

Shifting Skin (S5, E25)

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

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Tass: My new boss started listening to the show.

Megan: Oh!

Jake: I'm so sorry.

Tass: Oh, I'm so excited. So Courtney, this is your shout out when you inevitably catch up. Yay!

Jake: Yay!

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: And is there anyone that Courtney, you said your new boss ... Is she replacing anyone that I need to structurally adjust inside ...

Jake: Need to rearrange the IPT?

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: The podcast reflects real life, so.

Rev: Yeah, yeah.

Jake: We've got our finger on the pulse of the staffing changes.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: I guess they'd replace either Margaret or Reeves, so.

Kim: Oh.

Rev: Okay.

Kim: Well, okay.

Rev: We were looking for a replacement for Reeves, since she's stuck in a magic circle in another dimension, so.

Tass: Yeah, that's true. [Laughs]

Rev: This works out. Well before we get into this week's episode, just a few things. We had mentioned that we had set some new Patreon goals, some of them based strictly around the number of patrons. And we are halfway ... We're not halfway to that goal, but we've ...

Jake: From where were when we announced it?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: To it. We're halfway.

Rev: Started from the bottom ...

Megan: Now we're here. [Laughs]

Jake: Now we're partway here.

Rev: Halfway here.

Kim: We started from 380, and now we're ...

Rev: Yes.

Jake: Started at three eighty, now we four hundy.

Rev: Getting towards that 420 where we will get to play some Devil, Aim For Me. Not even play, but release.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

Rev: Release the Devil, Aim For Me!

[Beat]

That was nothing.

Jake: All this is nothing. This whole thing is predicated on a 420 joke, man. It's all nothing.

Rev: Yeah. Yeah.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Everybody just sit in silence and think about ...

Megan: Think about what we've done. [Laughs]

Rev: What we've done.

Jake: Everyone bow your heads in shame.

Rev: Yeah. It's time to let the recap roll.

Megan: [Laughs]

Kim: We have a Chosen tier!

Megan: Never mind. Come back. Come back, Come back.

Kim: Come back! Come back! We have more to announce!

Rev: What? Tell me, what else do we have to announce?

Kim: We have an opening in our Chosen tier. So this is the tier where ...

Rev: That's right.

Kim: Once a year, you can come hang out with all of us and we'll do a whole weekend of playing games. We've so loved doing our Chosen weekends the last two years, and ...

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah. So there is ... There is room for one more Chosen.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Should that be something that you are interested in.

Rev: Yeah. So you can head over to Patreon.com/TheCritshow to find out information about everything to do with Patreon, including that now available Chosen tier. And now ...

Tass: Now?

Kim: Okay. Yeah. Now you can go.

Rev: Okay. Now —

Megan: Wait, wait, wait!

Rev: Oh, yes?

Megan: I'm just kidding.

Rev: Oh.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: Anyone have any announcements or any ... Any final business? I hereby motion to close the intro.

Kim: I second.

Rev: All those in favor?

Tass: Aye.

Jake: Aye.

Kim: Aye.

Megan: Filibuster!

All: [Laugh]

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Kim: "I'm the acting head of the House of Strohm now, so I have to go oversee the blood duel."

Rev: As you turn to speak to the audience at large, there is a soft "whump" sound, and then a cluster of the fae start to burn as two dozen iron nails fire out of the seating directly in front of them.

Megan: I think I'm running over to the edge of the box where we're at, and I'm just putting my hands on the edge of it and I'm throwing out all of my mental energy and trying to focus in on where this thing is.

Rev: The room around you erupts into chaos. People start rising from their seats, moving towards the exits. You see the energy of all of these creatures bubbling up in your vision. Lights start to dim all around you until there is only one person in this room that is glowing. And as you turn to look at them, they're one of the few people who are not

moving. She sees you looking at her and holds up one of her hands, and in it is a small crystal which she squeezes and it shatters. Six portals pop into existence as the crystal breaks, and everyone starts to rush through them. Your eyes narrow in on her, and she's sitting in the third row smiling at you. It's Anastacia. She gives a small nod and then vanishes from your sight.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Megan has focused in, trying to figure out who is responsible for this. Jake and Damien and Kim and Tass, all around you, portals open up and the contestants and the audience of the Monster Mash start to pour through them, into these other locations.

Kim: Do I get the sense of my voice is still on loudspeaker?

Rev: Yes.

Kim: "Honored guests and esteemed participants, the House of Strohm urges you to please make your way to the main exit. There is an unseen assailant who is putting the Monster Mash and the entire supernatural world at risk. Do not raise a hand against one of your brothers and sisters. We will sort this out. Please make your way to the main exit safely."

Rev: Will you read your move Apollo's Gift for me?

