

Menace in the Vents (S5, E6)

Rev: The Critshow contains elements of horror, fantasy violence, and adult language. Content warnings can be found in the episode description.

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Who are all you people?

Jake: OK. I was afraid of this. Rev. Rev?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: It's me. My name is — My name is Jake.

Rev: I'm sorry. I'm on a three hour delay. I'm still on East Coast time. Or, West Coast time.

Megan: East Coast. [Laughs]

Jake: Oh, he's real fucked up.

Rev: I'm on North Coast time.

Jake: Get the paddles.

Rev: [Laughs] It has been like a month since we have all sat in this room together. Tell me something. What's happened in the last month? You got — share something with me. What's going on?

Jake: Sure. So, Tass lost one of his toes.

Rev: Whoa.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: Like a mower related accident? Or ...

Tass: No, no, no. I just — I clean can't find the thing.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: OK, OK.

Megan: He lost track of it.

Rev: I see.

Jake: Kim ...

Rev: Uh-huh.

Jake: Bought a hot air balloon.

Rev: That's gonna make the Gen Con commute way easier.

Jake: Yeah. And that was why.

Rev: Yeah. As long ... As long as the trade winds are favorable.

Megan: I was gonna say, what makes you think it's gonna be quicker for her to fly a hot air balloon?

Rev: Oh, I didn't say quicker. [Laughs]

Megan: Easier.

Rev: I said easier.

Kim: It's gonna be cheaper for The Critshow.

Jake: Monetarily, less punishing. Because I mean, like however many bags you can fit in that basket. You know, you can you can pack whatever you.

Rev: Like you can cosplay as big of a thing as you want.

Jake: No check luggage fees.

Kim: Oh. [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Probably. I'm honestly not clear. I don't know. There's ... Because there's rules around hot air balloons. You can't just do whatever you want.

Rev: Yeah. It's the Wild West in the sky.

Kim: I feel like hot air balloons are kind of famously slow. Right? I should probably take ... I should probably take to the sky right now, if I want to be there by Gen Con.

Megan: Yeah.

Tass: That's true.

Rev: We need to make a note. We need to buy Kim a new wind buffer for her microphone.

Kim: A really powerful one.

Jake: I thought ... Wasn't Around the World in 80 Days in a hot air balloon?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Well that's — so, yeah. 80 days to circumnavigate the globe, I think you can get from California to Indianapolis in like 30?

Rev: Oh, at least.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: The amount of shrugs happening around the table right now.

Rev: Getting back will be the harder part, because I think ...

Jake: The wind only goes one way.

Rev: [Laughs] Yeah.

Megan: You have to go 80 days around the world again.

Rev: Pretty famously, wind mostly moves in one direction across the United States.

Jake: You gotta go the rest of the way around.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: It's like when —

Rev: And if you miss your home, you just got to go back around.

Jake: Yeah. It's like when you're trying to start the washer, and like the knob only turns one way. And if you go a little bit too far past your setting, you got to do the whole other circle.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: And something happened with Megan. Megan, what was your thing? What happened — what's happened to you?

Megan: Oh, no! Jake started narrating everything, and I thought he was going to come up with something for me. So I didn't think of something. [Laughs]

Rev: And then he left you in the lurch.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I'm sorry. My brain got overwritten by the hot air balloon.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: I've done nothing.

Rev: Aww.

Megan: For a month.

Rev: I've slept on the floor here, waiting.

Megan: Yeah.

Rev: For the return.

Megan: For everyone's return. It's been a very lonely 30 days. I should have been in a hot air balloon.

Rev: The last intro that I recorded — I had mentioned before that I recorded all those intros just in one sitting — and I couldn't clearly read the calendar correctly. Because I have gotten some messages that people were waiting for the game of For the Queen to go on sale, and it was not on the website yet. That's because I thought the last intro was on the first of the month. It was not. It was the 31st.

Kim: Surprise.

