

Double Trouble (S5, E15)

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

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Tass: [Laughs] Just that phrase. Like, "You duck season, rabbit seasoned yourself into something," and I'm like ...

Megan: Into believing something was true.

Tass: How often do we do that?

Rev: At least once a season.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: It's a shame this isn't the intro.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: It's a shame this started in a whisper.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I feel like I'm good about being like, "This is why I think this."

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: But I ... Yeah, I make good points. So everybody's like, "Good call. I will now believe that."

Rev: Yeah. So we're going through a couple of talking points for one of the episodes we recorded. I said to Tass and Jake that at some point during an episode, you duck season, rabbit seasoned each other into believing something was true.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And then we came to the realization that at least once a season, that happens.

Tass: And I can't believe it's not more than that.

Kim: Jake, you should have been on speech and debate. Like, missed opportunity.

Jake: Yeah, my parents wouldn't let me do extracurriculars.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: They knew I would have been too good. [Laughs]

Jake: I would have been unstoppable. I would have been the leader of the world.

Megan: I would have become the president of the school. [Laughs] That's not the right word. Principal.

Rev: The president of the school.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Everyone, be on your best behavior. The president's on his way in.

Jake: I did do — I did run the entertainment page for our newspaper. So I did get to make a lot of arguments about like what movies were good and what movies were bad.

Tass: Oh, nice.

Jake: And I did broadly create a consensus among the student base, I think.

Rev: Nice.

Tass: That, I think, is why we keep getting into this duck season rabbit season thing, because I wrote the cartoons for my school newspaper.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: What were you saying? Right before we started recording, you turned to Jake and you said, "Save it for when the mic was on." Do you remember what it was?

Megan: Oh! [Laughs] That was us talking about topics for like just having conversations as a group.

Rev: Oh, I see.

Megan: And we just started really getting into debating cereals, and ... [Laughs]

Rev: Oh, that's right.

Megan: What serials were ... [Laughs] And this is the first episode of that show.

Jake: This is a backdoor pilot.

Rev: Yeah.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And part of that was around we're ... It's that time of year where we were gonna kind of spruce up the Patreon on a bit. So if you look in today's episode — and I'll remind you the next couple of weeks — but there is a link in the show notes for a survey about what we're doing on Patreon, what you'd like to see us do. Especially if you're not a current patron, about the kind of things that you would like to see us do. So again, that is in the show notes. If you could fill that out, that'd be wonderful. We'd love it.

Tass: Please.

Rev: But now, instead of asking for something, we're gonna give something.

Megan: Oh, I thought you were gonna say, we're gonna tell you something.

Kim: Demand.

Rev: We're gonna take something.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: We're gonna take some shit.

Rev: We've got the winners of the Halloween costume contest.

Jake: Oh, yeah!

Kim: Oh, yay!

Tass: What? Tell me.

Megan: Spooky boxes!

Rev: So again, these were chosen at random via our favorite method of choosing things: dice.

Jake: We threw dice.

Rev: We threw dice.

Jake: At a dartboard.

Megan: At a dartboard! [Laughs]

Rev: At pictures on the wall.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And whoever — whichever one stuck in ...

Jake: We assigned everybody a die, and then we threw them into Tass's mouth. And when he choked on one, that person is one of the winners.

Rev: Yeah. When he spit one out.

Tass: It took a while. I just ...

Jake: He swallowed a lot.

Rev: He's like Birdo.

Jake: He's just — he's like, "More for the collection." [Chomp]

Kim: Oof.

Rev: So our winners are Julie, C, Seamus, and Anthony V.

Tass: Congratulations!

Rev: Yeah!

Kim: Yay!

Megan: Gonna get some cursed boxes!

Rev: I know. So we will begin cursing into those boxes as soon as this intro is over. And I will reach out to those winners to get your address, so we can send you your spooky box.

Tass: I need to get a hold of TJ, so I can see how many toenail clippings I can acquire.

Rev: Oh, god.

Megan: Oh, my gosh.

Jake: You don't — I just kind of go into his trash can and sneak 'em out of there.

Tass: Well, that's kind of what I meant. I'm just trying to call him, to gauge the amount I can find.

Jake: Hey, how many nails have you clipped recently? And were they in your bathroom? Or ...

Rev: It's fortunate, because he keeps them in a jar on his nightstand.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: Likes them for a late night snack.

Megan: [Laughs] Oh, gosh.

Tass: And our track record on breaking into his house is not good.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: I think we have to pay more for postage if we're sending parts of people through the mail.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: If we tell people we're sending parts of people.

Kim: Ah, OK.

Jake: Yeah. And if we don't —

Kim: It's a good thing this podcast isn't going out to ...