Kim: When you Manipulate Someone using information gained from a vision, treat a mixed success as a full success and a full success as an advanced success. But on a fail, your truths are seen as lies by bystanders for the remainder of the mystery.

Rev: Yes, absolutely. I think that without Apollo's Gift, you wouldn't be able to do this. But I think with that move, we can justify you trying to manipulate this group of monsters. You know, we have manipulated supernatural folks in the past, but they kind of had to be open to be reasoned with. So I have kind of got an idea in my head of how many of these creatures are already fighting, how many of them are excited for the fact that they can now lash out at enemies that they had here, who maybe they would have been held accountable for before if they had lashed out, to have a sense of how many of these

people you might be able to just get out as opposed to them escaping through these portals, to these other locations. So roll Manipulate Someone.

Kim: [Sighs in relief] Nine. But I have a +1 Charm, so that's a ten. So that's an advanced success!

Tass: Nice. Hell yeah.

Rev: All right. So what do you get on an advanced success with Manipulate Someone?

Kim: On an advanced success, not only do they do what you want right now, they also become your ally for the rest of the mystery. Or, if you do enough for them, permanently.

Rev: All right. So yes, there are about 30% of the folks here who are wholly loyal to Strohm and her business, and who are not excited by the idea of jumping into this fray. What are some of the monstrous groups here that are not instantly in on this? I think that the werewolves and the vampires are groups that are fighting already. But what are some of the creatures that we see heeding what it is you are saying and heading for the exit, even some of them staying to help guard the exits?

Kim: Well, I think for sure the contestants as well as the coaches for the Monster Mash?

Rev: Yeah, that makes sense.

Kim: As well as, going off of the world that I came from, I have to assume that the wizards and the magical people would be allied with Strohm, as well as any soothsayers that may exist in this time.

Rev: Yeah. Because we don't really have, like, oracles yet, but there are certainly still soothsayers and fortune tellers, people who can kind of glimpse that veil.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah. So I think that we see those groups, specifically the contestants, go to the portals, stopping additional folks from going through them. Including Spark, who you did

not see before, but you know that he would have the opportunity at the end to face off against the winner of this year's Monster Mash. So he is there as well.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: The soothsayers and the wizards all head towards the exit, and they actually start to make portals to send folks home.

Kim: Okay. Good. Good, good.

Rev: Megan, you have just seen Anastacia crush a gem that opened all these portals, and then become invisible in the stands. What are you doing?

Megan: In the moment before she disappears, or even right after, knowing that I can't see her, but based on what Jake has said, she's probably still there. Can I Jinx her?

Rev: Roll Act Under Pressure.

Kim: Oh, boy! Oh, boy!

Megan: Is this Act Under Pressure due to a monster, phenomenon, or mystical effect?

Rev: Yes.

Megan: Great. So with my Just Another Day move that I took with my last level up ...

Rev: Uh-huh.

Megan: I get to roll with +Weird instead of +Cool.

Rev: Oh, nice.

Kim: Hell yeah. Hell yeah. Hell yeah.

Megan: Thirteen!

Tass: Hell yeah.

Kim: Woo!

Jake: Damn.

Rev: All right. I'm not gonna have you roll Jinx as well. This was just to see if you could get it off. So you get a hold 2 for your Jinx.

Megan: Great. I'm gonna go with the target loses something that you will soon find.

Rev: All right.

Megan: The other thing that I would think of to do right now with this other hold is to try and interfere with it turning into a chameleon. But I know that, like, you said that maybe that's not something that should be able to happen. I know that I've done that with like vampires turning to mist. And that was maybe too much.

Rev: Yeah. That like ... Okay, so the example we're referencing was back in season three, and you had interrupted Mercury turning into mist. Where it probably should have been like interrupting her escaping. Like that was the thing she was trying to do. You know, she turns into mist. She's trying to flee. You Jinx her, you stop what it is she's trying to do, which is to escape. And say the ... The vent starts blowing out air. Like the air conditioner kicks on. Because you're making the environment unlucky for her, or lucky for you. So I think we can still do the things we talked about. Just narratively, we've gotta make sure they're coming from the environment, not like affecting a creature's abilities.

Megan: Right. Like, I can't interrupt what they're trying to do by their choice to do it, but I can disrupt ...

Rev: Physiologically, yeah.

Megan: What they're trying to do.

Rev: That said. In this instance, you absolutely can interrupt with this creature's trying to do.

Megan: Oh! Okay.

Rev: Yeah ... Eh, we'll figure that out later why this will work this time. But yeah.

Megan: Okay, then I do that.

Rev: Okay.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: So as these monsters start to guard the portals and the wizards and the soothsayers move outside, you see the back of Anastacia flicker back into visibility as she sneaks through one of the portals.