Rev: So For the Queen will be up right now when you're hearing this. Because this is the first episode of the month.

Tass: Yay!

All: [Laugh]

Tass: You have it now!

Rev: Yay, I understand the calendar. I'm also supposed to have a list of new patrons to thank. But as I described earlier ...

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: So I ... [Sighs] I bought this tablet. And it's like writing on paper, but it's electronic. I love it, but I can't find it.

Jake: Wow.

Rev: And it had all my NPC names on it. So I was so bummed. I sat down before we start recording, I had to like rewrite all the MPC names and a couple of other things. The names of the patrons are also on that. So look for that thank you next week, patrons. But thank you.

Jake: Thank you, though.

Kim: You know who you are.

Jake: You know who you are.

Rev: You know who you are.

Megan: So he had to make up a whole new list of NPC names, and now he has to make up a list of patrons.

Rev: And, a list of patrons.

Tass: Yeah, break us off some of those patrons.

Rev: Yeah, uh ... Izzy the Squid. And, um I'm just looking at things on the table.

Tass: There's an actual squid on table.

Megan: Here's the thing, though. You have to also make up names you can't pronounce properly.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Rainbow Frig. Oh, that's Frog.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: But if you if you are not a patron and you would like to get in on the t-shirt or swag tier, this is the month to join. This is the beginning of that new cycle that will ship out in December. We had some really good reactions to the swag and the t-shirt. We did stuff all themed around the Wave and Sea, which was the little place in Hawaii that Ori was the manager for.

Jake: We made good merch. We got some good stuff. I'm loving my beach bag.

Rev: Yeah.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: Kim, you are barricaded inside of the Radio Room. You know that Jake and Megan have left Product Testing and are headed your way. What are you doing in this room? Are you just hiding out until they arrive? Or ...

Kim: OK. Scrolling through my video feeds, do I see Jake and Megan emerge into the Welcome Center? Because I want to warn them where Tass has actually ended up.

Rev: Yeah, it's gonna take them — because they're on foot — a good chunk of time to make it back to the lobby.

Megan: What if we're making, like, chugga chugga chugga ...

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: What if we're trying to sound like the tram? Does that make us go faster?

Jake: What if we're doing our arms like train wheels? Does that make us go any faster?

Megan: And we're on the rails?

Rev: Jake transforms.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: That was the hidden thing you were supposed to do here!

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I'm moving at incredible speed.

Rev: Jake turns into a train.

Kim: OK. Looking at the map of The Forge, how many robots do I see?

Rev: Twelve.

Kim: OK. And are there still robots in the room where Tass is?

Rev: No. All the dots that you see now ... Like I imagine, you know, you've looked away for a little bit as you were dealing with Megan and Jake.

Kim: Mmhmm.

Rev: You glance back over, and all of them are in that main part of The Forge, and it seems like they're looking for something.

Kim: OK. Do I have a video feed of The Forge?

Rev: You have a video feed of the main room.

Kim: OK. So when I was looking at what Jake was doing, I noticed that the layout of Product Testing looked like a magic circle. With that in mind, I want to look at the video feed of The Forge and see if I can see another circle here.

Rev: Yeah. You look around The Forge, pivoting the camera a little bit to take in the whole room. You don't see anything around this room that looks like the spell's layout. And we didn't really talk about this on mic, but I think it's safe to assume that all of you know what it is you're looking for.

Kim: [Laughs] OK.

Rev: And what you have to do to break it up. You know, you all already know that there are three circles. The three circles power the middle one. You have to do something to disrupt those three circles to kind of open up the center circle. That is knowledge I think you all came through with.

Jake: That would have been in the homework.

Rev: Yeah, exactly.

Kim: [Laughs] OK, good.

Rev: When you are examining The Forge, you see all of the workers. You do not see Dion.

Kim: Um ... OK. When I first saw my ... The map of The Forge, when I had initially escaped to the Radio Room, was Dion accounted for, on that map?