Jake: Yeah, it's a good thing this is not a public record of a federal crime.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: We want to take a moment to thank everybody for submitting. And we also want to take a moment to give a special shout out to Lisa and her two nieces. Their submission was from Season Four. Lisa was Mother. And her two nieces, one of them was Dani, and the other one was a changeling who was also Dani.

Megan: So good!

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: It was amazing.

Rev: And they had a — they had a mimic. The changeling had a mimic with them, so.

Tass: Yeah, absolutely stunning.

Rev: So yeah, thank you once again to everybody who entered our Crit or Treat Halloween costume contest. Man, it's time to get into the episode.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Megan: "Tass, can you hear me?"

Rev: As you are yelling that, you hear a door open further down this hallway. And Tass peeks around the corner.

Megan: "Oh, thank God. There you are!"

Tass: "I thought you went ... But Kim went ... No, but then I shifted over ... I don't know. This sucks."

Megan: "Yeah."

Rev: As it comes to a stop, Tass, you see at the end of the hallway, a door slide open, and Jake and Kim step out of it.

Tass: I think I just turn to Jake, and I look down the hallway, and I turn to Jake, and I look down the hallway, and I turn to Jake, and I take a few steps back with the gun sort of out, just leveled in the general direction of past me.

Rev: And as you take a few steps back, you feel the pressure plate ...

All: [Laugh]

Kim: No!

Tass: I don't exactly have the gun leveled at him. "OK. You saw that, right?"

Jake: "Uh, yeah."

Tass: "Look, let's just keep going because you're still you. You remember shit, right? We still want to go beat Nash's ass?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "OK. Then I don't think there's much of a problem."

Jake: All right, I step on the pressure plate.

Rev: Tass and Megan, you hear from both sides of you these giant circles start to rotate. They both stop. And Megan, as you stand there supporting Tass, you see at one end of the hallway, Jake and Kim. And at the other end of the hall, you see Jake and Tass.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Jake and Tass, and Megan and Tass, and Jake and Kim. You all find yourselves together in a long hallway. What are you doing?

Megan: I'm propping Tass up on my shoulder, and I'm looking back and forth at both ends of the hallway, and I'm just going, "Ahh!"

Tass: "Oh, it's happening. OK."

Tass: This is the ... The me with Jake. [Laughs]

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: "We think we know what's going on. Everybody chill. Everybody chill. It's OK."

Kim: "No, I'm not chilling. This doesn't seem OK. Why are there two of you?"

Tass: "I know. It is not chill. There's something absolutely wild going on, and we gotta figure out what. But I think ... I think everybody's chill."

Megan: "No! No, we're not!"

Tass: I know! God! OK, raise your hand if you remember getting here on a ship."

Tass: And I raise my hand.

Tass: [Pained] "Do I shoot this thing? What's happening?"

Megan: "Come on, come on. You're OK. You're OK. Come on. He's not good. He's not good."

Tass: [Pained] "No. No, I am not good."

Tass: Does anybody else move when I say raise your hand if you remember getting here?

Kim: I raise my hand.

Megan: I raise my hand. And then immediately, like, try to pick Tass back up off the floor. "I do. I remember getting here on a ship. But seriously, he's not good. We have to make it back to the Med Bay."

Tass: "OK. Where's that? Oh, just on the ship?"

Megan: "I guess. Or something. Or Jake!" And I look back and forth at both ends of the hallway.

Rev: One Jake is wearing a very dapper suit with the vampire cape on it.

Megan: I look at the other Jake.

Jake: [Laughs]

Megan: "Do you still have your med kit?"

Jake: Both Jakes hold up identical med kits.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: And both Jakes kind of Spider-Man meme at each other. Like, "Me? You? Me? You? Me?"

Megan: "Somebody! He's not good!"

Jake: Both Jakes run over to the injured Tass.

Rev: Oh, that reminds me. Somebody roll for shortage.

Megan: I'll do it.

Rev: OK.

Megan: Five.

Tass: Trust.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Tech is five.

Megan: Damn it.

Kim: So fuel/energy. Fuel canisters, solar panels, etc.

Rev: Yeah. So the two Jakes run over to you, Megan, and both offer you their med kits.

Megan: "What the fuck is happening?"

Jake: Yeah. I think — quote, unquote — "fake" Jake works on "fake" Tass? Because real Jake is probably still extremely confused and has not made peace with this yet. So.

Tass: "OK. Everybody, I can't say the word chill enough. Like there's something going on that we don't understand. Jake ..."

Tass: And I'm pointing to the one working on the other me.