Megan: I just yell out to everyone. "It looks like Anastacia. I don't know if it's actually her or not, but it looks like her and she went through that portal." And I point at the one that it went through.

Tass: I'm charging in.

Jake: Same.

Kim: Yeah. Follow.

Megan: I'm heading over to where I saw her sitting, to see if there was anything I can glean from her position.

Rev: Yeah. As the three of you head through the portal and Damien and Megan head over to where this Anastacia was sitting. And Megan, on the ground, you find ... It seems like the bottom of a pocket was ripped open. There are a handful of silver bullets, more iron nails, a wooden stake, and some shotgun shells filled with salt scattered on the ground here.

Megan: I scoop them all up and put them in my pockets.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: That's like monster hunter gear, right?

Megan: "Yeah. This is everything you would want to have on hand if you were trying to kill a bunch of stuff. But it seems like that's what this creature is doing here anyway. It staked a vampire. It shot a bunch of iron at some fae. Like, it's targeting a bunch of different creatures."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Shit.

Megan: "Yeah. I don't know what's going on, but it's really bad. Let's ... Let's go." And we're gonna head through that same portal that everyone went through.

Rev: Through the portal the three of you have entered. And again, you get this small sense of vertigo as you pass through, and you come out into a forest. There are maybe two dozen people here. They are packed pretty tightly around the opening of the portal, some of them scuffling with each other, some of them trying to hold others back. The leaves here are a deep green still, and the sun is high in the sky.

Tass: Do I see Anastacia?

Rev: Roll Investigate a Mystery.

Kim: Oh, god!

Tass: Ten.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Tass: Where did it go?

Rev: You were fairly close behind Anastacia as she came through here. And as I said, this group is pretty tightly packed around here. But you follow the trajectory that this Anastacia was moving, who thought she was invisible. And right where she would be is a werewolf who is goading on a fight between two other creatures.

Tass: I think I'm confused by that. Because spatially, that should be Anastacia, who I'm looking for. So what's being concealed here?

Rev: There is a small amount of green liquid that is running out onto the ground from what seems like the ankle of this werewolf. It's not blood. You've seen werewolves' blood before. This is not something that would be coming out of a werewolf. Whatever this is has sprung a leak, and it's losing something.

Tass: All right. I think I'm just gonna step up and pull my shotgun and level it at this thing's back. "I'm your huckleberry."

Rev: As these words start to leave your mouth, you hear a small crunch, and you get the idea that you were being watched out of the corner of this creature's eye. It knew you were approaching. There is a puff of pink smoke, and then a sharp pain as this creature teleports from in front of you to directly behind you, plunging a large dagger into your back.

Tass: [Pained] "I'm really good at visions, you guys!"

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: This is three points of damage, not armor-defeating.

Tass: Okay.

Rev: But you have got this blade buried deep in your back.

Kim: Oh, no! Does it still look like a werewolf?

Rev: It does.

Kim: Okay. I don't think this is gonna have the same effect because I don't think it's actually a werewolf. But I'm gonna whip out my silver censer and just try to whack it.

Rev: Yeah, roll Kick Some Ass.

Kim: Ah, there we go. There we go. That's the four.

Rev: You pull out the censer and start to move towards this beast. And it pulls the dagger out of Tass' back and spins and thrusts at you. You take three points of damage, not armor-defeating, as this long blade stabs into you.

Kim: Oh baby, I don't have armor to begin with. I take all three.

Rev: All right. Jake?

Jake: I whip my hands forward and magical chains spring from them and fly towards this creature.

Rev: Roll Use Magic.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: What is your effect?

Jake: I'm going to trap a specific person, minion, or monster.

Rev: Yeah. These chains of energy spring up and wrap around this werewolf's arms and neck and feet. And as the chains settle into place, Megan and Damien come through the portal behind you.

Tass: "Son of a bitch!" I'm getting up to see what we got here.

Jake: Does this ... I don't know if I can determine this right now. Does this seem physiological, what this thing is doing? As it would for a doppelganger. Or does this seem like a magical effect or a phenomenon?

Rev: It does seem physiological.

Jake: Okay. Then I don't think I can dispel it.

Rev: Hmm.

Jake: "What the fuck is this thing?"

Kim: [Pained] "I don't know. I probably shouldn't pull this out."

Tass: "Oh, shit."

Kim: "Right? No, probably shouldn't?"

Tass: "Sit down, sit down. Here."

Kim: "Okay."

Tass: "Let me help."

Kim: "Don't pull it out! Don't pull it out!"

Tass: "I might have to do that. Just let me take a look." And I want to see if I can help her out a little bit.

Rev: Yeah. What are you doing exactly?

Tass: I mean, med kit out. I think I pull the thing out, and ...

Rev: It bites you.

Tass: Oh, no!

