

The Invitation (S5, E23)

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

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Megan: Guys, I'm so close to being in my new house.

Tass: No, you're in the studio.

Rev: Are you ...

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Is this your way of telling me you're moving into the studio?

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: No, because she's so close. So she's moving into the utility room.

Rev: Oh, no.

Tass: Oh, okay.

Megan: The lockers, actually. [Laughs]

Kim: I mean mine's empty, so ...

Megan: I've hollowed out all of the lockers. It's actually one big locker now. I just lay in it sideways.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: I thought — I was like, There's no way Megan's moving into the room with the Pennywise entrance.

Megan: [Laughs] With the scary sewer entrance?

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: But no, Megan, tell me about the house.

Megan: It's so cute! I'm so excited to finally have a yard, and it's got a little sunroom. I'm gonna take lots of cat naps in there. And there's, like, a weird little crawlspace in the basement that I did not notice. It was a door, very much blended into the wall.

Rev: I heard there was, like, a toaster under counter or something.

Megan: Yeah, it's like a toaster from the seventies. So it's like, mounted underneath the counter. And it, like, has a little like front panel that opens up. So you frontload your toast. [Laughs]

Rev: And then does it shoot out?

Megan: No, but it makes a wonderful, like, ding sound when it's done.

Rev: Oh, okay.

Tass: How is that again?

Megan: Ding!

Tass: Oh, nice.

Kim: You know, that little crawl space will be perfect for me when I visit, because then I can just sleep there.

Megan: I'm gonna be honest, I didn't recognize it until we had the inspection. And one of the guys who's doing the inspection opened it up and I went, "Oh my God." And I looked

in and I was like, "I am so, so relieved to not see a sleeping bag in here." But one of the features that I'm really having a hard time figuring out what I'm gonna do with, I need your guys' help on.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Megan: There's a flagpole in the front of the house.

Kim: [Laughs] What?

Megan: Yeah. Right now there's just a flag there, but I'm trying to figure out what I'm gonna do with it.

Tass: Boxer shorts with hearts on them.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Like a flagpole, like a in the ground, standing under the sky ...

Jake: Yes.

Rev: Not like house-mounted.

Jake: No. In concrete, like 25 feet tall, big fuck off flagpole.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Perhaps hang a bunch of ribbons and make a maypole situation.

Jake: Oh!

Megan: That's a good idea. My first ... My first thought that I pitched was tetherball?

Rev: Hmm.

Megan: I don't know how my neighbors would feel about that.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Very, very, very long tetherball.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: A lengthy game of tetherball.

Rev: I think you should leave it empty, except when you raise the skull and crossbones and you raid your neighbors' doorsteps for packages.

Tass: Nice, yes.

Jake: Okay, yeah.

Rev: But they always know what's coming, because there's a ceremony behind raising it.

Jake: Yeah. And I mean, if we've declared it first, then technically it's legal.

Rev: Yeah.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Don't ... Yeah, all right.

Megan: Just raise a white flag and being like, "Who are they surrendering to?"

All: [Laugh]

Megan: "They just moved in!"

Rev: I think that my housewarming gift is going to be a flag with, like, Jake's face on it. Like, just some really goofy random flag.

Jake: I'll be like, "This is great. Thank you." As I open the door to the crawl space and put it in there. Never see the light of day again.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: I think this is the perfect opportunity to make your coat of arms, Megan. And then just fly that from your flagpole.

Jake: Ooh, a bespoke flag.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: Nice.

Megan: I like it. Oh man, I've got so much crafting to do.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So before we get into this episode, I want to do a little ... A little bookkeeping, out of character. You know, you've got a little bit of time before they're able to reset the portal and you can go through to the next world. What are some things that you all want to do? You know, we talk about this off mic every now and then. We've got the whiteboard in the corner. But what are some things you want to try and accomplish during your downtime here?

Jake: Well, if you look at the aforementioned whiteboard in the corner, you see that I've been drafting some new plays for the team. So let's talk about football.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: That's what I want to do.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I want to start a youth football team.

Rev: I think you guys got enough NPCs that you could start a flag league. [Laughs]

Jake: [Laughs] Dude, for the sake of my mental health, I need that break.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: While people are getting the portal up and ready, we gotta go play some flag football.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Tass: I nominate as the announcer for our team, Robear.

Rev: Hmm.

Jake: He just gives a thumbs up from the announcers booth.

All: [Chuckle]

Jake: We have talked about finding the skeeters.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I need to do some god-appeasing, though I'm not sure exactly what form that takes.

Rev: Yeah. You know, I've been thinking about this. Do you have a sense of which gods you want to try to appease, or it's just ... Here's the thought I had. If you want to spend a point of Luck, I think that when you're playing through a story — and it's gotta be in this world, because obviously the gods that you all know, that you have served, are the gods of this world. If a moment comes up that would appease one of those gods, I think that you can get like a spider sense. Just like a ... You would know, like, oh, hey, I think this would do it. And it's not something you have to do, because it may be something you don't want to do. But you would at least know.