Tass: "Woke up in a room here like groggily, but remembers everything before. But they had, like, a conversation. Does this sound familiar to anybody else in the room? They had a conversation, and had to decide about getting inoculated and then came in. So those of us that remember getting here are together. We are the ones that know each other. We remember getting here. Carrington's in the ship. They had a Carrington here in a room that's somewhere else and, like, asleep. But, like, I trust him. I believe that he believes he's Jake. So I don't know if they're Immortals like Dion was? Or ..."

Megan: "I mean, he just helped me. We had to fight a bunch of Immortals that came out of eggs. I messed up. I messed up real bad. And he's not ... He's not doing good."

Kim: "How do we know that like, they're ..." I'm gesturing at normal clothes Jake and the dying Tass. "How do we know that they are not actual Jake and Tass and, like, god, I don't know. Are we ... Did something happen to us?"

Tass: [Pained] "Hey fuck you, man. You're the clone. God. Ow, ow, ow ..."

Rev: As the Jake who is helping Tass tries to use first aid on him, you see that he is inspecting the wounds. And there is something about this Jake coming into contact with the open wounds on Tass on the ground, that everywhere this Jake touches starts to fuse to the open wounds on Tass. And the two of them very quickly start to melt and pull each other into this large globule ...

Megan: Oh!

Rev: Of flesh and hair and arms.

Jake: And he's just screaming bloody murder as it happens. [Laughs] He's just ...
[Screams]

Megan: I'm just scrambling backwards.

Rev: Tass, you see Megan start to move backward as these two people start to fuse together, both of them screaming out and forming into something new. And as Megan steps back into the hallway further, you see their wall rotate away from you.

Tass: No!

Rev: What are you doing?

Tass: I think I'm gonna shoot this thing.

Rev: Roll Inflict Harm.

Tass: Nine. And I don't know if I go the repercussions of this first or not, but I want to do my Old One Two as well.

Rev: And what does that do, again?

Tass: If I do three or more harm in one hit, I follow up with a bonus attack.

Rev: Yeah, sure. You can do yours first.

Tass: Seven.

Rev: All right, Tass. So mark two Stress. You fire off two blasts at this mass as they have come together, and you see the electric gauntlet reaching out. And then right before you fire off that second shot, you see your cannon faced back at you and it lets off a blast, knocking you backwards down the hallway. And you take four points of damage as you are hit with this duplicate of your blast cannon. And that is not armor-defeating, because it is a projectile but it's non piercing.

Tass: OK.

Rev: But the thing on the ground, this strange amalgamation, stops moving and then slowly starts to bubble and melt.

Tass: "Oh, God dammit." And I think I just plop my head back onto the ground and lay there for a little bit.

Rev: Back inside the cramped hallway, you have all just spun away as the pressure plate was triggered.

Megan: I think I'm just banging on the wall, and I'm just screaming "Tass! Tass! No, no, no, no, no! I'm sorry! I'm sorry. I didn't mean to close it!"

Jake: Yeah I'm jumping up immediately, trying to get back to Tass.

Rev: It's the long way, but you find yourself facing Tass laying in a hallway. In the middle of the hallway is a bubbling, melting pile of what kind of looks like wax.

Tass: I am laying on my back, and just have the blast cannon sort of aimed up at you guys. "What was the first place outside Indiana that we went on a mission?"

Megan: I just am running down this hallway as I see him, like, on the ground. I'm just jumping over this pile of goo to get to him. [Laughs]

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: Yeah, I'm just running towards him, shouting, "We're the group that didn't take Carrington with us! We didn't take Carrington with us?"

Tass: "OK, that's good. What the fuck is Jake wearing?"

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: As my beautiful, gleaming profile bounds over the goo as well, med kit in hand, ready to tend to Tass's wounds.

Megan: I think I'm just bawling. I'm just, like, crying my eyes out. And I scooped Tass in just like a great big hug. And I'm just like, "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to leave you. And I didn't mean to get you hurt before. I'm so sorry. Are you OK?"

Tass: "No. No, no, no. Everything's OK. I'm just a little shaken."

Jake: Yeah. I want to kneel down with the med kit and start, like, patching him up.

Rev: Yeah. Roll it.

Jake: Eleven. He heals one arm and is stabilized.

Rev: OK.

Jake: "So those were fucking real, huh?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "We were talking about if they were, like, holograms or some shit. But that was not a hologram."

Tass: "Nope." And I — like I just keep hugging Megan, to stay upright.

Kim: "Oh, my god. Oh, my god. Have you seen any more of other us?"

Tass: "No, but he talked like they were all together. That Carrington was passed out in this room. Like, I don't know if it was the same room, but, like, sort of what came down around us and, like, almost stabbed us or whatever. And that they were ... They woke up there and finally got out and like, almost exactly what we went through. That they hit the rooms and started getting separated one at a time. But here's what's messed up: like, he remembered everything up until the point that we passed out or almost did, as we were coming in."

