filled with dozens of coins of different shapes and sizes in various metals. You see silver, you see cold iron, you see gold. Like it's just a mishmash of shapes and imprinting and metals.

Kim: "Cool. What is all this?"

Rev: STROHM: It's just something that I had collected in some of my travels. Various coins from different lands, made from different metals that might be beneficial depending on the kinds of things you find yourself encountering. And really, it was the only strong narrative way I could figure out how to get you your second weapon.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Ah, yes.

Rev: A bag of strange coins.

Kim: There is that, yes. [Laughs]

Rev: STROHM: Listen, sometimes you have to break the fourth wall and just acknowledge that you've got to do something to do it.

Megan: Kim, it's time for you to learn this ancient Oracle attack.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: Throw Coin.

Rev: What's the money throwing attack from Final Fantasy?

Jake: I thought you were gonna make a Pokémon reference, and I was going to be blown away.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Because Meowth does that. Meowth has Payday, and throws coins to hurt.

Tass: Yeah, too. I don't know what it's called, but I know what you're talking about.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Also, Meowth's like an Egyptian cat, so. Perfect.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

Rev: Strohm pulls her mask off.

Megan: She's Team Rocket!

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Kim's Meowth!

Tass: House of Strohm, blasting off again!

Kim: The fucking dream!

Rev: It takes a really different turn when you think about her building exploding.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: That's what happened. The building collapsed and crumbled into dust. And as it was settling, we just saw her — whee! Ding!

Rev: And what are the tags on your new weapon?

Kim: The tags for my strange coins are 1-harm, many, and various metals.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: Got them all covered.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Oh, yeah. Yeah I will — I will pocket that bag of coins and throw my arms around Strohm in a hug. "Thank you."

Rev: STROHM: Good luck.

Kim: "Thanks."

Rev: You all head back to Indianapolis and to the subterranean lair. When you arrive in the lair, Anastacia and Jingles are gone. But sitting at the desk, just kind of tapping away on the computer, is Grandpa Tincher.

Megan: [Gasps]

Kim: [Gasps]

Tass: "Hey!"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, hello. I found my way through to here. Ferguson said that you would all be waiting. Fascinating fellow. Lots of — lots of knowledge. I spent a little time chatting with him after I realized where I was. I kind of thought the whole being frozen in magic was a dream, but then I realized it wasn't. And he explained to me what happened. And then I found my way through. And then there was a man in a castle, and he told me to go through a different portal. And that brought me here. And I thought I'd just wait.

Tass: I walk up and hug him.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Good to see you again.

Tass: "Good to see you."

Megan: "I'm so glad you're OK!"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, thank you. Who are you?

Megan: "Oh, right. OK. Yeah. You're not future Tincher, you're — OK. I'm Megan. Nice to meet you."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You're not the first person to say that to me today. The man in the castle also said that future me had written this.

Rev: And he points to the desk. He's got a bunch of notes and scrolls laid out, and he was doing some research on some stuff.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: He said that he and I wrote these together, and that I'm supposed to be building them. Or that we'll be building them together.

Tass: "Yes, indeed. You did do that. In addition to," and I'll also turn to Kim, "helping her help us get this information back to you, so that we could do that. So this is Kim and Megan."

Kim: "Hi, James. It's nice to meet you. In a hundred years, you and I were very good friends, but I'm excited to start that a little earlier this time."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh. Oh, have you all been time traveling?

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: And so you found a — what, a time where I had found my way back home, and you just shortened it?

Tass: "Yep."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, well done.

Tass: "Hey, you technically did a lot of it. We just sort of helped it along."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Well good job, me.

Tass: [Chuckles]

Kim: "Yeah. You were also instrumental in what we were trying to do in the future. Well, my then present, I guess. I'm from the future, and just came back."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Hmm.

Kim: "But they were in the future to try to find all of the different dimensions that Nash used to complete a ritual that he is trying to do right now, which will pump the entire world with a ton of magic and turn almost everyone into some degree of monstrous or supernatural person. And without your tech, we would have never been able to find the dimension codes that we needed."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Ah.

Megan: "Yeah. And the guy at the castle is also Nash, but he's a different Nash from the future that came back to stop his past self. And he's also my grandpa."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, so you're Megan?

Megan: "Yes!"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Oh, he mentioned you.

Megan: "Yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Excellent. I have learned a good deal in my travels. As you both know, I was jumping around from dimension to dimension, trying to find a way to re-synchronize myself with the proper timeline. The thing that I was able to do is collect time magic as I went. I had this idea as I got to these different locations that I should be drawing magic into some canisters I had made. My suit is hanging up in the other room, but it's got a bunch of different things on it that I was using to collect information, as well as actually to power it. It was kind of changing as I went to different locations. But I have — and I can see the reality of it here.

Rev: And he taps the stuff on the table again.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I've had some ideas on how to make travelling to these other dimensions easier and safer. I just need time. Yes, time. Not like time — I don't need to travel in it. I just need to spend it, working.

Jake: "OK. Well, that's fine. You have your place, here. This is the lab. Feel free, make yourself at home. We have another task that we need to go do right now anyway. So get rolling, and we'll be back. And if there's anything you need, let us know. We can bring stuff back or pick something up. I don't know exactly what — is this like a Home Depot trip kind of situation? Or like a ..."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: No, I think ... Hmm. I guess I don't know.

Jake: "OK. Well, you find out and then let us know, and then we'll help you."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: We'll see what kind of things lie in wait around this particular spot, and — what was your grandpa's name? I'm sorry.

Megan: "His name's Geoffrey."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Geoffrey.

Megan: "But you can feel free to use the portals and backtrack as much as you need to and talk with him, and I'm sure he'll be able to get you up to speed. And he said that the two of you were meant to work on these together, so."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. Magic is not particularly my forte. I was able to learn enough about it to collect some of it, but I'm not quite sure what to do with it. I believe that's where he comes in.

Tass: "Amazing."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Well, I will set to work. Question, what kind of car do you all drive?

Kim: [Laughs] Just really rubbing it in, huh?

Jake: [Laughs] Wow. OK, James.

Megan: Couldn't have asked me that a couple of days ago ...

Jake: "Uh, currently?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes.

Jake: "We've got a PT Cruiser."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Could I have the keys and access to it? I have an idea.

Jake: "Yeah. We're about to take a helicopter trip anyway, into a place where we won't be able to drive. So, sure." I'll toss him the keys.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Excellent. I will put this first on the to do list. I don't want to deprive you of your wheels.

Tass: "Nice. I don't want any clarification. I can't wait for whatever you're about to do."

Jake: "I will want clarification before I start driving it again, but ..."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: And ultimately, when you go to these other places, do you want to go from the castle? Do you want to go from here? Which of these portals can I take parts from, and which one needs to ultimately still work?

Jake: "I don't know. Squad, thoughts? My head was just kind of here, because this is home base."

Tass: "I think my vote is this one, because obviously the one we have in the castle is fully functional for other things. This one's kind of specialized in the way that we don't want it to be, right? So I feel like this is the one that should be taken apart and reworked?"

Megan: "Yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: And this is the one that TJ built from my blueprints?

Tass: "Yep."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. I think that's very fitting. I will work on this one.

Tass: "All right. Well, have at it, sir. It is so good to see you. And now we gotta go."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Good luck.

Tass: "You too."

Kim: "Thanks, James."

Rev: So with James safely set up inside of the subterranean lair, the four of you head out, headed towards the IPT, to hitch a helicopter ride from Everett to the Shorsky National Park.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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