

The First Step to Peace (S5, E26)

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

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: We got mail!

Tass: What?

Kim: [Gasps] Aww, I love it!

Rev: Yeah. This is ... Well, I'm just gonna read the note. This was expertly wrapped. It took me a half hour to open.

Jake: It took all of his not inconsiderable arm muscles.

Rev: Just ... Just like took a normal two foot bag and then just wrapped it in packing tape. So that no matter which way I opened it, it was still somehow taped.

Megan: Was it spam?

Rev: It was. It was. It was spam. But like a can of.

Megan: Oh, excellent. I love spam.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Nice.

Rev: Uh ... "To the CritCast. There should be enough of these for each of you to have one of each color, including Kim. These are mango candies brought back from my trip to India. The different colors are slightly different. Enjoy! Love, SnowPenguins.

Tass: Oh, thank you.

Megan: Aww!

Kim: Aww! Thank you, Penguins!

Rev: Thank you. I always love, like, coming here and finding stuff in our mailbox at the studio.

Megan: Love treats.

Rev: So yeah, there is a orange, a green, and a purple, or black. I'm not sure.

Jake: Which one are we starting with?

Rev: I think everyone can choose their own.

Megan: I'm gonna start with orange.

Rev: Okay.

Kim: Okay. I'm going to need you all to expertly describe these to me because I can't taste them just yet.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: I'm gonna do green then, since she's doing orange.

Jake: I'll do the black.

Rev: Okay.

Megan: Wait a minute. There's a ... There's a piece of paper in the middle of this candy. What is it? What is it? "We've been trying to reach you about your car's extended ..."

All: [Laugh]

Megan: It was spam. They're getting real clever.

Jake: These — I expected to be hard candy.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: This is a very squishy candy.

Rev: It is.

Megan: Oh, boy. That's good. That's really good.

Kim: What does it taste like, Megan?

Megan: Mango. It's a very like a — like a thick gummy.

Kim: Hmm.

Megan: It's a little sticky.

Tass: They're squishier than they look.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Hmm.

Jake: I'm getting ... I'm getting a whiff off the black one first, and I can't — I recognize it, but I can't place it.

Rev: Hmm. The green is good. There's like a little — I can't — maybe I just don't know what a mango tastes like. I was like, there's a little kiwi in this, but I don't know.

Megan: What do you mean? Have you not had mango?

Rev: I'm sure I have, but obviously it left an impression.

Kim: [Snorts]

Megan: It's kind of like if you took Fruit Roll-Ups and then accordioned it over and over and over again to make it, like, really dense.

Tass: Yeah.

Megan: And then took a bite. It's kind of got that texture. They're actually like little slices put together, like they come off in like a little Lego brick almost.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: The green one's good too.

Rev: Have you figured out the black one, Jake?

Jake: I have not. I don't — I don't know what this ... I don't know what it tastes like. I don't taste mango either.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: This is odd.

Kim: He's like, I taste nothing?

Rev: Is this the void?

Jake: I taste something.

Rev: I think she sent me a piece of the void.

Jake: I'm gonna move on.

Rev: Megan also seems perplexed by the black one. So while they try to figure out what this black one is, I'm gonna take a second here to thank all of our patrons who joined us in the month of January. We are getting dangerously close to 420.

Tass: Oh!

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: We'll have an update here in ... Not next week, but the week after about the number that we're actually sitting at. So here we go. Thank you Codey McFate, Ben Markley, Paul Humphrey, Scott Wright, Clay Cark — Clay Clark. That was ... Like, that was the easiest one. Why did I mess that up?

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: Uh ... Kevin Brennan. Oh, here it goes. Ulear Abbey.

Tass: Solid.

Rev: Emplitcha? Hmm ...

Kim: [Laughs]

Tass: You back into these.

Rev: I did. I put them in the order that they arrived. Oh, I'm so sorry to the last three people. Cathly ... Causley?

Tass: I like it.

Rev: Yup. The ... Boy. The Enigmatic Ziggy. This is a red letter day. Patrick, Aaron Adams, the O'Snarkies, SimpleKnight, MoFan192. No, 129. Even my dyslexia is getting in on it today. Argent Dragon, Chris Finelli, Cody L, Briana George, Patrick Kanza, Gungan Mobster. [Laughs]

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: Hayden Gavin, Jeff Arnold, Noah, and Richard Hart. So thank you to everyone who joined us this month on Patreon, and thank you to everyone who joins us every month on Patreon. Again, we do have a goal set for 420. And once we hit that goal, we are going to release a playthrough of Devil, Aim for Me. And then we will announce kind of our next patron number goal again. And I've gotten this question a couple of times through email. It does not matter what tier you join at, you will count towards that number. Does not have to be a specific tier. And actually speaking of tiers, we have an opening in Megan's Founders Tier.