Jake: So I like spend a point of Luck before ...

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: An arc, essentially?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: If I don't spend a point of Luck, is there still the potential for me as a player to recognize an opportunity and seize it?

Rev: Yeah, it would just be without my assistance.

Jake: Yeah. Okay. I mean, yeah. I'm into that.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: I know at least one god that I don't want to do anything for.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Jake: And that's The Torturer.

Kim: Yeah ...

Jake: Probably.

Rev: Probably.

Jake: Probably. I mean, I'm not — look, I'm not gonna say with 100% certainty.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: No, actually, I am. I'm going to say 100% certainty. No Torturer.

Rev: Okay. So yeah, I will make a note for myself that when something comes up that could be the appeasement for one of these gods, you'll just get a little ... A little shiver up your spine.

Jake: Is this one point of Luck, period? Or one point of Luck, per god?

Rev: Um, I think ...

Jake: Cause I've got a finite amount.

Rev: Yeah, I think it's ... I think this is just, uh ... Just so that there's some cost on your part. I think just one point, period.

Jake: Yeah. Okay. Definitely.

Rev: Cause I don't think that you'll necessarily take every opportunity that might come up.

Jake: Fair.

Megan: I do like the idea of you choosing The Torturer, and then it's just through playing pranks on Tass.

Tass: Oh, god ...

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: But it's only things that would like torture us individually. So he, like, sneaks around the sewer lair and constantly just leaves puddles on the ground for Rev to step in with his socks, and ...

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Like things that would just slowly drive us to madness.

Jake: The Torturer is like, "This brings me back."

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "It's nice to kind of get back to my roots."

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: We also should figure out exactly what we're gonna do with NOEL, now that we have all of the equipment back.

Rev: Yeah. You know, that is or was — you know, possession supposedly is 9/10 of the law. It was property of IPT. And you do know that they've got a new ... A new space. Are you wanting to set NOEL up here someplace? Are you wanting to set her up in the castle? Or you wanted to take her back to the IPT? You know, I know the other thing that you all talked about was checking in on Cracked Mirror. NOEL would be a way to open another portal while they're prepping this one for your next world.

Tass: That's a good point. Wow. It's a good point, all the way across. Because we ... If we set it up at IPT, then we have potential for workable circles in several places. That spreads out our stuff. You know, not all our eggs in one basket kind of situation. But that is more opportunity for any of these places — you know, it's another target.

Kim: Yeah, the IPT has been compromised on more than one occasion.

Jake: What are the odds it happens again, though?

Kim: Well, like a third time? Fourth time? What would it be at this point?

Jake: That — why, that's bordering on the outrageous.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Yeah. It's the least likely place that they would expect us to put something valuable.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: There is no way these jokers would put something sensitive in the IPT again.

Rev: There's two places they won't check: the IPT, and the ground underneath Santa's workshop.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: That's probably true.

Kim: Just put it back in the destroyed village.

Rev: Just put this back where we found it.

Jake: I think putting it back at IPT would be a good choice. Mostly I want James to have access to it, because it was kind of his baby in the past anyway.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And that would be a place that he could do that. But again, is not literally — it's not just creating one super grenade-able spot that could completely disable all of our resources, so.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: True.

Kim: [Laughs] Something that I maybe want to do is check in with Strohm, obviously, and then see if she's done any digging about trying to track down Tiresias?

Rev: Hmm.

Kim: Like, this might be a long shot, but just ... I don't know. Nash is so scary. And if he can find, like, a super powerful seer, that just seems like really bad news for us. It would behoove all of us to figure out where that guy is.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: I imagine you're like, "Nash is so scary." And I imagined like a ... Like a talk show where, like, he's backstage. And we see him like, "Aww, thank you."

Kim: Live Nash Reaction in the corner.

Megan: I would like to use this time to check in with Damien.

Rev: Oh, yeah.

Megan: I know that he gave Jake his car keys before we left him at Boba Yaga's place, but we never did track the car down I think, right?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: So yeah, maybe ... Maybe start on that, and then ... Yeah. See if he wants to come hang out with me. Maybe go get a slushie or something.

Rev: Okay.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So you have all gone to sleep once again. And it's very similar to having gone to sleep once you got back from Starhold. Your sleep is dark and dreamless. And when you do wake up, again, it's been about a day and a half. It's not quite as long as that first sleep, but something about that place has drained you. But you're starting to feel like your right self again. Everybody's got things that they want to do that take them in different directions. So I think first we find Jake and Tass standing outside of the IPT, and they are each holding a box filled with the components of NOEL. James is with them, and he is carrying a couple of the monitors.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Hmm, it'll be interesting to get things set up here again. Going back and forth will be a bit, but I think that putting her back home was the right call.

Tass: "Yeah, I agree."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Does someone want to get the door? My hands are full.

Jake: "All of our hands are full, James!"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Uh, can someone reach the doorbell ...

Jake: "Hello?!"