Megan: "What the fuck?"

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, like knew everything. Everything. And I believed him. Like, he wanted to help. It was just ..." And like, I'm just — I'm looking up at Jake, and I think I'm getting choked up. "It was Jake, man. This is really fucked up."

Megan: Yeah, I'm still just sobbing into Tass's shoulder.

Tass: "What happened with him?"

Megan: [Through tears] "He was in a hallway, and he said that he found a bunch of Immortal eggs. And we tried to take them all out, and he got ... He got really hurt. But he said that he didn't recognize any of the things that I said, as I tried to explain to him what happened. And he seemed like you. He seemed like you. And I'm so sorry. I feel like I've not been very good to you in this world. And it really was just awful to see you get so hurt, and it's my fault. And then I got you trapped in here, and I'm so sorry."

Tass: "No, it is not your fault. There are monsters here. And even if he is — was — something else, you didn't do anything wrong. We have to try to stick together, because there might be another Kim and Megan in here. Maybe even another Carrington somewhere."

Kim: "Well, the good news is that worry that you had, that maybe Nash was here? I don't think he's here. We found his room, covered in a bunch of grave dirt."

Tass: "Oh, yeah. OK."

Kim: "And a coffin. But nothing was in it."

Tass: "Oh, god. I can't believe you opened a coffin."

Kim: "Well, we didn't want to just leave it and not know. You know?"

Tass: "Where'd this little get up come from?"

Jake: "The coffin. It came from the coffin."

Tass: [Sighs] "I just about shot you, ol' boy."

Jake: "OK, we saw other me, and we determined that there had to be a way to differentiate between us visually. And so this was the best solution."

Tass: "Yeah, that's fair. Speaking of which, as far as I know, when other Jake was talking to me, like, he wasn't, like, getting new information. He wasn't downloading your thoughts or anything. Like he was unaware of you. So we might be back to square one here together. Like, what do we want? A safe word, or something. Like just so that we know it's us. Follicle."

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: "Sure."

Rev: What's a safe word that the other us wouldn't pick?

Tass: "OK. Not follicle."

Jake: "Vampire cape."

Kim: "OK."

Jake: "As far as we can tell, they probably haven't discovered this."

Tass: "What if they ask you about the vampire cape, though?"

Jake: "How would they know it's a vampire cape? They might ask me about the cape."

Tass: "It kind of looks like a vampire cape."

Jake: "Fucking ... OK, your turn." I put too much rubbing alcohol on one of his wounds.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: I'll take out my chalk and I'll just draw an X on all of our shoulders. "How did they have so many of our memories? Because where ... Where exactly does the divergence happen? It seemed like ... It seemed like they remembered coming up here."

Tass: "OK. I still don't know what this was. Some sort of flash clone, or an Immortal that did the Dion thing ... But like, as we got close, I don't think I'm the only one that got a little woozy, right?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "OK. I am just spitballing, but every single one of us left something down there. Getting sucked into a bag of goo that they were analyzing — they have my DNA. I know they got at least some of Megan's, right?"

Megan: "Yeah, I had to give it up for the scanners."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, I bet all of us left something behind. Let's say they grabbed that. As we got close, there were some sort of, I don't know, a field, a scan, something that hit us and then downloaded our memories into those bodies, and off they go."

Kim: "That would explain why they looked like us. But unless they had, like, scans of our brain or something. I mean, you can't clone a personality, memories, can you?"

Jake: "That must have been what that woozy thing was on the way up here. We must have gone through like ... Like a CAT scan or something, you know, radiation that, like, pulled our brains at that moment and put them into these bodies."

Megan: "I mean, I know that magic doesn't exist here, but we know that, like, telepathy does. You can be in each other's minds, to some capacity. So I guess that stands to reason that Nash would implement something that could take so much from our thoughts and memories."

Kim: Since we have other Tass and other Jake bubbling in a little mass over here, can I take a look at it? Try to see if I can make a little more sense out of these things?

Rev: Yeah. Survey the Scene.

Kim: That's a fourteen.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Kim: We think we know, but let's just be real clear. What happened here?

Rev: It seems that this other version of Tass was very badly wounded. And something inside of his system, when it came into contact with another like him, it tried to pull the mass that it needed to heal itself from that other body.

Kim: Oh.

Rev: Thus causing both bodies to be pulled into one.

Kim: Gotcha. So it was trying to repair itself by stealing material from other Jake.

Rev: Yeah, and it doesn't seem ...

Jake: Like it was a conscious thing?

Rev: Correct. Like it is a bug, not a feature.

Kim: Gotcha. OK. Is there something important I'm missing?