Megan: Woo!

Rev: What are you all currently playing?

Megan: Right now we're in Monster of the Week.

Rev: Okay.

Megan: And yeah, we're in the middle of, uh, kind of our campaign. But it's an excellent story, the way that it's set up, for anyone to just join in at this time. So I've got some neat ideas about how that might work. But yeah, I'm excited for whoever joins up next to work with them on how they fit into this world. It's really cool.

Rev: Awesome.

Kim: I believe we also, um ... In January just now, we hit the highest number of patrons we've ever had at one time.

Rev: I think so.

Kim: Which is pretty cool, yeah.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: We need that number to get so high.

Rev: Oh, so high.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: So. Have you figured out the black?

Megan: Yes, I have my guesses.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: So I think the green one is kiwi. I might be influenced by what you said.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: But I do — I do taste it, so it might be right. I'm guessing the black one is dates, because it tastes a little bit like the inside of a Fig Newton.

Jake: Yeah! There we go!

Rev: Nice.

Megan: That's my guess.

Jake: I knew I recognized it.

Megan: I think there's also little bits of seeds in it, too.

Rev: Let's wrap it in cake, and then you can take a bite and see if it is familiar.

Jake: I'm going to go buy some Fig Newtons after this.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: We find you all at the IPT, standing in front of NOEL. She is up and running fully, and Jingles is there as well. He has just put in the code for what we affectionately call the Cracked Mirror universe.

Rev: JINGLES: All right. Any thing else you guys wanna do before I kick this thing off?

Megan: "No, we're really just going over to get some information. So hopefully it won't take too long."

Kim: "So when we go through, we're going to be going through as us, right? Like we're not going to go into an alternate version of ourselves' head, or anything?"

Jake: "No, it should be us now."

Kim: "Oh, that's good. Because an alternate version of myself would not exist at this point. So that's good. That's good to know."

Jake: "That's true. You might just get thrown into a random person who died recently."

Kim: "Or maybe like my great grandmother or something."

Tass: "Nice."

Rev: JINGLES: All right. Here we go.

Rev: And Jingles activates NOEL's portal program. You see the computer buzz to life, and the energy starts to pour out of the various locations set up around the room, and a portal hums to life. There is a brief moment where the portal fluctuates its color. It's blue, it's blue, it's purple, it's blue again. It's very subtle, but it's there.

Jake: Is that something we've seen before?

Rev: It is not.

Jake: "Jingles, did you notice that?"

Rev: JINGLES: The purple?

Jake: "Yeah. Do you know what that was about?"

Rev: JINGLES: You know, I've used this so rarely, and, uh ... I don't know, man.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: JINGLES: I would love to tell you, "Yes, I think it was this." But I'd just been making it up.

Jake: I mean, does it look magically familiar in any way? Like, does it look like a ... Like an effect I've seen in other magics that I might be able to correlate?

Rev: Yeah. Why don't you Investigate a Mystery?

Jake: Okay. Seven.

Rev: All right, you get a hold 1.

Jake: What happened here?

Rev: You've used portals a lot at this point, and you've also used teleportation. You've used magic to see other times, other places. You know that this portal will just open up in a location. It's kind of random. Something about that purple indicates to you, shifting. Like, the location that it opened is no longer random.

Jake: "I think maybe they've like locked in from the other side where we will arrive."

Kim: "Oh, so the other side also knows how to go through portals?"

Jake: "I don't ... I mean, they didn't really last time we were there, but they know that we did. It could just be a more general like magic net or something that captures anything coming in and directs it to one place. I'm assuming it's not a jail cell, but I guess it could be."

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: "Are we gonna have our abilities over there?"

Tass: "I don't think we know."

Jake: "It functioned awfully similar to here, so maybe."

Kim: Figuring out where we would spit up in this other world, is that something that NOEL could figure out for us?

Rev: I don't think so, because she doesn't have ... How do I want to say this? She doesn't have a, um ... Like a sensor on the other side.

Kim: That's fair.

Tass: "Well, I can just peek through and come back through and give you a thumbs up if everything's good."

Jake: "What if it's not good, though?"

Tass: "Then ... Know something went wrong if I don't come back within 10 minutes."

Kim: "No, I hate that."

Tass: "Okay, an hour."

All: [Laugh]

Kim: "I'm so sick of us splitting up."

Jake: "That's a great point. Yeah. Because I swear to God, if you go through and then we come through 10 minutes later and there's 25 of you, I'm going to be furious. Let's all just hop in. And then at least if anything goes wrong, we're like there in force to deal with it."

Megan: "Yeah, And if we don't have our powers, we'll just have to break out of jail the old fashioned way."

Jake: "You know how to do that, huh?"

Megan: "We'll worry about it if it comes up."

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: [Laughs] I go through.

Tass: I follow.