Rev: He was not.

Kim: Well, OK. Well, I'll worry about that later.

Megan: Out of sight, out of mind.

Kim: Yep.

Rev: Yep.

Kim: Man. If Jake and Megan come out just onto that main floor, I am worried that they will be slaughtered by a dozen robots. So I want to look very carefully around the Radio Room that I'm in, and specifically up at the ceiling. Is there like a vent or like some ceiling tiles that I think I could climb up into?

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: All right. So I'm not doing that yet, but I am going over to the door and I am ...
[Exhales] I'm unlocking it.

Rev: Are you moving the boxes?

Kim: Not yet.

Rev: OK.

Kim: And then I am moving my video feed to the Welcome Center and waiting until I see Megan and Jake. Oh, and I didn't check this. Do I have a video feed of where Tass is?

Rev: You do.

Kim: I want to check on him. Is he still in the pod?

Rev: You cut into the Bioengineering Lab and you see a open pod on a table that is empty.

Kim: [Gasps] Oh. Oh, no. I'm going back to the video feed of The Forge.

Rev: You don't see him.

Kim: Fuck. Yeah, I — then I turn the video feed back to the Welcome Center and wait for Jake and Megan.

Megan: I know that, in theory, this should be good for us. Like, oh, Tass isn't still in a pod. But my instant reaction was like, "Oh no, he's escaped. We're gonna have to hunt him down and kill him."

Tass: My god!

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Jake and Megan, it takes you about half an hour, moving pretty quickly to get back to the lounge. And there's a tram and a closed ceiling.

Jake: "Oh, dang."

Megan: "All right. Look around for, like, an access panel or something. Maybe there's a way to open it from down here."

Rev: I think you can find the controls for this, but you're gonna have to Use or Repair and Advanced Item to kind of trick it into opening up when it hasn't been activated from the proper location.

Megan: OK. Would this be a stressful situation, since we know that Tass is in danger and Kim is in danger?

Rev: Yeah. When you know people are in danger that you have to get there fast, and it's a long trek to get there. That, you know, it took you like a half hour of running to get here, just knowing that time is burning away.

Megan: Yeah. And I definitely wasn't running the whole half hour.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: So every time I had to stop and breathe, I was just like, "Oh man, I'm wasting their — minutes of their life, because I am out of shape." So I'm definitely stressed right now.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Megan: Fifteen.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to get it to trigger the release, no problem. It rises up with both of you standing next to it, and you are in the lobby. Kim, inside of the Radio Room, you see Jake and Megan rise up on the tram.

SFX: SPEAKERS CRACKLE WITH FEEDBACK

Kim: [Through static] "Oh, hi. Oh, I'm so glad to see you."

Rev: Again, you hear this old technology crackle. It sounds like it's coming from underneath the desk.

Jake: Head over to the desk.

Megan: Yeah. I'm like, "Can you hear us?"

Kim: [Through static] "Yes."

Megan: "OK. What's going on?"

Kim: [Through static] "We were lied to. Tass isn't in the Med Bay. He's in the Bioengineering Lab. Or at least he was. He's not there anymore. I don't know what happened to him."

Megan: "Engineering. What does that mean?"

Kim: [Through static] "I don't know. I think maybe they were trying to read his genetic code for the scorpions."

Jake: "Oh, no." [Laughs nervously] "Oh ... Oh, no."

Kim: [Through static] "All of the robots are in The Forge looking for me, actually. They don't know that I'm here yet. I think that if I make my presence known, they would probably all rush the Radio Room, and then you would maybe have a kill box situation if you wanted it."

Megan: "Where would you go?"

Kim: [Through static] "Into the vents. We saw an armory on the far wall of The Forge, if you could ... I don't — I don't know what you've got on you."

Megan: "I've got a wrench and a bow gun. I don't think this is going to be great for kill box."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, if we can get to that wall. Like the gun that I have I think only hurts organic material. And I don't know if they count."