Rev: As you grab the handle, it bites you. You take one point of damage, armor-defeating.

Tass: "Oh, mother-! God damn mimics! Come on!"

Jake: I look at the thing and chains. "I had ruled out doppelganger. What are you?"

Rev: ATTACKER: I'm the end of all of you.

Jake: "That's nonspecific. Why are you doing this?"

Rev: ATTACKER: Fuck you.

Tass: "Oh, let me shoot it. Oh, let me shoot it. Please, please."

Megan: I step forward and I, like, put a hand on Tass' shoulder and kind of pull him back. And I just look at this thing, and I want to try to connect with it telepathically and Tune In again.

Rev: Megan, roll Tune In.

Megan: Eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2.

Megan: Who does it regard as its biggest threat? Like it seems like it thinks it's better than us. So who is it afraid of?

Rev: I think you're partially right. It isn't afraid of any of you, but it sees all of you as threats.

Megan: Who is it going to attack next?

Rev: This comes to you in a way that is shifting. Like as you get the answer to this, it changes, then it changes, then it changes. And you get the sense that it is reevaluating the order in which it would need to kill the things here as it takes in every new moment.

Megan: What is it planning to do right now?

Rev: You know that it has a failsafe that it can activate that is an anti-magic field. And it's trying to play possum to wait for the right moment to activate it.

Megan: Would that be something we could access while it's trapped?

Rev: Roll Investigate a Mystery.

Megan: Okay. Nine.

Rev: You get a hold 1.

Megan: What is being concealed here? Where's this kill switch?

Rev: You saw it shatter a crystal, and it enabled some magic portals around the room. But it was magic that seemed like it was already set up, because you know that they travel to different locations to do the fights. And you'd all talked about activating them to move the crowd through. And so it has some crystals on it that can activate dormant spells and deactivate active ones, when crushed. You saw it hold one up in its hand earlier, and you can see just a little lump in its fur where it's got one hidden underneath some layers of fur.

Megan: I think I take all of the stakes and rock salt and iron nails out of my pocket and hand them to Damien. "Well, you drop some of your toys back there, but I think you're still holding on to some." And I want to use Telekinesis to pull those crystals off of its person.

Rev: Roll Telekinesis.

Megan: Twelve.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 2, and mark 1-harm.

Megan: I'll definitely go with suffer one less harm, to get rid of that. And then I don't have to choose anything in particular about size because this isn't bigger than a person.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: But I'm gonna go with something is held fast. Instead of it being like something is held in place like frozen, I want these crystals to not be able to be crushed. Like they are frozen in place as they are moving towards me.

Rev: Oh, okay. So like, they are held fast in their structural integrity.

Megan: Exactly.

Rev: You reach out with this energy and pull a set of these crystals. And you see that their eyes follow them, and then narrow.

Megan: "We just want to talk."

Tass: "Some of us just want to talk."

Jake: "I understand that you intend to kill all of us here. It seems like you're probably going to succeed in doing that one way or another. I'm just curious, why? Did you lose someone?"

Rev: ATTACKER: Because you're all threats.

Jake: "What are you?"

Rev: ATTACKER: The cure.

Jake: "What are we threats to?"

Rev: ATTACKER: You're the worst kind of threat. These monsters, these abominations. And you sit beside them, treat them with kindness. You disgust me.

Jake: "Oh ..."

Megan: "You're mean."

Jake: "Yeah. You're the worst."

Megan: "How did you know to look like Anastacia?"

Kim: "And Strohm?"

Rev: ATTACKER: I study my targets.

Tass: "Who are you? Do you know us?"

Rev: ATTACKER: I don't know you. I know of you."

Megan: "Did someone send you?"

Rev: ATTACKER: No.

Jake: "You're like a solo act?"

Rev: ATTACKER: No.

Megan: "If you're not one of us, how can you do what you do?"

Rev: There's a long moment of silence. But you can see resignation in this werewolf's eyes as it realizes there's no escape from these chains. And the mouth of the werewolf yawns wide, and a man's head sticks out from inside of it. There are electrodes stuck to his head and face, and wires running down into this flesh suit that he's wearing.

Rev: ATTACKER: Figured out what some of you monsters could do. With a little science, we turned your abilities into our own.

Jake: "Who is we? Who do you work with? What do you call yourselves?"

Rev: AWOKEN: We are the people who are aware that the myths, the legends, are real. And we're gonna do something about it. We're The Awoken.

Kim: Do we recognize this man?

Rev: You don't.

Kim: "Are there more of you here?"

Rev: And the mouth of the werewolf slowly closes up around him again. And then he looks and sounds like you, Kim.

Kim: AWOKEN: [In Kim's voice] I guess you'll never know.

Rev: Jake, you get a very clear sense, in this moment. You could please The Executioner.