Jake: Yep.

Megan: Yeah.

Rev: All right. You all step through the portal, and it feels very similar to the other times that you have gone through portals. But again, there is that ... Almost like you're on a waterslide. Where you're going down, and then there's just a sudden sharp turn, and then you're going down again. You come through into a large observation room. There is glass panels all along the ceiling. There are columns running down both sides of this room and tapestries hanging. Next to each column is a armed soldier.

Kim: Ooh.

Rev: They all turn and look. None of them are readying their weapons at you, but they do acknowledge your arrival. You hear footfalls from the far end of this room, and a figure in this heavy leather armor covered in runes walks towards you and stops.

Rev: ARMORED FIGURE: Where are you coming from?

Jake: "Uh, 616."

Rev: As you speak, Jake, the person in the armor tilts their head.

Rev: ARMORED FIGURE: I know that voice.

Rev: And they reach up and they pull their helmet off, and it's Sherry.

Rev: SHERRY: Jake?

Jake: "Sherry?"

Tass: "Tass!"

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: SHERRY: Well, it's good to see you.

Jake: "Yeah, you too."

Rev: SHERRY: I mean, well, see you. I've just saw you, but not you-you.

Jake: "Oh, okay. So other me is, like, good? Around?"

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah, yeah.

Jake: "Fabulous." Yeah. I mean, I want to walk over, like, for a hug.

Rev: Yeah. And she gives you a hug.

Rev: SHERRY: How are you here ... Like last time you were, like, possessing bodies, and ...

Jake: "We've made some improvements to the process on our end, so we don't really have to do that anymore."

Rev: SHERRY: Okay. Is it gonna be weird if you ... Like, should I radio ahead? Should you not come into contact with yourself? Or, how does that work?

Jake: "I don't ... I don't know. I mean, we've had to worry about this as far as time travel goes, but I think trans-dimensionally, it should be okay."

Rev: SHERRY: Time travel.

Jake: "Yeah, that's a whole other kettle of fish."

Rev: SHERRY: Wonderful. I guess I'm jumping the gun. Why are you here?

Jake: "We are here." And I gesture to the rest of the squad. I'm like, "Oh, by the way, we've got new people on the team. This is Kim. This is Megan."

Rev: SHERRY: Oh.

Megan: "Hi."

Kim: "Hi. Nice to meet you."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah, nice to meet you.

Rev: And for a brief moment, you see the recognition on her face of two new team members and the absent member, but she doesn't press it.

Jake: "We are here to just check in, touch base. See how everything is going on this side."

Rev: SHERRY: Oh. Not too bad, all things considered. We, um ... Have had a time. We've had some visitors from other dimensions, I suppose, and so we built this because we couldn't tell where they were going to pop up. And so TJ, he designed a spell that would make it so any incoming visitor would be directed to this exit portal.

Tass: "Nice."

Jake: "You've had visitors from other dimensions?"

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. Not a lot, and none of them overly friendly. We did have, um ... I don't know if it was a scout? Something. But this large spider person, kind of made out of stone ...

Jake: "Oh. Oh, no."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. But we were able to push him back and set up some defenses.

Jake: "Oh. Good ones? Because that's sort of their whole deal. They like to just come through and eradicate the next place."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. From what we gathered, if you can turn away their scout, they tend to change direction slightly.

Jake: "I guess that makes sense. Path of least resistance."

Rev: SHERRY: You've encountered them before?

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah, we sure did."

Jake: "Not in our world. In a different, adjacent world."

Rev: SHERRY: Hmm.

Jake: "What's what the getup?"

Rev: SHERRY: Oh. Well, again, TJ's been kind of busy. He made this for me. You know, we have a lot going on. You know, it's tricky trying to get everybody to play ball together. You've got people who were changed by the events that happened here, you've got old power, you've got just regular humans. For the most part, everybody seems to be willing to play ball, but you're always gonna have those outskirts of people who ... Who don't wanna. So he made this for me. It's — he called it Magical Iron Man. It's all natural armor that he has woven some spells into. And it basically can kind of protect me like a big suit of armor, and it's got some magic stored in it so that I don't find myself defenseless or weaponless, regardless of what we run into.

Jake: "Where, uh ... Where is TJ?"

Rev: SHERRY: Back with Siobhan. He's doing a ritual spell. I think he said it would be seven or eight days for them to complete it.

Jake: "Well, what about the other us-es? Are they around?"

Rev: SHERRY: Everybody's kind of stationed at different locations based off of what's most pertinent to them. Jake is over in Europe right now, trying to continue the negotiations between one of the larger vampiric councils and some of the human groups. And Tass is in Indianapolis. He's working to kind of help rebuild. He's still pretty quiet. He has come out a couple of times to talk, but mostly it's ... It's the Soul Bat that is in control still.