Kim: [Through static] "I think definitely not, from what I've seen."

Jake: "Also where's Tass, though?"

Kim: [Through static] "I don't know."

Jake: I know that last time this front desk terminal was used, like it had glitches and it kind of shut down and stuff.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Is it still, like, inoperable? Or could this thing be, like, finagled again in a different way with a different set of hands, to see if I can make it do anything else?

Megan: Or is it like the maintenance room that we lost access to last time is still off limits?

Rev: Yeah, I think you could try and hack into this system, now that you've seen some of the other computers around. What would you be trying to get it to do?

Jake: I want to try to use it to see if there is a way to locate Tass. So like similar to Kim, I don't know if there would be other video feeds or any way that this thing is keeping track of who's in what areas that we might be able to get an idea of where he is now in this facility.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Use or Repair an Advanced Item.

Jake: Seven.

Rev: All right. So you pick two problems.

Jake: There's an ongoing negative side effect.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Jake: And it doesn't work for as long as you need it.

Rev: So as you turn this on and start to go through the system, you do discover pretty quickly that they have Tass's genetic material on file.

Jake: Oh, no.

Rev: In fact, it seems like they have everybody's genetic material on file.

Jake: I knew soiling myself on the train was gonna come back to bite me.

Rev: [Chuckles] But you don't get any indication that Tass is in the facility. It starts to play back, tracking him from room to room where he was located. It shows him in the Bioengineering Lab, in The Forge, in the hallway outside of the Radio Room, in another room that you don't recognize, in another one attached to that, and then he vanishes from the screen. As you see this, it shuts down. And the ongoing negative side effect is that this terminal says out loud ...

Rev: COMPUTER: Subject no longer found. Next query.

Rev: And all the visuals from it are gone. And you have an impression that it will only respond to things spoken out loud. It's become Alexa.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Oh, no.

Jake: "OK. Tass got pulled out of the lab, into The Forge, into the hallway, into a secret room that I don't think we knew about, into another room past that one, and then he's off the system. So either he became so much some other creature that he's not reading as Tass anymore, or there are parts of this facility that are not mapped within this database."

Megan: Did he still look like Tass, when you saw him go through all the video?

Rev: He's not on the screen. It's just like a tracking of.

Megan: Hmm.

Kim: [Laughs] I hate this. [Through static] "OK, so what do we do? Is there a point in you still coming down here? Should I try to make my way back up to you?"

Jake: "I mean, if you've got a way to sneak out of that room, we might be able to come back down the elevator and, like, bar it from the outside or something, thus preventing them from following us without having to murder them all. But if you need a fight to happen to make you an exit, then we can come down there."

Kim: [Through static] "I mean, I don't know where this goes. But they haven't thought to check the Radio Room yet. And if I get lost or I end up somewhere bad, I can just come back here probably, and let you know that I can't find a way out."

Jake: "And if you think that any of these questions could be handled in a vocal medium, I can ask the computer that only speaks now. But I can no longer see the readouts."

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: "Computer, is there a path via the air ducts from the Radio Room to the Welcome Center?"

Rev: COMPUTER: Radio Room not found in inventory.

Jake: "Well, that's — we're fucked."

Kim: [Through static] "That's good, though. That maybe means that they don't know where this is."

Jake: "Yeah. They like literally don't even know it exists. Maybe that's why they're not coming to look for you. We'll wait here. See if you can navigate your way through those vents. And if anything goes wrong, just backtrack and let us know."

Kim: [Through static] "Oh, if anything goes wrong, I hope I'll have the opportunity to backtrack. OK. I'll see you soon. Hopefully."

Megan: "Be careful."

Kim: [Through static] "Yep. Yeah. Yeah, planning on it."

Megan: Fuck, I miss having telepathy.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: OK. Change of plans. I want to go over, relock the door to the Radio Room, and go into the vents.