Tass: "Have you actually got to come back here, while we were gone?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. I thought about what you said, that taking that Band-Aid off would be better done sooner than later. And I did give Margaret a call, and she invited me over to see what the IPT had become. That sounds bad, but it's very different now than when I left.

Tass: "Yeah, a lot more underground."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. I mean, that part I do like.

Tass: "Yeah. Pretty cool, right?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes.

Tass: "They did a lot of good work already, getting everything sort of covered, and ... Yeah, it's cool."

Rev: And as you're standing here, you know, you have seen before where the road had been covered over, and there were structural support so that this whole cavern was now available to them. And the building has continued to be built up. So there are more floors going up now than the last time you were here, even. And you do know that they're kind of building it the opposite of what they had before. Where instead of going down to go to the different levels, they're just building up now.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: Megan, you look confused.

Megan: I think I still don't visually, like, understand how this is ... Is this at the bottom of a pit?

Rev: Yes.

Megan: Okay.

Rev: The pit that the IPT fell down into, up at the top they just built the road back over it, put support beams, kept the building where it was, and then started to build the building up.

Megan: Right.

Rev: Since the bottom part had been destroyed by the cave-in.

Megan: So what if you stand at the edge of the pit and look down, you just see a building being built up?

Rev: You don't see anything, because they've covered the pit with the road.

Megan: Oh!

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: I think I'm imagining this is a very large hole, and then just a strip of road going across it.

Rev: Ah, no.

Megan: [Laughs] Okay.

Rev: So, no. That all of the ground has been covered over.

Megan: So there's a ceiling.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Okay. So it's got a hat.

Rev: Correct. It's got a —

Megan: We're good. Okay.

Rev: It's got a toupee, more.

Kim: It has a lid on it.

Rev: Yeah. It's got a lid.

Kim: So what happened to the theater? Is the theatre ... Like in terms of, like, what do the rest of Indianapolis ... What do they think happened? That randomly the theater just dropped into a sinkhole, never to be seen again?

Rev: Yes. They think that — the city at large thinks that there was like a sinkhole and it destroyed that theater and a couple of the other nearby buildings. And right now, it's just kind of open lots because ain't nobody investing money in theater right now.

Tass: And seriously, the amount of sinkholes I have had to experience working downtown for the last almost seven years, this tracks in real life.

Rev: No one would be surprised.

Tass: No.

Kim: Sinkholes are like one of my worst fears. Just the thought that, like spontaneously the earth could just open up and then it's like, yeah, then you die I guess. [Laughs]

Tass: Well I'll tell you what, when you come back around for, like, Gen Con, don't drive downtown.

Kim: Oh, Jesus Christ ...

Rev: But yes, there are like two or three additional floors built up, compared to when you were here last time.

Tass: "They are really getting work done."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes. It seems that having given up control to Anastacia, Margaret's got some very good ideas and Anastacia doesn't quite have as much to keep her hands full as Margaret did when she was trying to also run a theater. So it seems they're being much more productive, the two of them.

Tass: "Fair point."

Rev: And while the three of you are standing there looking at the building and the construction of this kind of cavern, the front door opens and Margaret comes out, still wearing the mechanical legs.

Tass: "Hey, how are you?"

Rev: MARGARET: Oh, not too bad. How are you?

Tass: "Oh, just, you know, holding this old supercomputer."

Rev: MARGARET: Yes. James said that you recovered NOEL.

Jake: "Yeah. Will you press the button for the freight lift? It's ... This is not light."

Rev: MARGARET: Oh. Yes, of course.

Jake: "Oh, god. Thank you."

Rev: She walks across over to the elevator and pushes the button.

Rev: MARGARET: I'll be quite honest, I thought that you might have some need for this. I wasn't sure we'd ever see it again if we did get it back. Glad to have her.

Tass: "Yeah, I don't know off the top of my head what we might need her for. But, you know, the organization having her back, I think, is the most important thing for everybody."

Rev: MARGARET: Yes, it will ... It will definitely give Jingles the ability to not keep quite so focused on all of the organization and communication, for sure.

Tass: "Fair. Yeah, I didn't even think about that."

Rev: The freight elevator opens, and the four of you step inside. The freight elevator, before it moves up, moves sideways.

Tass: Oh! Was not ready for that.

Rev: Yeah. Kind of a weird experience. You feel the elevator go sideways, and then it goes up once it is a little deeper in the building.

Tass: "What Willy Wonka shit is this?"

Rev: MARGARET: Well, we just wanted to keep as much of the old façade of the building as possible. But, I mean, that was all lobby. And we decided to keep the lobby the lobby. So this elevator's gotta jut in a little bit before it goes up to the newer stuff we're building.

Tass: "Huh. Okay. What is it? Are you just recreating the stuff that was destroyed, or are we making some fun new additions?"

Rev: MARGARET: For the most part, we're just building the things that were lost. The room for the lab. I lost my junk room, so it's harder to test people.

Tass: "Aw, that's a shame."

Rev: MARGARET: Yes. We were able to recover some of the things from it, but now it's going to become more of a junk attic. All the things that don't work quite right or seem a little dangerous will go into the attic.