Kim: Oh ...

Jake: Man, I was thinking about it anyway.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: And as he is struggling in these chains, you see more of that green fluid just leaking out of the ankle. You all have been standing here a couple of minutes talking to him. And as this green fluid is leaking out, you can see that the hair on the werewolf part is like starting to kind of sludge off. And the suit just seems to be decomposing very slowly as it loses whatever the fluid is that's leaking out.

Tass: Is the group of other monster folk that had come through the portal, are they watching any of this? Has their attention turned, or are they still squabbling?

Rev: I think they're watching. They felt the magic burst up when Jake used his spell. And, yeah.

Jake: I think without, like, averting my gaze from him, just kind of to the rest of the group. "Any final questions?"

Tass: "Nope."

Megan: "I don't understand why you had to do all of this. We truly want supernatural beings and regular people to be able to live together in harmony. This doesn't need to be this way."

Rev: AWOKEN: We're food, prey, targets to them. You're living in a dream world.

Tass: "Man, you're the only proof here that monsters exist."

Rev: AWOKEN: That's the hope. Give you all something to fear when you walk down alleys at night.

Tass: "Oh, man. I don't think there's a one of us afraid of you anymore."

Rev: AWOKEN: I don't walk out of here? Not a bad score. What, 18 to 1?

Jake: Oh, I roast him.

Rev: Jake's wand licks with flame and engulfs this man. As he burns, this set of armor falls off of him, and the mimic stuck in Kim shrivels as well.

Kim: [Pained] "Oh, god."

Rev: As the smoke starts to clear from this fire, you can clearly see that it is just a man in a suit made of doppelganger skin that was being controlled by the electrodes connected from it to him.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: And that brings us to end of session experience.

Tass: Woo!

Rev: That was horrible.

Tass: That was scary.

Jake: That took a lot out of you.

Rev: It did.

Kim: You look very uncomfortable voicing that guy.

Rev: I had the idea for this, and it was just one of those things. It was like, I have to do this. I hate everything about the things that this person is gonna say. Don't forget, everybody. When you get a chance, punch a Nazi.

Tass: [Laughs] Yes.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: It's tough! Because like, gleeful evil is so much fun to play.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: But there are certain kinds where it's just tough.

Rev: It's ... Like, it erodes your ... [Shudders] Anyway.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: So did we conclude the current mystery?

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah, we did. We sure did.

Rev: Yeah. What the hell was going on?

Tass: Murder-man.

Kim: Yeah. Someone was attacking the Monster Mash and trying to, like, kill a bunch of powerful supernatural people in one fell swoop. Make it seem like the monsters were destroying each other.

Megan: And they had a plan.

Rev: Yeah, And they had a plan.

Megan: Like it was get everyone outside, instigate a fight, get back in. Like, plant the stuff for the fae.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Megan: And then everyone ... It was just like, everything kept being triggered.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Sighs] It was really, like, cool how it was set up, in like a we never knew where to look next.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Like it was very ... Like it was a good mystery for us to be like, just heads on a swivel, like looking over direction, not knowing where to look, because we know that this thing can shapeshift.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Shudders]

Tass: I had to look in so many mouths.

Rev: It's true.

Tass: Ugh.

Rev: You didn't see anything you liked.

Tass: No.

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

Megan: Yes.

Kim: We saved the entire supernatural community.

Rev: Give or take.

Jake: For now.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: That werewolf that was framed.

Rev: Yeah, that's true. Strohm, who was framed.

Kim: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Rev: Maddie!

Kim: Maddy.

Megan: Who was poisoned.

Rev: Absolutely saved Maddie. Did we learn something new or important about the world?

Kim: The existence of ... What are these people?

Rev: The Awoken.

Megan: The Awoken.

Rev: And did we learn something new or important about one of the hunters? We learned that Jake is on the path to reopening his connection to the gods.

Tass: Oh, yeah.

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: Did we learn that? Does it matter — like, is that out of character, or is that in character? Like ...

Rev: I ... Ooh ...

Megan: I guess we don't really know that that connection was established. It was just ... Jake was ...

Rev: Yeah. Um ...

Megan: Getting rid of this guy.

Jake: It's not — I mean if we're ... This is not something I'd conceal.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: So if they didn't know it already, they'll know it ...

Rev: In a couple of minutes.

Jake: Yeah. In a minute.

Rev: Yeah. So that's all four. Everybody gets two points of experience. Eight gear points, for those of you keeping track at home.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Does anybody level up?

Kim: I do.

Rev: Ooh. What are you gonna take?

Tass: Nice.

Kim: I'm going to take a move from another playbook.

Rev: Okay.

Kim: I'm going to take Do as the Supernatural Do from The Pararomantic. I think this is one that Rev, you and I maybe have to chat about off-mic.