Megan: Since we have to wait for Kim to try and find where these vents go, would it be possible to go back to the Workroom on the ship and try and make something to help us out right now?

Rev: Sure. Like what?

Megan: I'm thinking like an EMP thing, to disrupt the robots. So we can get past them and try and get to wherever Tass went.

Rev: OK. So, are you both going back to the shuttle bay? Or just you? Or ...

Megan: No, I think I would bring this up to Jake. "Hey, I think you should stay here in case Kim gets back and has to radio us. I don't know where exactly she'll have access to, but we know she can get to here. I think I have to go back to the ship and try and make something."

Jake: "OK. Be careful. I mean, we haven't been back to the ship, so it's possible that something is like there, or that our access to it has been revoked or whatever. So just be careful and yell out if you need me."

Megan: "All right. Yeah. I'm hoping like an EMP grenade or something to disrupt them. There's just so many of them, when we went in there last time."

Jake: "That would be perfect."

Megan: "All right, I'll try to be quick. If you hear back from Kim, come get me."

Jake: "OK."

Rev: All right. So Megan heads into the hangar. The ship is just where you left it. So I think you go into the ship. This is gonna be an Act Under Fire. You've got the space to build something, but you are trying to build an EMP inside of your spaceship, inside of a place that's protected by an energy barrier. There is a lot of things that could go wrong here.

Megan: Yeah, no. This is fine. I'm just gonna destroy our ship.

Kim: Worst case scenario, we can just push our spaceship back through the portal. Put it in Neutral.

Rev: Pop the clutch.

Megan: Jake, get out and push.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Five.

Kim: Oh!

Megan: I'm gonna use Intuition. This seems like something that I should not mess up.

Rev: [Laughs] Yeah, all right. I think that's a good call. So yes, you are able to put together ... You're essentially able to make a EMP grenade from the things that you have inside of your Workshop.

Megan: Excellent. I'm carrying it very carefully and making my way back to Jake.

Rev: So Kim, inside of the vents.

Kim: Yep.

Rev: Why don't you Survey the Scene?

Kim: Sure.

Rev: I feel like I have already said Survey the Scene more than I have said any other move of any game we've played for its full length.

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: We're very scared in this one. So we're like — we're really looking around.

Rev: Which I appreciate.

Kim: Yeah. We're doing — we're doing a lot of looking around. That's an eleven for me.

Rev: So that gets you a hold 2.

Kim: The one at the top of my list: how can I get out of here?

Rev: So you follow this along for a while, and pretty quickly it starts to climb up. And you get to a point where there is a little node sticking out of the ground. Like, you can see the surface of the planet. There is a similar node about 20, 30 feet away. It seems like these vents, much like the room, are old. That they're not the primary system anymore. But they used to vent outside. So you would have to break this open, same thing on the other one, and climb back inside of this vent that used to be the outgoing air from the lounge.

Kim: Gotcha. And looking at this node, does it look like it is easily breakable?

Rev: Not easily. You know that it has been able to survive the weather of this place.

Kim: Mmhmm.

Rev: And also this is not inside of the barrier. Like you are at the pockmarked section of the ground.

Kim: So then my next question. If I am trying to break this, get across the surface of this planet, and get down into another node, what can help me?

Kim: There were some old tools inside of the Radio Room. It seems like everything that was old technology, they kind of crammed into this one room in case they happened to need it again. And the pieces down there, you think, would be able to take apart the top of this node.

Kim: Yeah. Then if I can scamper my way back to the Radio Room, I'll grab some tools and then head back.

Rev: As you get back into the Radio Room, you collect these tools and you start to head back towards the vent. You hear something scratching around the door outside of the room.

Kim: Uh ... I'm not looking at it. I've seen that horror movie. I'm just back — back up in the fucking vents.

Rev: Yeah. You are able to grab a hold of the tools and get back up in the vent and start taking it apart. It takes you maybe a minute and a half to get this taken apart from the inside. So you know it'll probably take you about that long on the other side.