Tass: "Okay. So where are we taking this? What's the sitch now? Do you have a spot laid out already, or are we gonna have to build a new level?"

Rev: MARGARET: No, for now, we were just thinking about putting it in one of the unoccupied corners of the lab. That's the benefit of building this new, as opposed to actually building it inside of an old theater. The lab was a little cramped and crowded before, because it had to fit where they were space. But we're not hiding anything anymore. So the lobby is still nice and has got places to sit and stuff, because we wanted to keep that element. It's got all the photos. But everything above that doesn't have to have the public façade.

Tass: "Nice. Are you still gonna rent the main floor out for weddings and stuff?"

Rev: MARGARET: Oh, no. The main floor was just annihilated.

Tass: "Oh."

Rev: MARGARET: And I'll be quite frank: if it hadn't been, I would have destroyed it myself to not have to deal with renting it out anymore.

Tass: "Yeah. There we go. Okay."

Jake: "This computer has been in the possession of Nash, doing kind of God knows what for a while. So do we have people ready to, like, put it in quarantine and give it a look over before we just grant it access to the whole network again and whatnot?"

Rev: James raises his hand and waves.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: I can guarantee that there's no one on this planet that has any better sense of the workings of Noel than myself. If there is any issue, I will find it.

Jake: "All right. Good."

Rev: The elevator door opens and you are on the third floor. It opens up into a very, very large room. Metal floors, metal ceilings, and no windows. There are tables set up. There are like emergency showers. There are contamination and quarantine sections. But you can see that there is one area of this room that is just empty and it's got power ports and wall mounts set up already. They are positioned in the way that you remember NOEL's screens being laid out.

Rev: MARGARET: All right. Over this way. We'll see what the old girl can do.

Tass: Okay. We'll start helping to get it set up.

Rev: It takes maybe 20, 25 minutes to get everything unpacked and get the monitors and the towers all set up. And that's when James starts firing up the towers. You notice that he does not put the mystical components in place. So he is really just going through and checking out the computer components first.

Jake: "Is Jingles on site?"

Rev: MARGARET: Yes, he is.

Jake: "Should we get him in here, just to make sure there isn't any like adverse effect of booting this back up? It's not gonna, like, rip anything out of him or it's not going to like trigger a Trojan horse that could still be in the system? It seems like it'd be better to have him close than loose."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Yes, you could bring him down if you want. It's ... It shouldn't be on the network, but I guess they are linked in a very special way. Yes. Actually, yes. Perhaps grab him. That would be good.

Jake: Okay. Yeah. I'll go fetch Jingles.

Rev: You head down to the second floor where Margaret tells you that Jingles has his office.

Jake: Wow.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "Wow. Jingles gets an office, huh?"

Rev: Well I mean, he is running the network for the IPT.

Jake: Well, he's a little — you know, he's a little robot elf. I'm a big man. I don't get an office.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Megan: He's here for more than 10 minutes at a time.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: CEOs have offices.

Kim: You work from home, Jake!

Jake: Shut up.

Megan: He's like, I want an office.

Jake: I want an office. I want the desk.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I want ... Chairs.

Rev: Uh-huh, uh-huh. As you're walking towards ...

Jake: I want clock.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I want desk clock.

Rev: As you're walking to his office, you also pass Dave Garmesan's office.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Son of a bitch.

Kim: Yes!

Megan: Good for him.

Jake: Is Dave Garmesan in his office?

Rev: He's not. You actually see him in Jingles' office.

Jake: I just quietly open the door. Go in there, take one of his nice pens. This is mine now.

Rev: Yeah, That's fair. It's engraved.

Jake: [Laughs] Oh my god! How does he have all this already?

Kim: He's employee of the month.

Rev: But Dave is sitting inside of Jingles' office, and he's sitting across the desk from a man — average height, brown hair, who's just sitting at the desk. And they're having a conversation.

Jake: Who is on which side of the desk?

Rev: Dave is on the side of the desk of like the visitor.

Jake: Okay, I will go knock.

Rev: The man behind the desk turns and looks at you.

Rev: MAN: Yes. Can I help you?

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: "Um ... I'm looking for Jingles?"

Rev: MAN: Oh. Yes. He should be here momentarily.

Rev: And he turns and looks at Dave.

Rev: MAN: Didn't you say that Jingles was gonna be here pretty soon?

Rev: And Dave looks at you and smiles. And the chest and neck of the man sitting in this chair come apart. And you can see that sitting inside is Jingles, and he climbs out of this human looking mech.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: I'm so disappointed. I was so hoping that this was going to be a Pinocchio situation, and Jingles got turned into a real boy.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: I was absolutely waiting for this man to unzip in some fashion.

Rev: Kind of like the alien host in Men in Black. Like, you just see like it unfolds mechanically.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: JINGLES: Oh hey, man. What's going on?

Jake: "That ... Not knowing that that's coming? That is terrifying."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah, right? Like this is my way to — I'm gonna be a field agent. You know, once they get everything up and running? And this is my way to go out into the world and not be noticed as ...