Rev: So before the other Jake and Tass merged, they were reasonable and rational. But when they merged, they attacked Tass. When they get into that combined form, they don't remember the who, what, and where of what they are. They only respond to external stimuli.

Tass: "So I'd say that is a pretty interesting defense mechanism. To divide us, confuse us, have us not trusting each other, and then have these things turn into monstrosities that could possibly murder us."

Kim: "Yeah, but I don't know. Like looking at, like, other Tass and other Jake. Like when that absorption was happening, it didn't really seem like it was a conscious decision on either thing? Seemed like a bug."

Tass: "OK. So not conscious for them, or not conscious in the design? That's the question. Because whoever made these things, if it's a defense mechanism, it's a good one. And if it's not a defense mechanism? Well, it is." [Chuckles] "Whether they wanted it to be or not. Either way, until I saw them mixing together like that? I mean, he had me thinking it could be us. It could have been us. That I wasn't real." [Shudders]

Megan: "We've got to get out of here."

Kim: "How? I am so lost in this place."

Jake: "Somewhere in here is a way to control where these are going. And I would assume that wherever that is, there is an explanation of where to go. So we need to stick together, and I guess just try and cycle through this thing until we get where we need to go. Or at some point they will just do their own thing, but I don't ... I don't know the rhyme or reason behind that, either."

Megan: "I put a marking in the hallway that we had fought the Immortals that just hatched, to kind of mark that that's where that was. So maybe we just keep cycling through until we find something new, and then check it out. If we have to leave, we mark that, so we can get through quicker. I can't puzzle this map out. Everything's moving, and it's ... It's too complicated. But we just have to keep going until we find something we haven't found yet."

Kim: From all of the kind of like chambers and rotating rooms that we've been in, are all four of us able to travel together? Does that seem like a viable option?

Rev: No. The very first one you came across was only big enough for one person. But I will say that from everything you've encountered, except for that one hallway, that all the other hallways you've encountered had rooms. So you could fit everybody into rooms. You just may not all be able to fit into the hallway as it rotates.

Jake: Like right now we have the burial room and the interrogation room.

Rev: Correct.

Jake: We could all get in the interrogation room.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And cycle.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: That seems like the way to do this.

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: Yeah.

Tass: I'm in.

Rev: All right. So everybody into the interrogation room, and then trip the switch.

Megan: Yes.

Rev: You feel it rotate clockwise, and it stops and there is just a bit of a curved wall at the end of the hallway.

Jake: Do a hop.

Rev: You feel it go counterclockwise, and you're back where you started.

Kim: "God damn it."

Jake: Hop.

Rev: You feel it start to rotate again counterclockwise, and it comes to a stop with a short hallway and a door in front of you.

Tass: "OK, this looks new."

Kim: "Has anyone been in this before?"

Jake: "No."

Megan: "I don't think so."

Kim: "OK."

Tass: "Yeah, let's go."

Rev: All right. You all head down this hallway through this double door, and it opens up into a small square room that is covered in bookshelves. There are old leather tomes all over these bookshelves, as well as some tables in the far corner that have dozens of drawings laid out all over them.

Tass: I want to look through all this stuff, see if there's anything that seems important.

Rev: Yeah, roll Survey the Scene.

Tass: Four.

Kim: Oh ...

Megan: Can I help out?

Rev: Yeah. How so?

Megan: I'm looking through the bookshelves as he's going through the blueprints, just kind of splitting up these materials so it's easier for him to focus.

Rev: Yeah. Roll Assist.

Megan: Eight. Sorry, bud.

Tass: It's OK. I like that good experience.

Rev: Yeah, Tass. You start to go through this and you see a bunch of different blueprints of the three circle spell that you all recognize, but it's different. Each one of them is different. And I think you realize as you start to look through them that, you know, you're familiar with the version that Anastacia had done. And you've also seen the version that Estin had done. But you know both of those were stolen from Nash. So either those were like the simple version or prototypes, but he is definitely enhanced this spell. And I think that as you're kind of all looking over this, for example, Jake sees the version that had the two different runes on top of the glass tower that projected all the energy here. You see another one that has a single rune that is different, and it seems like that one's intent is to make it so that one layer does not have to be directly above another. It allows it to shunt over in the direction that that rune is placed. There are all these different little alterations to it to make it more useful in a three dimensional space.

Tass: Oh shit. Look at this revelation I've just had, without any repercussions.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "This is wild. Like, look at this. Oh, my god."

Megan: "What?"