Megan: I think I raise my hand. "Sherry, you don't recognize me at all, do you?"

Rev: SHERRY: No.

Megan: "Okay. I just, I ... Yeah. I didn't know, if I existed in this world, if I had somehow made it into all of this here. But, that's okay."

Rev: SHERRY: I don't know how to ask this. What would I know you from? Like he told me you're Megan. What does that mean?

Megan: "Well, I guess I don't really know how this world has been set up, but I seem to play a part in all of this on our side. And we're kind of trying to work on getting some answers on how to better set up the world, so that mortals and the rest of us can coexist in a peaceful and successful way. And I'm kind of trying to work on that. So I thought maybe me in this world might have gotten there as well."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. I'm stationed here for the most part. So it's possible that you could exist, you could be doing work somewhere, but I don't know off-hand. As for getting everybody to coexist, it's way better than it was. We've got a lot of factions working together. We have got ways to generate the food that almost everyone needs, regardless of what their background is. Mom, she ... She's not sure what to do about the fringes — the people who don't want to play nice together. She's got this idea of a spell to kind of boost everyone's mood, but we all kind of nixed that pretty quickly.

Tass: "Ooh, yeah. Seems like a lovely idea, surface level, but ... Oof. Yeah. Fair."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah.

Tass: "So, fringes."

Rev: SHERRY: Hmm?

Tass: "The Awoken?"

Rev: SHERRY: No, they got on board pretty fast. Because, I don't know how much you remember, but they were trying to force people into symbiotic relationships, and ...

Tass: "Sure, sure. I guess I just wasn't sure if they meshed with everybody else. That's great."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah.

Tass: "Okay."

Rev: SHERRY: No, it's ... It's the people who don't want to interact or, I mean, the reality of it is that sometimes there are creatures that ... Like, how do you designate what's a wild animal and what's a cryptid? If it can talk, if it can reason ... There are some things that just want to hunt. And then that gets into the whole conversation, "Well, did we classify them as animals, then?" Or ...

Tass: "Sure."

Rev: SHERRY: It's ... It's tricky.

Tass: "I think we gotta start like really considering the, um ... The indoor plumbing rule. Are they on board? They know how to use it? I think it's a good one. You should look at that."

Rev: SHERRY: What about things that don't defecate?

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: "Man, she's got you there."

Tass: "Yeah. I got ... I got nothing."

Rev: SHERRY: Is it just ... Like, do they have to use it? Or just that they understand it and would be like, "Yeah, that makes sense."

Tass: "There it is. That's the distinction. Very good."

Jake: "Like a ghost don't poop no more, but ..."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah.

Jake: "They know how toilet work."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah.

Jake: "Maybe. I guess it depends when they died."

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "Well, shit. Seems like you've really got it working. I mean on the way, at least."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. What, um ... What specifically do you want to know about? I mean, I can even just give you one of our data pads. I could load it up with the various factions we've encountered, the bargains we've been able to make with them. It might give you a blueprint. Again, I don't know how different your world is, your factions, the things they want, but it might at least give you some stepping stones for, "Oh, you know, we tried this with this group and it took seven gatherings before we could get them to agree to something. And here's the thing they agreed to."

Kim: "That would be really useful."

Megan: "Yeah. I mean, figuring out where to start is the hardest part, you know? People don't want to be food, and monsters don't want to be hunted as monsters. You know, everyone just wants to survive, and nobody feels like they can because they're not safe. And how do we ... How do we make everyone feel safe and provided for, and not see the other person as purely a threat?"

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. But no, I'm happy to give you all that information. We actually make it public knowledge, because we think it's important for the future. For ... I don't know, if this ever breaks down or other groups come, that we know the steps we took to get here, so we could get here again.

Tass: "Smart."

Jake: "And I think the problem we've gotta deal with that wasn't really an issue over here, at least by the time we arrived, is half the population on our side doesn't know the other half actually exists."

Tass: "Yep."

Megan: "Yeah. Breaking the news."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. There's, uh ... A lot of wild reactions when people first learn that.

Jake: "But yeah, what you have collected already will definitely ease the process after we rip that Band-Aid off. So please, we'll take anything you got."

Rev: She walks over to one of the soldiers against one of the pillars and collects a data pad from them and walks it over to you.

Rev: SHERRY: You guys have lightning cables?

Jake: "We do. I guess I don't know that they're technically the same thing, though."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah.

Megan: "It's a cable made out of lightning?"

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah. Cast by a elementalist to charge this?

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: "I'm sure it'll ... It'll transfer fine."

Megan: Yeah, I'll take the tablet.

Kim: "Hey, out of curiosity, is there a Strohm in this universe?"

Rev: SHERRY: Uh ... Could you be more specific? What do you mean, a Strohm?