Kim: Then I think I'm gonna push open that node, pull myself out, and then just full sprint to the other one and start trying to work on it.

Rev: Yeah. You push this open and you start to sprint across the way. The first thing you notice is the immense heat on this planet. You're moving a little slower than you would expect. It seems like gravity here is a little heavier than what you're used to. Roll Act Under Fire to get this other vent open, with the pressure of this planet and the heat.

Kim: Sure. I rolled an eight. With a +1, that's a nine.

Rev: You are able to finagle this node off of the top of the vent that leads into the lounge. As you get it pried open and start to climb inside, you hear that skittering sound again coming from behind you. From the vent that you have opened, leading from The Forge, you see the face of Dion.

Megan: [Gasps] Oh, no!

Kim: No! No!

Rev: Peek out.

Jake: [Chuckles]

Megan: Fuck! Two very large scorpion claws grab on to the edge and lift his body out. His whole body is flesh colored. Those scythes have turned into his scorpion legs, and his two legs have fused together and his feet have bent backwards to create his scorpion tail. And he is smiling at you and starts to scuttle in your direction.

Megan: Oh my god!

Kim: Lob a smoke bomb, down into the other vent.

Rev: You're able to throw a smoke bomb down and scabble through this air vent. And Jake, in the lounge you hear ... [Scrabbling sounds] One of the panels on the floor knocks open, and there is Kim in an old vent.

Jake: I'll hold a hand down to help her out.

Kim: Yeah, I am scrambling out of that. "Dion is behind me! A scorpion! A scorpion Dion!"

Jake: "Ah!" I want to put the panel back.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: And stand on top of it. I want to get heavy. Can I move the desk?

Rev: It is attached. Like it is a — it is a fixture.

Jake: I'll move the computer. [Laughs]

Megan: There were like couches and stuff in here, right?

Rev: Yeah. Big, big plush chairs.

Jake: The heaviest thing that I think I can move, I would like to try and move over this opening.

Kim: Rev, you've seen Jake's muscles.

Rev: Roll Act Under Fire. I think this is less about finding something heavy, and more about the speed at which he is in pursuit.

Jake: OK. Yeah, he's knows how many Coca-Colas I can carry. He knows how many pallets of Coke I can carry. I'm a strong boy. And ... Seven.

Kim: Can I help? Can I help by helping him move some furniture?

Rev: Yeah. Roll Assist.

Kim: [Gasps] That's an eleven!

Jake: Sweet. One of these was a 1, so it can only get better. Fuck, yeah! Boxcars!

Rev: Nice. So you are able to drag a bunch of these very plush chairs over and start stacking them on top of this panel, sitting on them, just making as much weight as possible.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: They have a flat bottom so they don't have legs, so it's not popping up a little bit. And you hear this skittering get louder and louder, kind of a very slow clawing at the space below the chair, and then a titter.

Rev: DION: [Titters]

Rev: And then it skitters away the other direction.

Tass. You have been walking in relative darkness for a while. The air here is not great, but it's not as bad as you expect it might have been, had the full air filtration system not been turned on in the main building.

Tass: OK.

Rev: It's just stone all around you, and you have walked for a half hour. And it's very subtle, but the whole time you can feel that there is a slight incline. You finally come to a very nice, polished piece of metal, flat and wide. On it are etched ten runes. You recognize the spell.

Tass: I'm like looking at this. Like, does this read as a central point, or one of the outer edges?

Rev: It reads as one of the outer edges.

Tass: OK. OK. I think I take out my thermal knife and just start cutting through all of those symbols.

Rev: Yeah, you have no problem marring this. And as you do, there's just a faint shift in the quality of the air. Like, you know what it feels like when magic breaks. And you know that in this world magic isn't quite there, but there is a sense of some kind of pressure being let off when you mar this.

Tass: OK, now we're cooking! Is there anywhere else to go? Or is this just like the end of this little hall?