Rev: He just poses.

Jake: [Laughs] "You're gonna be a field agent?"

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah. I mean, they need somebody — they gotta have a group to take care of Indianapolis, and ... Man, I'm okay with this stuff. Remember that time I organized the group to save you all?

Jake: "Yeah, no, I remember."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah.

Jake: "Just you — I mean, you're sorta like the Oracle, though, on that one. You know, you sorta gathered everybody, but you weren't like boots on the ground from that point out. It just ... But I mean, that's what —"

Rev: JINGLES: Like hell I wasn't.

Jake: "Well —"

Rev: JINGLES: I was there with Wallace.

Jake: "Yeah. Okay. I mean, okay. Well, good for you. This is a very, um ... It's a very unassuming form you've taken."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah. Thanks. His name is Ben. It's my human body.

Kim: [Elated] No!

Megan: My god!

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: Perfect. I love it.

Jake: "Well, we need you up on four. I don't know if it matters if you are you or if you are Ben. Probably better if you're just you."

Rev: JINGLES: Okay, yeah. It gets hot in there.

Jake: "I bet."

Rev: JINGLES: Little musty.

Jake: "What's the skin made of? It looks very real. But does it breathe?"

Rev: JINGLES: Oh, skin.

Jake: "What?!"

Rev: JINGLES: Oh man, I'm just kidding.

Jake: "Oh, my god."

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: JINGLES: It's the same stuff as like an Impossible burger.

Jake: [Laughs] "The skin?! The skin is Impossible meat?!"

Rev: JINGLES: Oh man, I don't know.

Jake: "All right."

Rev: JINGLES: I was making shit up.

Jake: "Yeah, I'm picking up on that."

Rev: JINGLES: I didn't make this. They made it for me.

Jake: "You got a real vibe going right now, Jingles."

Rev: JINGLES: Man, it's been a day.

Jake: "All right. Well, come on. Let's go upstairs."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah, okay.

Jake: "Dave, good to see you."

Rev: DAVE GARMESAN: Yeah, you too.

Rev: And Jingles hops out of the chest of his android mech, we'll say, onto the desk and then down onto the floor and follows you.

Jake: Okay. Heading back up.

Rev: Yeah. So a couple of minutes pass, and Jake comes back upstairs with Jingles in tow. And he sits down next to James, watching over his shoulder, seeing what he's doing.

Tass: "How's it looking?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Everything so far seems just as I would expect. But I'm double checking to make sure that it's not set up so that it would look exactly like I would expect, and have that be the actual trick.

Jake: "Yeah, that's clever. I hadn't even really thought about that. You're a smart guy, James."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Thank you. I invented inter-dimensional travel.

Jake: "Yes, you did. Tass, Jingles has a human body now."

Tass: "Huh?"

Jake: "Yeah. Things are wild here."

Rev: JINGLES: I'm not human, but it sure looks like a human.

Tass: "Really?"

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah, I can get inside the chest. I saw Men in Black, and there were guys that had ...

Tass: "Oh, yeah."

Rev: JINGLES: But I'm bigger than them. So it's the whole chest cavity.

Tass: "Oh, my god."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah.

Tass: "That's so cool."

Rev: JINGLES: Yeah.

Tass: "Can we get mech bodies?"

Rev: JINGLES: I mean, you gotta get a little smarter.

Tass: "Oh, okay."

Rev: As Jingles is sitting down to help James, Margaret turns to both of you.

Rev: MARGARET: So I've had a little time to test your friend that you brought back. Seems that the talent that she's got is still there, but it's very difficult for her to do it. Her nose bleeds a lot when she's trying.

Tass: "Oof."

Rev: MARGARET: Sometimes her ears. But I'm sure it's something that she can train at, something she could work with. But it certainly is a lot of effort right now for her to try to do it on command.

Tass: "Okay. We knew there is a little something at least, but I guess just the disconnect between worlds, it's like kind of like she has to work a new muscle? Like she's got to stretch and strengthen that before it'll work without hurting?"

Rev: MARGARET: Maybe. Also, on some level, I think it's that her brain doesn't match any scans that we have of brains on this world.

Tass: "Wow. Okay. So she is technically alien, then?"

Rev: MARGARET: Oh, yes.

Tass: "Huh."

Jake: "I don't know that I feel that we should be encouraging her to strengthen this ability, then. If it's more or less useless that is kind of good, because it's a pretty fucked up thing."

Rev: MARGARET: Yes, I was wondering about that. She doesn't seem all that inclined to work on it, to be working here. I wasn't quite sure once the tests were done what exactly to do with her.

Jake: "I mean, one way or another, we gotta keep an eye on her. Whether she tries to go live a mere human life or not."

Tass: "Yeah. Because I mean, obviously we're not gonna force her to develop it or anything. But there are people out there that if they know what she can do, will force her to develop it."

Jake: "Or, like you're saying, if it just strengthens like a muscle. Like if it just starts developing again over time, we don't want her out in the world Kilgrave-ing people."