Kim: "A woman named Strohm. She ran a very well-known auction house in Chicago. To those in the supernatural community, she was also a buyer and seller of magical, supernatural artifacts."

Rev: SHERRY: No, not as far as I know. I know that one of the vampiric houses, they had a pretty strong grip on any kind of transaction of magical or mystical artifacts.

Kim: "Gotcha."

Megan: "Sherry, I have a question."

Rev: SHERRY: Yeah?

Megan: "As we're getting ready to set all this up, a lot of things are going to shake up in our world, and people's worlds are going to be turned upside down. What's your advice for keeping focus on what's important?"

Rev: SHERRY: Honestly, I think it's what you just said a couple of minutes ago. That everybody wants to survive and nobody wants to be seen as a threat. I don't mean to remember that idea. I mean remember that that's the message you're spreading. You know, here, we've got our Jake, who is now powered by this god and used to be part of the vampire group and the human group. And so we've got our bridge there. Find all the bridges you can — those people that can talk to both sides — and make sure they're saying that message.

Megan: "Yeah, that makes sense."

Tass: "Well, I think we're all just pretty damn relieved that things are going so well. We really just wanted to kind of pop in and say hello, and make sure that the world wasn't burning down over here. And so, uh ... Hate to say hi and run, but we've got a lot on our plate as well."

Jake: I think I look to Tass. I'm like, "Well, let's ... Let's take like a minute. Let's go look around some of the old places." Because the thought suddenly occurs to me that like we're in one room with one person who might not be who we think they are ...

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: And god knows what's going on outside of here. So I want to go actually just take a little bit of time to go walk around the block and look and see like for myself what life is like out here.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And once we get somewhere else, I will explain that to everyone else too. Just like it occurred to me at the last second that we should maybe do this, so ...

Kim: Rev's like, "You emerge into a Fallout-esque wasteland."

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: Yeah.

Jake: That's what I'm afraid of. Sherry, like, melts into a puddle of insects.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And they're like, "You've seen through our ruse."

Rev: [Disgruntled insect noises]

Kim: We notice that the window is actually a video screen.

Megan: Yeah. Not glass at all.

Rev: Yeah. As you leave, all of the guards pour through the open portal.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Oh, no!

Kim: All the spider people.

Jake: Yeah. All their extra legs reveal themselves.

Rev: But yes, she absolutely says go ahead and take a look around. But they do ask to give you trackers, because you are from another place. They want to be able to know where you are in case something were to happen to you — if you were to be grabbed or go missing.

Jake: Okay.

Megan: Yeah, sounds fair.

Rev: They're like from Chili's. They're just a little ...

All: [Laugh]

Rev: They are, uh ...

Jake: Don't forget your pager.

Rev: Yeah. They're like an ambassador's pin that you might get when visiting an embassy that indicates you as a visitor.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: And you head out of this building. It takes quite a while of walking to get out of this building. It is very well fortified. And the portal room that you appeared in was at the

center. But after a couple of minutes and an elevator ride up, you step out into the streets of Chicago.

Jake: And everything looks as described?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Cool. Yeah, I'd say just like a short walk around to see some landmarks?

Kim: Go get some pizza?

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: See the Bean.

Tass: [Chuckles] Inter-dimensional Sbarro.

Kim: No, we're not going to Sbarro in fucking Chicago. Who are you?

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Yeah. But you go around, and you see very similar to, actually, what you saw in the future. There are creatures of all different shapes and sizes. There are humans running errands, going into apartment buildings, running businesses. There are creatures going down the street, obeying the laws of traffic. There are cars going down the street, obeying the laws of traffic.

Megan: Beautiful.

Kim: I have to imagine, even if she's not here, I would want to walk by what I know to be The Vault and just see what it is now.

Rev: Yeah. As you all start to head that direction, Jake, you recognize it pretty quickly. Where Strohm's building should be is part of the block where the convention center was and the large hotel where the vampiric council met.

Jake: Okay.

Kim: "Ah. Yeah. Okay. I've got a pretty good idea of what happened then."

Jake: "Sorry."

Kim: "It's okay. This is the universe where everything went wrong, right? So that would ... That would make sense."

Megan: "There's an infinite amount of possibilities and directions that our lives can take. And, you know, there's one of these worlds for all of those. So nothing's for sure until we actually find out what happened. So yeah, she could absolutely be here in any capacity, but just not right here in this one."

Tass: "All right, folks. We've got a lot to work with."

Jake: "Yeah, let's go home." What do ... Um, what do we pass? [Laughs] Is there anything good on the way back?

Tass: That was a quick zag from "on the way home."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Any attractions?

Rev: Oh. Like ... Yeah, I think between where you were going at this hotel, back to the portal facility that you came through, there ...

Jake: Like the Shedd Aquarium? The Field Museum? The Lincoln Park Zoo?