Tass: "Well, I have theories. I don't know for sure, but, like, some of these runes, like, they're just slight alterations from what we know of as the spell to do advanced shit. Like, you know, we're assuming, for example, that the circles have to be like matched directly

above or below each other, that kind of thing. This one makes it so that it can move around a little, be slightly offset. So like, who knows what was in that circle under the storm? It could have been something in a cave somewhere, or something in the storm, or the storm, or something like that. All of these, they have little things that just enhance how the circle works, instead of just making the circle work."

Megan: "Oh, no."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "Awesome. So now we don't even really have like criteria that we can make assumptions based off of and, you know, deductive reason from. It's just fucking no rules, just right. Anything goes."

Megan: "We gotta take this with us."

Jake: Yeah. Can we, like, fold these drawings up and pack them away with us?

Rev: Yeah, absolutely.

Jake: Cool.

Megan: "I mean, we've gotten pretty far with what we thought we knew up to this point. Hopefully it can get us out of here and get us back home, and then we can go over these with everyone back home before we go into the next world."

Jake: Before I do pack these up, I want to run this idea by the group. Like, "OK. So obviously Nash is gonna know that we've been here. We've made some changes, and we're gonna take his thing, but ..."

Megan: [Laughs] Take a space suit.

Rev: I'm wearing his clothes.

Jake: Yeah. "I've stolen his clothes. We're gonna take his battery, or whatever. Should we leave some things as if we never found them, in the hope that he then does not make

changes? Like if we take these, he knows we know this is how it works, and he could maybe modify it somewhere that we're going to go. If we leave these, he might go, 'Oh, they never made it here. So that is safe.'"

Kim: "Boy, I feel like Nash is gonna know, right? When we come back to our world, and he realizes that this part of his spell isn't working? I ... I mean, I guess you all know Nash better than I do. But I feel like if he had an inkling that we were on his trail, he wouldn't risk it. He would change as much as he could. I don't think he would be satisfied in the knowledge that we just didn't get to this room, so we didn't know the details of the spell. I feel like you don't live as long as Nash does without being extremely careful."

Megan: "Yeah, I don't know exactly all of the details on how this Nash differs from my grandpa, but he's not really one to just make assumptions. He's very smart and he's very safe."

Tass: "Yeah, I agree. And I think we have a lot more to learn from these, especially if we pass it on to some of the more advanced folks that understand these runes. Maybe we learn something or learn about how they work a little more, for whatever we see in the next worlds we have to go to. You know? I think that information is more important than just hoping he doesn't notice this."

Kim: "Than trying to maintain the charade that we didn't see this."

Megan: "I love the idea of misleading him, but I don't think this place is secure enough for him to be confident in that."

Jake: Then now I will fold them up and tuck them away.

Rev: OK.

Tass: All right. Is there another way to go from here? Like deeper in? Or is this just the room?

Rev: This is just the room.

Tass: OK.

Jake: Then back into the interrogation room and cycle again, I guess. Keep clearing fog of war.

Rev: It rotates clockwise, and stops at another hallway with a door at the end.

Tass: "Brand new."

Kim: "Yeah."

Tass: "Yep."

Kim: I'll open it.

Rev: Yeah. Inside of this room, there is a large bank of computers. Each of them shows different parts of this base. And you can also see a panel that has indications on it for these three very large circles.

Jake: "Boom. I think this is what we're looking for."

Kim: "Incredible."

Jake: I want to start taking a look at all this and see if I can parse it.

Rev: Yeah. Survey the Scene.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Jake: What can help me?

Rev: Yeah. As you look over these computer consoles and more specifically, these three screens that indicate the red circles, you see that there are some commands that you can put in to change the way that the circles move on the pressure plate. That you can set it

to only move clockwise or counterclockwise once for each tap on the pressure plate. But that's basically a you tell it always clockwise or always counterclockwise.

Jake: I kind of want to ask, how can I get out of here? It's a good directional question when we're in a maze. But I don't necessarily want to know how to get out of here. I kind of want to know how to get around here. So I think I might leave that one alone, because I think we can puzzle that out as we go. So I'm gonna go, with is there something important that I'm missing?

Rev: Yeah. As you look through these different screens and the readouts, you notice that that third circle, the one in the bottom right hand side, it doesn't have that same toggle switch of rotate this way or rotate that way so many times. It just has Closed Room and Opened Room. And right now, it is set to Closed Room. And I think that there is a larger image that shows you the entire layout of this base. And that is certainly the thing at the center.

Jake: Ooh, OK. Yeah. So I will explain how this mechanism works and can work. But then specifically, I'll be like, "And then down here, this is just closed or open, one or the other. And that's ... That's the center. So whatever was being shot up here is presumably there. And that could be where a battery is, but it could also be where something very bad is to guard the battery. Fortunately for us right now, it's closed, just in case."

Rev: I've just sent you all in Discord what the map currently looks like. And if you're in our Discord, I will have posted and pinned this image in the spoiler chat.