Rev: Yes.

Kim: So you can take a unnatural move from your supernatural guide's playbook if they're a hunter. If they're a monster, choose a move from a suitable supernatural playbook, or the Keeper may offer you a custom move instead. I think ... I mean, it makes sense for Strohm to be my supernatural guide.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: And to, like, in light of this mystery involving her and me stepping up in the house of Strohm in this timeline, I think it makes sense that I, like, get a move from her.

Rev: Yeah, we'll revisit this.

Kim: Yeah, yeah.

Rev: I want to go away and write some monster moves.

Kim: Yeah, I thought that'd be fun.

Rev: Yeah, that's good. All right. So does anyone have any questions about the mystery? It's over now. Is there anything you want to know?

Tass: I think all of mine got answered there at the end.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Where's their HQ?

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: Yeah, I think I still have a lot of questions, but none that ...

Rev: Can be answered?

Megan: Can be answered. Yeah. Like I'm very curious ... Like Anastacia is gonna be pissed that somebody, like ... That she was on somebody's radar like this.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Also, how did they gain access to Maddie's office?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Like, just by looking like Strohm? Or, like, I feel like there had to be more defense than that.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: This was so cleverly planned and infiltrated.

Rev: Yeah. It seems like, you know, they had a lot of stuff on them. And you have some of it, so you'll be able to, I think, take some of that stuff and figure out like, okay, so what does this crystal do, or what did this thing do? Because they had quite a few tricks up their sleeve. You know, unfortunately, you didn't really get to examine the doppelganger skin, but it had its own set of moves based off what I thought, like, okay, if a doppelganger could mimic the flesh of X, Y, and Z, here are the moves I think it gets. So ...

Tass: Nice.

Megan: Something that I found really interesting was the moment you said that they have a crystal that they're gonna break to enact a anti-magic field?

Rev: Mmhmm.

Megan: Like I got scared.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: For a moment. Like, I think kind of we've been talking a lot about how Megan felt, going into these other worlds. Like into the future and into space, and suddenly not having her powers back. And then coming back and just now getting them again, and then having the sudden knowledge that that could be taken away at any moment?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And that this has been a murderer of people all evening?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Was like really scary in that second. It was good.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So I think we find all of you being dropped off by Strohm. You're outside of the subterranean lair, inside of her large SUV. Where is everybody headed?

Jake: I feel like we should go warn the agency about this attack. I mean, tell them about the attack and warn them about the perpetrators.

Megan: I think I also want to head to the IPT. But first, I'm gonna see Damien off and walk him to his car.

Kim: I'm gonna hang back by the car for a bit.

Rev: Oh, okay.

Kim: "Strohm, why didn't you see that attack?"

Rev: STROHM: Ah. I was wondering if that was going to escape your notice.

Kim: [Chuckles] "Sorry."

Rev: STROHM: There have been times in my life where the necklace, the visions are fuzzy. Or the things that it shows me are multiple. Or sometimes, it just shows me darkness. From what I've been able to glean over the years, these moments are when something large is happening. Something that, well, is unpredictable. And I seem to be in one of those states right now.

Kim: "I see. I'm sure my friends and I going off to different parallel worlds and messing things up probably isn't helping get that consistency?"

Rev: STROHM: Yes. And dealing with the old gods, and dealing with the dead gods' avatars. I imagine that that all has a little bit to do with it as well.

Kim: "Well, listen. You have plenty of tricks up your sleeve that don't involve that necklace. I'm just really happy that you're okay."

Rev: STROHM: Yes, that was quite an ordeal. I think I'm going to, um ... I think I'm actually going to stay here for just a little bit. I was going to grab Carrington and take her with me to talk with her about her possible future, but I think I'm just going to stay here for a little bit. I'd like to see you off before you go. I've got something for you, but not right now.

Kim: "Stay here, like in the sewer?"

Rev: STROHM: God, no. Seems like it's a little crowded down there, and I don't think a sewer is the best place to conduct a job interview.

Kim: "I think Rev would probably freak out if he saw you, so."

Rev: STROHM: Oh, yes. I forgot he's down there.

Kim: "Yeah."

Rev: Her eyes narrow.

Tass: [Laughs] Oh, that's where he was all this time.

Rev: That little shit.

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: Pulls out a radio. "Fire."

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: I give her just like a huge hug. And then I go find my friends.

Rev: I think we'll jump over to Megan and Damien, walking towards Damien's car.

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: So what are you gonna do now?

Megan: "I mean, this opened up a whole extra can of worms before we head to this next world. I mean, this is getting way more real and way more dangerous on this side. So I don't know. I think we just need to figure out how to kind of kick start getting a plan in action for however we're going to bring everyone together. Because that was really scary."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: How are you doing? I know that ... I mean, you are The Empath, after all. Bringing everybody together, I know how much it means to you.