Rev: All of them.

Jake: All of — wow!

Kim: Oh!

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Get the city pass!

Rev: The geography here is slightly different, so ...

All: [Laugh]

Rev: It's like the Strip in Vegas now.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: So all the cool things are just on one road.

Jake: They've made a series of portals that just take you from attraction to attraction.

Rev: Yeah. Because it's not — the actual building isn't there, just a doorway that says the place above it.

Megan: Oh, my god.

Jake: Ooh.

Megan: Like this would be my dream to just be, like, hit one right out the other. No travel time between. Perfect day.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: So real world myself and Megan first met each other during a trip to Chicago, and we bonded intensely at the Shedd Aquarium. So I feel like we have to do it here in-game. We simply must go.

Rev: And I always shout him out. Jeff O'Brien, the gentleman who taught me everything I know about this audio format, is the sound designer at the Shedd.

Kim: Oh, wonderful.

Rev: All the music that you heard, he designed.

Tass: Am I right in saying that he is the Jeff in the Jeff and Eddie pair? The namesake?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Nice.

Kim: Nice.

Jake: I want to stop by the gift shop in the zoo.

Rev: Uh-huh.

Jake: Get one of those, like, stretchy monkey things, that like the hands Velcro together?

Kim: Oh, yes.

Jake: And you squeeze its belly and it shrieks?

Tass: Oh, yes.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Like, is this big enough that it goes around your neck?

Jake: No.

Rev: Oh, okay.

Jake: No, this is ... It's ... I don't think so. I do have a big neck.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I guess maybe.

Rev: Let me rephrase this. Should this go around a normal neck? Not like a super jacked neck?

Jake: Probably. It probably could.

Tass: It'd go around my skinny pencil neck. Yes, we can just say it. Yes.

Rev: All right. So yeah, you make your stops. The zoo and the Shedd and Circus Circus.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Oh, these portals have gotten out of hand.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: And we find you walking back through towards the portal room.

Tass: And as we're heading back through, I want to make sure to turn to address the guards before we step in. "If those spider people do come back and get uppity ... Just so you guys know, their faces are very weak to point blank shotgun blasts. So use that."

Rev: GUARD: That doesn't sound accurate. We found that their underbelly was actually their weak point.

Tass: "Oh, that was — oh, sorry. The queens. The queens' faces are weak to shotgun blasts."

Rev: GUARD: Hmm.

Tass: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

Rev: GUARD: What does the queen look like?

Tass: "Kind of like the big ones, but littler. And, like, far ... Far too sexy for a spider person."

Rev: GUARD: Hmm. Noted.

Jake: "That's all you'll need. You'll be able to identify."

Rev: GUARD: Sexy spider person. Got it.

Jake: "If you see any one of them, and think sexy even at all."

Rev: GUARD: Hmm?

Jake: "That's a queen."

Rev: GUARD: Shoot it in the face.

Tass: "Yeah."

Megan: The guard's like, oh, there was a lot of queens here.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: A lot of big, buff queens.

Tass: And I back through.

Rev: You pass through the portal and you come back out into the IPT.

Megan: All right, I'm gonna go take this tablet. Find Margaret.

Rev: Okay. What's everybody else gonna do?

Jake: Just gonna head back to the lair.

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: So we stay with Megan. Megan, you do find Margaret. She is actually sitting with Everett, going over some blueprints to try and rebuild Mother Hen.

Megan: "Hey, we're back."

Rev: MARGARET: How'd it go?

Megan: "It went really well, actually. We got all this information on how they've set up their entire system." And I pull out the iPad.

Rev: She takes it and looks at it.

Rev: MARGARET: Well, it seems to all be treaties and bargains, things like that.

Megan: "Yeah. It's kind of the building blocks of how they've set up the relations between all the human and inhuman folk."

Rev: MARGARET: Mind if I make a copy of this?

Megan: "Yeah, absolutely. I definitely wanted you to have it. I do want to take at least some form with me to look over, so I can have an idea in my head of where we can go forward with this. And, you know, once all of this other world business is taken care of, we can start building something. But I definitely want you to have it."

Rev: Yeah. She takes it and walks over to a computer station and plugs it in. And it takes a few minutes, but it downloads everything from this tablet. And she brings it back to you.

Megan: "Awesome."

Rev: MARGARET: So what's the plan now?

Megan: "Well, we've got to head through to the next world and see if we can't knock out the battery there. And then we'll have one more after that. And I guess if we make it that far, we'll see what we're gonna do at that point."

Rev: MARGARET: I'll start looking over this, see if there are any group names I recognize or anything like that. Maybe a bit of a shortcut, but if we can find some groups and what it was they ultimately agreed to, it might make the work here a little faster.

Megan: "That's the hope."