Rev: It is the end of this — and this is a ... Almost seems like hand-dug tunnel.

Tass: Wow. OK. I'm still — I'm feeling good. And I'm, like, even going through — just for the hell of it — just cutting through a little more. Just making sure that this is messed up. If anybody stumbles on it any time soon, they'd have to fix the whole thing before they could even reset it.

Rev: Yeah, no problem.

Tass: And then I'm gonna walk my happy ass back the way I came.

Rev: So back in the lounge. You're all sitting on fancy chairs.

Jake: Hell, yeah.

Rev: What now?

Jake: "All right. Well, we know where Tass was last spotted. So now that we're all together and we've got this EMP. I mean, I guess we gotta go back down there and see if we can decommission some of these bots and go after him."

Megan: "Yeah. I mean, it might be worth using it when we get down there to try and get to that armory wall, and see if they have anything else like this."

Jake: "The bad news is that now we know Scorp ... Scorpius ... Dion ... I'll come up with a clever name. He went back through the vents. Presumably, Kim, back towards the Radio Room?"

Kim: "Yeah, I guess so."

Megan: "Would there be anywhere else for him to go? Were there like a lot of offshoots or anything?"

Kim: "No, it was pretty much a straight shot to the surface of the planet. And then through this vent, to the Welcome Center. The planet's breathable, by the way. I wouldn't say that it's pleasant. It's really hot. And the gravity is kind of intense."

Jake: "Man, I don't see how we have much other choice, though. This seems like a bad idea with low odds, but I don't have another idea, period."

Megan: "Yeah. It seems like we would meet it on the other side, but we just don't know what's down there. We have to find Tass."

Jake: "Any other great ideas, or are we going down this elevator and just throwing a EMP grenade?"

Megan: "Yeah, I think we gotta get to that wall."

Kim: "Yeah. The only thing to keep in mind is that Dion for sure knows where we are. So there is a chance that they could be riding the elevator up to us."

Megan: Knowing that this vent was under a panel in the floor, is there any way we can try and, like, use the computer to see if there would be any other vent that is an access point to somewhere else in The Forge, or the Bioengineering Lab, or any other room down there?

Rev: No. Kim had discovered that these were all individually vented. That's why she had to go outside. So there's no vents connecting this place to that place.

Jake: I have a question. I don't know if there's a way for me to know it in the game.

Rev: Yeah?

Jake: I asked the computer about the vents, and then Dion was in the vents. Do I have any way of knowing or reason to believe that, like — as you've said, they are very well tapped in, despite not being a hivemind. That Dion, like, hears what I ask this computer, or knows what this computer knows?

Rev: Whoa. Uh ...

Megan: Are they on the same network? [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah. I mean, the computer system doesn't know about these vents. Kim knows that they are outdated, and she used some old computer technology to tap into these speakers and into the newer camera systems. So you have the distinct sense that there's more than one operating system set up here. How far each one goes, you're not sure. Or if the workers have a way to access them both.

Jake: OK.

Rev: But at the same time, just following the series of events, I think it's safe to assume that Dion knew about the vents because he tracked Kim through them once he got into the Radio Room.

Jake: "Is there anything else we want to ask the computer that might help us in this venture? Or ... I had the thought for a second that maybe we could, like, feed Dion a red herring, if he knew what this computer knows. That we could be like, 'How long does it take to run across the surface from point A to point B?' And then we go down the elevator. But I don't know if that's actually how this works."

Megan: "Oh. I wonder, are there alarms? Is there an alarm system here in any capacity? Is that something we could set off in a specific room, to maybe draw them towards somewhere? Like the engineering lab?"

Kim: "Maybe."

Megan: "I mean, I think it's fair to ask the computer, like, is there an alarm system?"

Jake: "Do it." I gesture to the computer.

Megan: I'm gonna give it a shot. I'm gonna go to the computer and say, "Computer, is there an alarm system?"