Megan: "I'm not good. To see so much hatred in someone's face over something that just doesn't have to be that way. Like if everyone could just set their sights on the same goal and make that be living happily and in conjunction with one another ... Like, this can be good. I just don't know how to make everyone want that. It seems so obvious to me, and it's not. And I get that that might be a, you know, idealistic way to look at the world. But I don't know how to not fight for that."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Look, I know that in the future that you were told about, you were supposed to be the person who unified everybody. That your presence brought

them all together. It's a lot of weight. But that was you doing it someone else's way. I know that you're gonna find a way to do it, and do it the way that's right for you.

Megan: "I just need to know that it can be done. I think maybe we need to get over to that other world and see how things are going there. I know they kind of had a head start on us. It was not pretty when the boys went over there. But maybe it's better now."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: All right. Well, you know how to get a hold of me if you need me.

Megan: "Yeah. I'm ... I'm sorry. I thought that date was gonna be more fun. Kinda, you know, spectator sport. I didn't think that it was going to end up like that, but thanks for coming with me anyway."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah. I mean, the event itself was a little ugly. But getting to see you do your thing, notice stuff that no one else was noticing, take charge of a situation ... It was kind of hot.

Megan: [Laughs] "Yeah, I guess you're right. It probably was, huh? Well, here's your car, and I don't know what you're gonna be up to right now. Do you have plans?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: I was actually thinking about talking to Anastacia. Since I'm not sure what to do right now, very least I could be, I don't know, like training in some hand-to-hand combat or getting better with guns. I mean, she's fucking training a park ranger. I'm sure she could help me out.

Megan: "She trained me, so yeah, I definitely think you could learn a lot from her. And that all ... That all sounds pretty hot, too. So I think it'd be a probably really useful way to spend your time, though."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Megan: "Okay, well I'm gonna go."

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: Yeah.

Megan: "Um, I'll see you when I'm back from this world, huh?"

Rev: DAMIEN O'DOYLE: All right.

Megan: "All right. Well ..." And I just — I grab him and I kiss him.

Kim: [Squeals]

Rev: He puts his foot up.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: That was actual Kim. And then I immediately run away to give them more privacy.

Megan: I Jinx her. And she, like ...

Kim: [Yelps in surprise]

Rev: She falls into a mud puddle.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: "I'll see you later, Speed Demon." And I head back to the guys.

Rev: All right. Kim and Megan catch up with Jake and Tass, and you head over to the IPT.

Tass: We were cool guy slow walking the whole way.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: We got ... We got distracted. I kind of slipped on part of, like, the floor down here, and I kind of looked like I did a moonwalk. And then we were both, like, trying to do a proper moonwalk.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And didn't even realize that the other two hadn't caught up yet. And we're like, oh, yeah, we were supposed to be going and doing something.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: What did we do in the game, though?

All: [Laugh]

SFX: And you go inside and you climb into the elevator, and you all start to head up towards Anastacia's office. Jake, there is a moment inside of the elevator when the door closes that everything around you goes black. And there's just a brief glimpse of The Executioner, standing in their full flaming armor. And their hand reaches out and touches your forehead, and it burns. Mechanically, you've just gotten a boon from The Executioner.

Jake: Oh!

Rev: All of your spells, if they are fire, do an additional damage.

Jake: Ooh.

Megan: Oh.

Kim: Oh, boy.

Rev: And then you're back in the elevator as the door opens.

Jake: [Gasps]

Tass: "Oh, God! What?"

Kim: "Do you have visions, too?"

Megan: "Oh, come on!"

Jake: "Not ... Not really. I just got my forehead burned."

Megan: "Like what?"

Kim: "What?"

Rev: And as he says that, you all notice that there seems to be, like, a dark smudge at the center of his forehead.

Jake: It's Ash Wednesday.

Tass: You beat me to it!

Kim: I didn't know you were Catholic.

Tass: You beat me to it by two seconds.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: My first thought was that he burnt his forehead accidentally with a curling iron, because I've definitely done that.

Kim: It can't be Ash Wednesday already. It was just Christmas.

Rev: Time's weird here.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: "What is this now?"

Jake: "I guess I satisfied part one of the deal to make good with the gods. Because The Executioner ..."

Tass: "Oh ..."

Kim: "Oh."

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "Okay. I can see it."

Jake: Yeah. I want to, like, snap my fingers and make the thumb on fire and see if it's burning hotter than normal.

Rev: Your normal fire is orange, but you can see a blue core at the center of it now.

Tass: [Gasps] "You're Azula!"

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: "Who's that?"

Jake: "It's a children's show, but it's very good for adults also."