Rev: As the three of you are headed back to the subterranean lair, Kim, you get a text from Strohm, saying that she is parked back at the spot where she dropped you off, and she'd like to see you for a second.

Kim: Yeah, I'll go find her.

Rev: As you come above ground, Al is opening the back door to let you in. Strohm is sitting there, and she has a silver case in her lap — ornately detailed. And as you sit down, she opens it.

Rev: STROHM: I said I had something for you. What we just witnessed, it makes me realize even more so just how dangerous things are. Not just for your group and you, but for everyone.

Rev: And she opens up this case, and she turns it towards you. And inside of it are three scarabs, about the size of a quarter. One of them is a sickly green color, one of them is onyx black, and the other is bone white.

Rev: STROHM: You're still mostly human.

Kim: [Chuckles]

Rev: STROHM: I would bestow all of my gifts on you if I could, to protect you, but I think that your physiology would only allow you to endure one. So I thought I would let you choose.

Rev: And so mechanically, we are harkening back to the level up that you took.

Kim: Ah, yes!

Rev: Do As the Supernatural Do. So you will be able to pick one of these scarabs, and I have made some moves that I think that Strohm has. And whichever scarab you choose will give you one of these powers. Are you ready for your options?

Kim: I am.

Rev: The green scarab, the move is Curse of the Pharaoh. "When you become unstable and dying, a random plague will befall your immediate surroundings. Examples — hail, boils, darkness, flies. Roll a d6 for the effect. The effect list randomizes after each use." The onyx beetle is Obsidian Touch. "Any intimate or hand weapon you use, including your hands, gains the life drain tag at will. High stress situations may cause the effect to activate reflexively." The bone white beetle is Canopic. "You may create a canopic jar. When you die, the resurrection process is Use Magic instead of Big Magic, and you roll +Weird instead of -Weird, so long as one of your canopic jars is intact. For every canopic jar you create, you gain one harm that you cannot heal."

Jake: Ooh.

Tass: Ooh.

Megan: Beautiful.

Tass: These are all good.

Kim: Um ... I think I'm gonna go with Curse of the Pharaoh.

Rev: All right.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: So you reach into the little silver box and you pluck up this green scarab.

Kim: "I don't have to eat this, do I?"

Rev: As you ask her that it melts into your hand, and you feel heat and coldness and exhaustion all wash through you, and then you feel great.

Kim: [Clears throat] "Thank you."

Rev: STROHM: I hope it serves you well.

Kim: "Yeah, um ... Just thank you for everything. You know, I ... We are probably gonna go through another one of those portals soon. Like right now, soon. And I'm gonna miss you like crazy. I know that, you know, we ... It's important what we're doing, but I ... I really just miss spending time with you. But I'm hopeful that when all this is over, we'll have, um, lots of time."

Rev: STROHM: Well, I realize that The Vault is not set up the way that it is in the future. But once you all get this nasty business of saving the world from whatever it happens to be — it's unclear to me still. Well, I'll have a room ready for you.

Kim: "That sounds really nice."

Rev: STROHM: I'll see you soon, my love.

Kim: "Thank you. I love you."

Rev: STROHM: I love you.

Kim: "I'll text you when I'm back."

Rev: STROHM: Safe travels.

Kim: "Thank you." And I'll get out of the car.

Rev: Okay. Jake and Tass. As you come into the subterranean lair, Rev is at his circle, inspecting it, and James and Geoffrey are both over at the computer. And James peers up from the computer.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Which of the destinations would you like to go to next? We can get that all put in now.

Tass: "Oh, I think the one where we had the flintlock and stuff, right? I think — I think that's maybe next on our docket?"

Jake: "Sure. I feel like we might as well save the easy one for last. Easy being a loose term applied, probably."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Ah, yes. Easy in the sense of perhaps distance traveled to find the location that you are trying to achieve.

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "Yeah."

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Ah, very well.

Rev: And he starts to type in the coordinates.

Tass: "Question about all of this that I haven't really asked. Like I know the stuff we have on us when we go through — the car, obviously — everything sort of takes on an appropriate form. Is that true of like any old thing we throw into the car?"

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: You all and the car itself can have a more complicated transformation, we'll say? Because of the things that, well, are inside of you and what we have equipped the car with so that it can make a large shift to perfectly fit the world. But yes, anything that you take through with you will take really the closest shape to what it would be in our world.

Tass: "Okay. That's ... Yeah. Good to know. Good to know."

Jake: While they're talking, I want to climb in the driver's seat and hang that monkey from the rearview mirror. [Laughs]

Kim: Yes!

All: [Laugh]

Kim: I bet it looks so cute.

Jake: Give him a little squeeze of the belly. He goes ... [Screeches] I'm like, "Oh, you."

Megan: What's his name?

Jake: Herman.

Tass: I like it.