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: MARGARET: There is a little bit of data that we collected when she was testing it. The things that Landara and Ori described her being able to do. It seems like even at her peak here, she wouldn't be able to come close to what she was able to do before. Could she minorly influence the people in her immediate area? Possibly. Could she get them to protect her, to die for her? I can't imagine.

Tass: "Well, that's certainly good to know."

Rev: MARGARET: Just to give you a sense of scale. When we were testing Megan, the levels of mental energy that Megan gives off just having the device on, was more than Carrington was now giving off when she was exerting.

Tass: "Wow. Okay. Then I think a lot of this is just gonna be up to her. Ultimately, she just wanted to get away from where she was, which was a dangerous place. So if we can help her out by making her comfy somewhere, it may just be a non-issue."

Jake: "I don't know, man. I mean, even if she's not the danger on her own, even if she can't muster this ability without a nosebleed. If Nash knows to look for her signature, or if somebody else finds out that like there's a shred of this — if they want that ability, what's to stop somebody from making her into a brain in a machine that, you know, it's just the component they need to make this power a problem. Like I'm just saying, I think that no matter what, I maintain we should surveil her."

Tass: "Oh. I mean, I agree. Yeah. I just don't think we need to push to try to turn her into some sort of operative or anything like that, I think."

Jake: "No. God, no."

Tass: "Yeah, I think we can still try to make her comfy, keep her under the radar. Because, I mean, you're right. It's still a danger. Like there was a clone of her. Nash or at least somebody down on Hydarnes got her DNA somehow, so they're at least peripherally aware of her, and if not much more aware of her. Whether they know she's here or not is a whole different thing. But we might as well not chance it."

Jake: "Yeah."

Rev: MARGARET: Well maybe having a conversation with her or seeing what it is she wants to do just in general may not be the worst idea. She's pretty bored here.

Jake: "Where is she?"

Rev: MARGARET: Last I saw her, she was down in the lobby. They've turned one of the old coat rooms into a little library.

Tass: "Shall we, then?"

Jake: "Sure."

Rev: Yeah. The two of you head out of here and down into the lobby while Jingles and James continue to work, with Margaret kind of watching from the side. You head down into the lobby and you find a small little reading nook, four or five bookshelves and some plush chairs, inside of one of the old coat rooms. And sitting in one of the chairs leafing through a couple of magazines is Carrington.

Tass: "Hey, how's it going?"

Rev: CARRINGTON: It's going all right, all things considered. Not a lot to do. Bleeding a lot more than I'm used to.

Tass: "So weird question for you. Do you have any idea how they would have gotten your DNA to make a clone of you up on that station?"

SFX: CARRINGTON: I guess I don't know how they were collecting samples, but I'm sure I left some blood on Hydarnes.

Tass: "Uh, okay."

Jake: "What is this, now?"

Rev: CARRINGTON: You had asked before how I came to be on the Striders outpost, and I had said not to worry about it. It was no big deal. I was working with someone who was coming to make a purchase, and they wanted to use me as part of their bargaining. And I did not find out until I was there. And so I made it very clear that I would not be sold or traded, and fought my way out with the help of, uh, people who suddenly found themselves on my side.

Tass: "That's fucking brutal."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Yes.

Jake: "How were they able to even have that thought?"

Rev: CARRINGTON: I have no idea.

Jake: "Who was it?"

Rev: CARRINGTON: His name was Mazinsky. He was a fairly large crime boss. And I thought we were on the same page as to why I was working for him, but that seemed to not be the case.

Jake: "Do you have any idea what became of him after you got away?"

Rev: CARRINGTON: No. In my getaway, I was picked up by the Striders. And then that's where you found me.

Tass: "Sorry you had to deal with that. Really, the whole reason I'm asking is because we're just trying to gauge next steps here, so far as like, well, what do you want to do? You know, the guy that we're hunting, that we're dealing with, is a very bad man. He had our DNA probably because of just little things like what you went through just being down in that facility and leaving behind traces. We just weren't sure why he had yours as well, why we found a clone up there. So we're just not sure if you're on his radar."

Rev: CARRINGTON: What do you mean, what I'd like to do?

Tass: "I mean, it's a whole wide world out there. You know, the option's really yours. Just ... Are you gonna learn about this world? Are you gonna go back to your own somehow? Are you gonna stick around here and try to develop what you can do a little more. Like one way or another, you know, we'll probably try to help out, keep tabs so that if Nash is looking for you, that you'll at least have some people looking out for you."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Would he be looking out for me if he can clone me?

Tass: "That's a wonderful question. We did well and truly mess up his facility. So I don't know what's more or less work for him if he decides he does want to utilize you for something, tracking you down here or trying to rebuild all that, if he even has any traces of that left. I don't know."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Hmm.

Tass: "That's kind of the biggest problem here is we just don't really know where you're at, as far as on the radar."