Rev: COMPUTER: Affirmative.

Megan: "Computer, activate alarm in Bioengineering."

Rev: COMPUTER: What is the emergency?

Megan: "Intruders."

Rev: COMPUTER: No lifeforms detected.

Megan: "Inorganic intruders."

Rev: COMPUTER: Acknowledged.

Jake: OK, let's get to the elevator.

Megan: Let's go.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: All right. You bring up the elevator and climb inside, and the three of you head down. Again, darkness. You notice as soon as you get down here, the air's starting to feel bad again.

Jake: "Hmm. I wonder if they're trying to flush us out."

Kim: "Yep."

Megan: "Smart."

Jake: Is the hallway Dion-free? [Laughs]

Rev: How? How are you going to find out?

Kim: I want to use my flashlight.

Rev: I think we've established that your flashlights don't illuminate the whole of this hallway. Because every time you've come down here, you have stumbled across Dion once you've gotten to him.

Jake: I'm gonna take a step off the elevator, and I feel like I'll learn pretty quickly whether or not the hallway's Dion-free.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Do I get immediately assaulted when exiting the elevator in the dark?

Rev: You exit the elevator into the dark, and you hear that titter again.

Megan: [Gasps]

Rev: DION: [Titters]

Kim: Yeah. Fucking hell.

Jake: I whisper, "Oh no, he's in here. Get that grenade. I don't know if the grenade will even help, but fuck ..." I'm gonna ready my gamma gun.

Rev: And there's some skittering. Sounds like it's on walls, then on the ceiling.

Megan: "I think we just have to run for it. We can't tell where he is."

Kim: "OK."

Jake: Try to book it to where we know the door to The Forge is. And I'm just waiting, finger on the trigger of the gamma gun, for when it comes time to shoot Dion.

Megan: Yeah. I'm holding the EMP grenade in one hand, and my bow gun in the other.

Rev: Is this a rush? Is this a sneak?

Megan: I think we don't know if he can see in the dark, and we know that we can't.

Jake: So a rush.

Megan: So a rush.

Kim: I think so.

Rev: Yeah. Everybody roll Act Under Fire.

Jake: Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kim: [Sighs] Eight.

Megan: Four.

Jake: Three.

Rev: You all sprint into the darkness. So I think right off the bat, everybody takes a point of Stress. This is a bad situation. Kim, with your mixed success, you are going to be able to get into The Forge. But you're gonna draw some unwanted attention, you're gonna take some damage in the scuffle to get through, or you're gonna leave something behind.

Kim: I'll take some damage.

Rev: OK. So the three of you jump off the elevator and sprint into the darkness, your lights illuminating just ahead of you. Megan and Jake, for the first time, you see Dion. He is hanging from the ceiling. He has large scorpion claws, and a tail that is his two legs

fused together and then hooked back. The scythes that you saw coming out of his sides have turned into his legs. His face is looking at you, but it's unnatural because it's the back of his head that is attached to his neck, not the bottom of his head. He titters as the light falls across him, and there is fluid pouring down off of his sides that Jake and Megan both get stuck in. His tail lashes forward, and this barb fires out of it and sticks into Kim's leg. She takes two points of damage.

Kim: So one is eaten by my armor, and I'm gonna roll my Keepsake to see if I can shrug off the other one.

Rev: This is piercing though, so it's armor-defeating.

Kim: OK. So that is a seven for my Keepsake. And on any kind of success, I take one less harm.

Rev: Yeah. So you take one harm, you are able to get through as this barb is in the back of your leg. Tass, you come out of the passage hidden behind the bed inside of the living quarters and make your way back into the break room and peek around into the hallway. In the hallway, you see all of the workers still combing this area very carefully, trying to figure out what has happened. As they are all searching the room, you're able to sneak down in that direction. And suddenly the door bursts open, and Kim comes bursting through the door. And you see all dozen of the workers stop in unison, turn and face her, and start moving in her direction.

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.