Kim: Oh, thank goodness. Bless you.

Megan: Yay!

Kim: Look at that.

Megan: I've imagined this four different ways, and all incorrect.

Kim: They were all not this.

Rev: It's way simpler. Like looking at it, it's so simple compared to what it feels like trying to get through it.

Kim: Oh, this makes so much more sense.

Jake: Is the clockwise or counterclockwise per circle? Or is it activate this, and like both of those circles are gonna go ...

Rev: Per circle.

Jake: OK. Not that I've got great plans for that or anything. I just want to make sure I'm understanding. "OK. So looking at this map. From where we are right now, if we set it to rotate counterclockwise, the circle that we've been like working our way around here. A couple of people could trigger it from the interrogation room. Or one person, whatever. But somebody's got to go in there to trigger the rotation, and then whoever stayed back would gain access to a room we have not yet been to within the circle. And I feel like we want to know what's in all of these before we do the big room, right?"

Kim: "Yeah."

Jake: "By the big room, I mean the important room at the center. Not the physically largest room on this map."

Kim: [Chuckles] "Yeah."

Jake: "So who wants to trigger the rotation, and who wants to clear room 6?"

Kim: "OK. So my double and Megan's double are the only ones that are unaccounted for."

Jake: "Yeah."

Kim: "I really want to know what's in room 6, but I feel like maybe we should stay behind in rooms that we've been in? So that if you encounter people in 6, you know that it's not us?"

Jake: "I was thinking maybe that like you two and Tass should go into 6, because then Tass has had eyes on you the whole time. And also he's got the big gun."

Kim: "OK."

Jake: "So if you find others of you, there's no question that there's doubles here."

Kim: "Yeah. OK. That works for me."

Jake: "OK. So I can go back into 5. I can trigger this one rotation. How do I know when to come back around? Or I guess from 6, you'll be able to trigger it also. So maybe I just hang out until you guys trigger a rotation, and I step out somewhere new?"

Kim: "Couldn't you just activate it and then end up in the magical lab, and then just hang out in the magical lab, and then we will ride another rotation to come get you?"

Jake: "Yeah, that makes sense. All right, well, all aboard. And by all aboard, I mean, I will go into a different room." So I'm gonna set this to rotate counterclockwise.

Rev: OK.

Jake: I don't see ... I mean, I'm gonna set the other circle, I guess, also to counterclockwise. I don't want it going randomly, but I don't have any particular feelings about which way it does go right now.

Rev: OK.

Jake: And I'm gonna leave the middle room closed.

Rev: All right.

Jake: And then, yeah, I'll step into 5 and get this to do one quarter turn.

Rev: All right. It does one quarter turn. And in front of Kim and Tass and Megan appears a short hallway that leads to a door. In front of Jake, appears the magic library.

Jake: I will step off, and I will wait.

Rev: OK.

Megan: I'll step through.

Kim: Yeah.

Tass: Yep.

Rev: Inside of it is, again, a bunch of computer consoles, and they are all flashing. You pretty quickly get the sense that it is informing someone that the circles on the planet have been broken.

Megan: Oh, shit.

Kim: Oh, no.

Megan: I'm gonna go start looking at them. See if I can shut this down.

Rev: Yeah. Use or Repair an Advanced Item.

Kim: Send another message that says, "LOL. JK."

Megan: JK.

Kim: "Everything's chill."

Megan: Is this a stressful situation?

Jake: Boy, it sure seems like walking into a room full of flashing consoles narcing you out to your arch nemesis would be stressful.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Megan: Ten.

Rev: All right. Yeah. You are able to get these shut down, and it seems that they are no longer broadcasting. And as you've got these all shut down and you're looking over the data that they were putting out, it seems that they have been sending out this data, each one individually, as a circle was broken. So one of them had been going off for a couple of days now. The other one a day, the other one a couple of hours.

Megan: "OK. So he knows. He knows that we've been going through and clearing it out. But I think I got it shut down to where it won't give him any more information from here, but he's gonna know sooner or later."

Kim: So a question, Rev, as I am parsing all of this out. When we went to this world, we synched up the timeline. So a day in Starhold is a day in our normal world.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Kim: Is that true only for us going through that specific portal, or is that true for anyone who is getting like details from Starhold?

Rev: Yeah, it is true for the reality. So as of right now, these two worlds are synched up.

Kim: Good to clarify.

Tass: While she's working on that, I'm just scanning, like, under the desks and under the tables and around the corners, and just looking for any hidden dangers or Megans or Kims.

Rev: Yeah Tass, why don't you Survey the Scene?

Tass: Eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Tass: What can hurt me?