Rev: All right. And so I think about this time Kim and Megan arrive in the lair as well, and Grandpa Tincher looks around.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: All right. Any last minute issues? Anything that needs to be adjusted, anybody?

Rev: He looks around the room and nobody gives any indication. Rev moves over to his spot, and Landara and Ori move into position.

Megan: I give my grandpa a big hug and I say, "All right, you guys don't have too much fun while we're gone." Let's get out of here.

Jake: I'll hop in the car.

Kim: Yeah.

Tass: "Oh, actually, I need to go grab something real quick. Just go ahead and get it fired up. I'll be right back."

Rev: All right. Rev starts to cast the spell.

SFX: SLOW SYNTH MUSIC

Rev: Grandpa Tincer activates all of the computer components. The dome comes up around Rev and he starts to slow. The magic pulses out, pulses out, pulses out, and the portal opens.

Tass: I think after my conversation, I'm bustling up to the car, popping the trunk and, like, putting in a couple of crates of some random stuff. "I got some goodies for us. This is going to be awesome."

All: [Laugh]

Tass: And slap that shut and run up to the passenger side.

Rev: As Tass runs up to the side of the car, the portal finishes opening fully and there is a green flux inside of the portal, and a beam of energy lances out and strikes the person closest to the portal entrance, which is Tass. He falls to the ground mid-stride.

Kim: Uh, scrambling back out of the car. "What just happened?"

Jake: I want to get out and go look him over. See what the fuck's going on.

Rev: What is your roll Investigate a Mystery.

Jake: Three.

Rev: You know that he's not dead.

Jake: Oh, good.

Rev: But it does seem like he is entirely frozen in time. And whatever has done this to him has come from this other world.

Megan: I'm looking around at everyone else. "Can we shut this down?"

Jake: "No. Whatever did this, it's like, tied to the other side of this. If we shut it down, I don't know what might happen, but it might kill him."

Kim: "Oh, god."

Megan: Can I try to reach out telepathically, see if I can tell if Tass is like, okay, or what's going on in there?

Rev: When you reach out to his mind, it's as if you were listening to an audiobook or a song that has been slowed down a thousand times. Like, it takes you a good minute to realize the sound you're hearing is part of him thinking, "I," as in, "myself."

Megan: "Oh, no. I think it's the exact same thing that is going on with Rev. Like Tass is in there, but he is thinking incredibly slow."

Jake: "Except somebody shot this through from the other side."

Megan: "It's like a defense thing."

Kim: "Was it Nash?"

Jake: "I don't know. And I think there's only one way to figure it out. We still gotta go through. We gotta find what caused this. We gotta break it loose so that he's safe on this side."

Rev: LANDARA: Looks like you're all gun down. I hate for you to go in shorthanded. I realize I've only worked with one of you, but I could take a spot.

Jake: "Fuck. Yeah. I mean, I think you're absolutely correct. We're gonna need another person." I'm kind of, like, looking around at everybody else in the room. "Basically everybody else has got something they need to be doing here, though. And we need some defense left behind."

Kim: "Yeah. Ori, are you okay handling all this by yourself?"

Rev: ORI: Yeah. I mean, like, I could go. You know, Landara might be a better fit to guard the portal.

Rev: And Landara shakes her head.

Rev: LANDARA: You just got your sister back. You're not going off on another adventure.

Megan: "I gotta be honest. All of your experience dimension hopping could really come in handy."

Rev: LANDARA: Yeah. All right. Let me grab a few things.

Rev: And she runs back into one of the back rooms and comes out with a pack over her shoulder.

Jake: "Ori, help me ... Help me get him somewhere safe."

Rev: ORI: Yeah, okay.

Rev: At this point, Geoffrey has cleared off the work table he and James have been using, and he's already chalking out some symbols and runes on it.

Rev: JAMES FRANCIS TINCHER: Place him here, and I'll see what I can figure out while you're gone.

Jake: Yeah, we'll put him up there.

Rev: You get him set down and start heading back towards the car, and Landara walks over to the car and climbs in.

Jake: Yeah, I guess we'll pile back in. A little bit perturbed, a little bit stunned. Going in on a worse foot, but head through the portal.

Megan: Before we head through the portal, I'm in the car and looking out the window through to where Tass is, and I open up the mental chat room between us and Tass. And

everyone just hears me say, [Telepathically] "We're gonna go through and figure this out and we'll be back. Hang in there."

Rev: As you pass through, energy begins to flow out of and into all of you, causing you to shift and change. The IPT Cruiser also begins to fluctuate. The roof peels back, the tires meld into the body, as the body grows longer and wider, the metal shifting to ...

Tass: [Overlapping] ... Fine grained wood planks. You burst out of the portal into the bright sun, a salt spray, and the gentle rocking of the ocean. Welcome to RapsCALLION.

SFX: PERILOUS TIDES THEME FADES

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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