Rev: CARRINGTON: I see. Well, I guess I'd prefer not to go back. I don't love the idea of being there because I assume if he does want me, that's where he'd look for me. As for what I could do, I was always very good at sales. I don't know if that's because of my innate ability, but I was a very good broker. You know, if you had like something you wanted to sell and to see who would pay the highest price for it, things like that.

Jake: "Well, we've got a friend who's in a similar business."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Oh?

Jake: "Yeah. She lives in — well, you don't know what Chicago is, but it's a little ways away from here."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Kim's mother, who has the auction house?

Jake: "Yes. She deals in rarities and antiques and whatnot."

Rev: CARRINGTON: I seem to recall Kim saying that she was rather powerful. Kind of a player in her own right that wasn't on anyone's side, really. Or at least not on Nash's side.

Jake: "That much is definitely true."

Rev: CARRINGTON: So someone that maybe if I worked for and was with ...

Jake: "You would be protected."

Rev: CARRINGTON: Yes.

Jake: "Yes."

Tass: "Damn, that's all a really good idea."

Rev: CARRINGTON: I like this plan.

Jake: "All right. Well, we'll give her a call."

Rev: CARRINGTON: All right.

Rev: Megan, we find you sitting on the hood of a car. It is late in the evening and the sky is filled with neon and fluorescent lights gleaming off of the metal of the car. And Damien walks over, carrying two slushies. And we pull back and see that you are sitting in a parking lot at Sonic. And he hands you one.

Megan: "You got me the blackberry, right?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. I can't believe you were able to find my car.

Megan: "Magical LoJack."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Did you just drive around on your moped, like pushing the button constantly until it honked?

Megan: [Laughs]

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: "Yeah. I used my telepathy and I just kind of, like, kept hitting the button and used that as, like, a magnifier until I could hear it kind of reverberate back, yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: [Laughs] I see, I see. Like when you're on your moped, you're kind of like a bat or a dolphin in the way that you echolocate.

Megan: [Laughs] "My bat radar, yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: That's really cool.

Megan: "Yeah. It was right here the whole time. Just ... I don't know how it made it to a Sonic, but ..."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Oh. Huh.

Megan: "Maybe it knew to look for you by the slushies or something."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, maybe. So, space.

Megan: "Yeah."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: How was it?

Megan: "Awful. It was really ... It was awful."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Megan: "I've always thought, like, space was really cool. I still think it's cool. It's just, you know, stressful to be there."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Kind of like being at the bottom of the ocean. Like, you think it's really cool, but then it's super stressful when you're there because your body is like, I'm not supposed to survive here.

Megan: "Yes, exactly. And I, like, didn't have any of my abilities. And there was always stuff trying to kill us in ways that aren't like things that are always trying to kill us here."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. Not ... Not having your abilities must have been rough.

Megan: "Yeah, it was not the first time it's happened, but just so different and really throws you off. But I mean, I imagine you kinda ... You kinda know what I'm talking about, huh?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Rev: And as you say that, he's walking a coin across his fingers and it falls and hits the ground. And he picks it up and tries it again. And it's a trick you saw him do hundreds of times before.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Megan: "How are you dealing with that?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: You know, it's odd because I'm not really sure what to do with myself now. Like, I don't have a purpose anymore.

Megan: "I mean, that's ... That's not true. Like, maybe the original reason for why you set out to do all of this is taken care of. But that doesn't mean you don't have a purpose."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. I guess I just haven't figured out what it is.

Megan: "I mean, when I went to the future and, you know, that was kind of the first time I really didn't have my abilities or I was at least aware that I didn't have my abilities, I still had to take on a role that was very new to me. But I ended up having to, like, be in charge of just a bunch of people who were just trying to survive, and I couldn't use magic to help them. And it felt so scary. But you just kind of have to take the tools that are available to you."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. Is there anything ... I don't know — I don't even know what it would be. I mean, is there anything I can do to help you all out? Like so much of what I was doing before, I couldn't help because that was part of the rules. And like, I want to help now, but I don't ... I feel like I would just be in danger a lot.

Megan: "Damien, I have magic powers. I have telekinesis. I can make things happen. I am always in the way and in danger and other people have to save me constantly."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: [Chuckles] Well yeah, If there's anything I can do ... I can't go back to that woods and just live there. It's, you know ...

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I've seen too much of the world to just live in a haunted woods in Russia.

Megan: "You've done so much over so much time. And yeah, you might not have the same powers anymore, but you have that knowledge and you have that same drive and that energy and kind of chaos that you're able to think of really interesting ways to try and tackle a situation. Like if you're not able to, you know, make a fireball, that's okay. There are so many people helping in so many different ways. And honestly, we need all hands on deck. You're not a demon anymore, but you're still you."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. And I mean, if I don't have a fireball, I can always make a Molotov cocktail.

Megan: "Yeah, man, that's what I'm saying!"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: All right.

Rev: And he walks around to the trunk of the car and puts his hand on it.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: You know, it used to be that I could open this trunk, and for the most part, whatever I needed in the moment would be inside.

Rev: And he flips it open and the trunk is empty.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Maybe I don't need anything but me for this.