Rev: As you're looking around, you do see that there is a little bit of blood underneath one of the tables. There is a vent, but that vent goes directly into a wall right now. So you get the impression that maybe someone was trying to travel through the vents, and it moved and something bad happened. So I think the thing that can hurt you is that everything in this place somehow shifts — not just the hallways. But if you try to go through the air vents, if you try to go through like water mains, everything seems to move.

Megan: Whoa.

Tass: Is there something important that I'm missing?

Rev: There are small droplets of blood that lead away from this vent, and towards the hallway at the other end of this room. This is the first room that you've been in that has two doors on it. And that other door exits out into a partially round wall. So this must have happened a little while ago. But you do notice that in that hallway, there are a couple of different white hairs — different lengths — and a couple of blue ones.

Tass: "OK, how's the computer stuff going?"

Megan: "I did what I could to shut down the signal that it was sending, but it's too late for some of it."

Tass: "Fair. So I think the girls went John Carpenter already."

Megan: "Oh, man."

Kim: "No ... I really wanted to meet myself."

Tass: "Yeah, I've got some blood splatter here that maybe they were in the vents when things shifted, and they went that way. Which right now is nothing, but is otherwise ... Well, depending on the orientation, could be where we're trying to get. Which is neat."

Kim: "Yeah. Vents does sound like me."

Tass: "All right, what now?"

Megan: "OK. Well, if they went somewhere out of this room, it's probably one of the places we haven't been yet, because we haven't encountered that yet. So let's ride another rotation out of here, and we'll leave through the door that we came through to meet up with Jake, and go from there."

Tass: "All right."

Rev: All right. You click it once counterclockwise, and you find yourselves looking into the magic library. And Jake is there.

Jake: I'm just sitting cross-legged with a tome open. I'm like, "Oh, hello. Welcome to my study."

Kim: Where'd you get that smoking jacket?

Megan: He has it on over the spacesuit.

Kim: Over the spacesuit.

Jake: Turns out the spacesuit is glamoured. It'll change into whatever I want it to look like.

Megan: [Laughs] "So I don't think there's gonna be any confusion over which of the clones is the real Megan and the real Kim, and which ones are the fake ones."

Jake: "How come?"

Megan: "Because I think they're already like a goopy monster."

Jake: "Oh ..."

Megan: "Yeah. We found some stuff. Tass said he saw blood and some, like, hair and stuff, so."

Jake: "Well ..."

Kim: "Oh, shit. Carrington's probably part of the Huddle as well."

Jake: Gross.

Rev: A Huddle! I love it.

Jake: That's what they're called.

Megan: What?

Kim: Sorry. If you've played Inside? There's just this sort of like orb of human body parts. It's called the Huddle. [Laughs]

Tass: I start tapping the floor to leave.

Kim: [Laughs]

Tass: Whatever that direction is, that's where we're going.

Jake: "Look on the bright side. That means that you guys don't have to watch yourselves turn into a horror and die."

Kim: "No. Instead, I get to kill an already horrific version of myself?"

Jake: "It's just a blob. You just get to kill a blob. We killed lots of blobs. We killed one like earlier today."

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: [Groans]

Tass: "I was really hoping they'd all just be chill and we would have, like, two teams of us to go out and do things."

Megan: "That's not what they were made for, Tass."

Tass: "I know, but ..."

Kim: "As long as they never got hurt, they would have been incredible."

Tass: "Yeah, I mean ..."

Megan: "That was never an option for me."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: As long as they never tried to heal each other.

Jake: Hmm.

Tass: Damn it. All right, one more turn?

Kim: Yep.

Jake: Yeah, I'll hop in with them.

Rev: You push it once more and it turns counterclockwise, and you come to a new hallway. Halfway down this hall, you can turn left or right. And if you keep going straight ahead, the hallway continues further down and ends in a door.

Jake: "All right. So down there on the left is gonna be the thing that's still closed. So it looks like we've got a couple of avenues here to still look through."

Megan: "Yeah, I think this first door on the right is a small one, and the one at the far end is larger. So maybe let's clear the small room first?"

Kim: Are there any more blood trails here?

Rev: Roll Survey the Scene.

Kim: OK. Ten.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Kim: What can hurt me?

Rev: There is a little bit of blood trail coming down this hallway, and turning the corner towards what would be the small room that Megan had mentioned.

Kim: Yeah, I point at the small room in the T. "Huddle's in there." Might as well go with old faithful. Is there something important I'm missing?

Rev: At the far end of this hallway is another of those double doors. But you can see that there is a sign above the door that reads Cloning Room. And from the windows in the door, you can see these four chambers very slowly glowing and pulsing, as four beings begin to form inside of them.

Kim: [Gasps]

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

Rev: 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.