Kim: "Nice."

Jake: "Way before your time."

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: [Laughs] "You have to stop saying that about literally every piece of media."

Megan: "How are you?"

Jake: "What do you mean?"

Megan: "I mean, like, I know that wasn't one of the gods you probably thought you were gonna check off the list."

Jake: "I thought there was a pretty narrow set of circumstances where I might."

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, I'm sure not gonna speak for you on how you feel about something. But, you know, I started doing this job to hunt monsters. That was the ... That was the kind of thesis statement. Hunt monsters. But now I think we all realize that it's more about hunting evil?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Megan: "Yeah. I think everything's just kind of taking a new shape from what I thought it would when we started this. But I suppose that's good, right? That's like clarity? Things making a bit more sense? I think we really need to get over to that other world and see how things have been set up there."

Tass: "Yeah."

Kim: "Yeah."

Megan: "If we think we have the time for it, I would love to do that as soon as possible. I mean, we obviously need to inform Anastacia and Margaret about what happened at the Monster Mash, but I need to know that we're on a track that has a possibility of ending well. Just a little bit of hope would really ... Would really serve me well right now."

Tass: "I agree. We have the time."

Rev: All right. You all head towards Anastacia's office, and she is in there. Lana is sitting in a chair in the corner, reading.

Kim: What book?

Rev: Project Hail Mary.

Kim: Ah.

Rev: Because it was my favorite book of 2022.

Tass: So now we have a year that we're in, for sure.

Kim: [Laughs] Oh, shit!

Rev: She got the list from Rev.

Tass: Oh.

Rev: So that could have been a book he read three years ago. It could have been this year. Who knows?

Tass: Oh.

Kim: Hmm.

Jake: He could have jumped into the future to get it.

Rev: Yeah. He could have brought it back from one of his travels with Landara.

Kim: Don't worry about it.

Rev: [Chuckles] And Anastacia looks up.

Rev: ANASTACIA: It's never a good sign when all of you arrive.

Jake: "First of all, thanks. Second of all, correct. We had an incident."

Rev: ANASTACIA: All right.

Tass: "Sounds kind of silly to say, but we found more monster hunters?"

Rev: ANASTACIA: Oh.

Kim: "There was a huge attack at the Monster Mash."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Oh.

Tass: "Yeah. They're extremists. Like extreme, extremists. Like, it doesn't matter what kind of non-human. They're coming after everybody."

Rev: ANASTACIA: So, do you have a name?

Megan: "He said they were called The Awoken."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Hell, that's a dangerous place to hunt.

Jake: "It was brutal, and calculated. And I mean, the planning that had to go in it. The execution. Like, it was impossible."

Kim: "They had tech. They were wearing a suit that was made out of a doppelganger's skin, and had a bunch of weapons with them specifically geared to kill different kinds of supernatural people."

Tass: "They even had a contingency for potentially if we showed up, or anyone from IPT. Because they shapechanged into you."

Rev: Her eyes narrow.

Rev: ANASTACIA: Did anyone besides you see them as me?

Megan: "I can't guarantee that. It was a big crowd. But there was a lot of panic happening. And I saw them as you, and when they noticed me, they went invisible. So there was a window. Somebody else could have seen you. But ... Or seen what they thought was you."

Rev: ANASTACIA: So they knew you, too.

Megan: "There was definitely a look of recognition when I found them out."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Who do you think would have the most information about what happened there? Is there anyone that would be willing to talk to me about their defenses? And I don't know, the kind of things it would have taken for someone to get through them?

Kim: "Probably Maddie? She's the caretaker of the facility where the Monster Mash was being held. I can get you her number. She's kind of injured right now, but she's strong. I'm sure she'd be willing to talk to you."

Rev: ANASTACIA: All right.

Megan: "They definitely did their homework. We couldn't get much more information out of them."

Jake: "I mean, we end up on the news and stuff, so it doesn't shock me so much that they had our number. But you, I don't know how they got you."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Yeah.

Kim: "And this was just one person. I'm terrified at the thought of what a group of them would do."

Rev: ANASTACIA: Well, good to know. I can reach out to folks that we work with and see if anyone else has heard of them.

Rev: And Lana looks up from her book.

Rev: LANA KING: Yes. If you could get the information from this Maddie person, maybe even allow me to visit, I might be able to glimpse some things from an unseen perspective. Get some readings, some residual energy to maybe learn more.

Tass: "That's amazing."

Kim: "Yeah, absolutely."

Jake: "I probably wouldn't go alone, though."

Rev: Anastacia kind of grunts.

Rev: ANASTACIA: We don't go anywhere without each other.

Kim: "Aww!" That was also out loud.

Megan: I spray Kim with a water bottle.

Kim: Sorry! I love love!

All: [Laugh]

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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