Megan: "I think that's a great way to look at it. There's a lot of great stuff that you can contribute here. And if I'm being honest, I would love for you to not go back to live in the creepy woods."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah, me too. Wanna go for a ride?

Megan: "Definitely."

Rev: And he walks over and picks up your moped and nestles it into the trunk and closes it, and tosses you the keys.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I told you I'd let you drive.

Megan: "Hell, yeah."

Rev: Kim, we find you on the street outside of the subterranean lair, on the phone with Strohm.

Kim: "I think I have a better idea as to the nature of the ritual that Nash was trying to undergo in our world, our future. Nash isn't Nash anymore? I mean, he never was, like, completely himself, but he used to be under the influence of a god known as The Devourer. But when we knew him in our world, he was the host for the god of Death."

Rev: STROHM: Oh. So what was he trying to accomplish then? Why was he feeding everyone so much additional energy, making them more powerful?

Kim: "See, that's — that's the thing. That's what we found out. There are modifications to the ritual that he apparently added after he became the host for Death. It seems like by pumping the world full of magic, that was only the first half of what he was trying to do. It was to create some very nutritious livestock so that when the time came, he could harvest it. When he was coming to Chicago, right before I left? That's what he was coming to do."

Rev: STROHM: To what end, I wonder?

Kim: "I have no idea."

Rev: STROHM: That is a lot of energy, a lot of power. I suppose I could reach out to my contacts in the magical world, the wizards in particular, and see if they can make heads or tails of that ritual. If you don't mind me sharing, of course.

Kim: "As long as you trust them, which, you know, obviously you would only work with people that you would trust with that information. We swiped some of the plans, and any eyes that could look at it would be ... We would appreciate it."

Rev: STROHM: Very well.

Kim: "Thanks."

Rev: This deep blue SUV with darkly tinted windows pulls up next to you, and the front window rolls down and it's Al. And he nods at you. And he gets out and goes around to the back and opens the door, and Strohm steps out.

Kim: [Gasps]

Rev: STROHM: I thought I'd surprise you.

Kim: "Consider me surprised. Wow. Hi."

Rev: STROHM: I got a call from one of your friends about a prospective new employee. I thought I'd better get eyes on them myself, so I thought I could come down here and, well, see where you're staying.

Kim: "Uh, temper your expectations, I think."

Rev: STROHM: Oh, it's in a sewer. I ...

Kim: "Yeah. It's in a sewer. I mean, and it's — it's a nice sewer. Like, it's pretty tricked out as far as sewers go. It's still a sewer."

Rev: STROHM: Listen, you don't live as long as I have, made as many enemies as I've made, and started as many new lives as I have started without living in a sewer a few times.

Kim: [Laughs] "All right, then. You'll be right at home. Let's go check it out."

Rev: As you both start to head towards the entrance of the subterranean lair, Strome reaches into her pocket and she pulls out a black envelope that has a wax seal on it.

Rev: STROHM: Actually, before we get into any of that, I do have, well, a previous engagement. But it's one I thought you and your friends might enjoy joining me for.

Rev: And she passes you the envelope, and on the wax seal is the House of Strohm.

Kim: What is this?

Rev: On the front of this black envelope there is some gold scroll work, and it just has two capital M's.

Kim: [Gasps] "Strohm, is this the Monster Mash?"

Rev: STROHM: It is.

Kim: [Squeals]

Rev: STROHM: You and your friends are cordially invited to join me in the VIP box at the Monster Mash. And it starts this evening, so I suppose we better get everyone gathered up so we can go.

Kim: "Yeah, absolutely. Yeah." And I'm just, like, furiously texting everyone to get back to Indianapolis.

Megan: As soon as I get that text from Kim telling us all to gather back up so we can get ready for the Monster Mash, I text her back and I ask her, "Ask your mom if I can bring a date."

Kim: I reply back in all caps, "YES." And then a bunch of heart emojis.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: So we find the six of you sitting inside of a very lavish set of box seats at the Monster Mash. Strohm, Tass, Jake, Megan, Damien, and Kim. The place has changed since Jake and Tass saw it last. It's not quite as rustic. The seats everywhere have been upgraded. There are a lot more magical runes around, and the crowd is about twice the size as when you saw it the last time. There is a gong that echoes throughout this room, and a number of magical portals open all around the arena. And Strohm stands up inside of the box. She clears her throat, and you can hear it throughout the entirety of this room.

Rev: STROHM: Thank you all so much for joining us this year at the Monster Mash. Your entry fees have made me very happy.

Rev: And there is polite laughter around the room.

Rev: STROHM: As you all know, the winner and their trainer gets to take their pick of the entry prizes. Now allow me to introduce the trainer I have worked with the most, and the manager of this facility. She will be introducing this year's combatants and the brackets. Please, a warm round of applause for Maddie.

Rev: And a portal snaps open at the center of the pit, and Maddie lurches out of it. She is coughing heavily, and blood is running from her eyes and ears. And she collapses onto the ground, the sand around her turning maroon with her blood.

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.