

The Well of Last Bay (S5, E30)

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

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Megan: Uh, you know how they say you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Tass: I do know that they say that.

Kim: Yes.

Megan: Have you heard that?

Rev: Yeah, because we have tried to get Tass to learn OBS for weeks, and ...

Tass: Look. Sometimes I get OBS, but I have medicine for that.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: And I keep it under control, thank you.

Jake: Ordinary Bowel Syndrome.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: I only sometimes have that.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: And I take medicine to prevent that.

Tass: It's called Taco Bell.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Tell us about old dogs, though.

Megan: Well, I've been ... I've been trying to teach Parker a new trick. Because he likes to bring the ball to you, and he wants you to throw it. You know, it's the — it's the no take, only throw.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: He won't let it go. And he's ... Oh, nine? Ten years old?

Jake: Eleven now, I think.

Megan: Oh, goodness.

Jake: I did the math like yesterday. I'm pretty confident it was eleven.

Megan: [Chuckles] So he's getting up there. He's been around the block a few times. He knows ... He knows what he likes. He knows his tricks.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: He knows what he's into.

Rev: What kind of ... What kind of tricks are you trying to teach this dog?

Jake: He's been around the block. He knows his tricks.

Tass: She had him ... He comes out with car keys in his mouth, and he's wearing a full gimp suit.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "I'll see you guys later."

Megan: So he does not like to give the ball. I don't want to have to get my hand bitten because he ... When you go to take the ball, he's like [chompy dog noises] and he — you might catch a finger in there. So I have started doing a thing where I bring my arms around and my fingertips touch each other and I make a big hoop with my arms. And sometimes I'll, like, I'll sit on the ground or I'll just lean forward and make a big basket. And then I say, "Put it in the basket! Come on, Air Bud!" And he comes over and he holds the ball and he growls a little bit because he wants you to take the ball. And then he grumbles and he just like flops his head inside the basket and then drops it.

Rev: [Laughs]

Megan: And then I take it and I throw it. So I'm trying to get him to be Air Bud.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And then I'm gonna make so much money.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: Do you think that after Air Bud came out, a bunch of children's basketball teams had to rapidly rewrite the rules?

Jake: They had to add a rule.

Kim: So that they made sure that they accounted for the Air Bud clause?

Jake: The Monday after the weekend that Air Bud came out ...

Kim: Everyone showed up with their dogs.

Jake: Every kid brought their dog and was like, "Coach, I've got a fucking idea."

Rev: "Coach, put him in."

Jake: "Put him in, Coach."

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: "Take me out."

Megan: There's nothing in the rules ... [Laughs] Take me out!

Rev: [Laughs] We both know I'm just holding the team down. Put my dog in.

Megan: We both know my dog will be so much better at basketball than I could ever be.

Jake: Put me against my dog in any contest of athletics and I will lose.

Megan: I thought you were gonna say, "Put me and my dog as the only people on the court."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: We can take them.

Rev: Me and my dog, one on one, for the last spot on the team.

Jake: Me and my dog, 2 v ...5? I don't know anything about sports.

Rev: Hmm ...

Kim: Five players in basketball. I did learn that from Space Jam.

Jake: Booyah.

Rev: Nice.

Jake: Oh, yeah. Five Monstars.

Kim: Yep.

Rev: Oh. Well, speaking of Monstars ...?

Megan: Tass?

Jake: Sure.

Rev: We'd like to thank our Patreon all stars?

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: I got nothing.

Jake: Yeah.

Kim: There we go.

Rev: It is time to thank ...

Megan: Monstars of the Week? [Laughs]

Rev: Monstars of the Week. Shit.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Well, join us next week when we start our new Monster of the Week Bugs Bunny crossover.

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: Oh, I can't wait for this. Our next universe is Toon World.

Rev: Toontown.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: I do have a couple of cartoon themed RPGs. Um ... We want to thank our patrons who joined us in the month of February. PartTimePaladin, PsychicButtercup, Devin T,

Casey, Lev Lazarus, Andrew Moskowitz, Megan Swanson, Charzore, Michael Van Vleet, Mike Martins, Brian Sago, Gabriel Robbins, ByEmberAndAsh, and Amalie McKee. So thank you to everyone who joined us in February. Next week we will have the new total of our number of patrons to see how close we are getting to roll into 420. We are super close.

Tass: Woo!

Rev: If you are interested in joining our Patreon, you can go over to Patreon.com/TheCritshow. Tiers start at just \$1, and that gets you access to the most aggressively welcoming Discord on the Internet. And as of right now, actually, the moment that you're hearing this, we have opened up a new Founders tier. So there are four spots available. I'm gonna be running those folks through a game of Dungeon World each month. So yeah, you can find all of that over at Patron.com.

Kim: /TheCritshow. There we go.

Rev: Oh, yeah. /TheCritshow. Yes. And I think the other thing I want to mention is that some of you, most of you probably, saw that last week we put out a Let's Play for Codex of Worlds. It was something that I was on and I produced and they asked us to release it on our feed, but it did not feature our cast. It was actually a lot of the creators, and it was run by Michael Sands, who obviously — he's the creator of Monster of the Week. But they have just added a stretch goal to their BackerKit for Codex of Worlds. Once they hit that stretch goal, we are gonna do another Let's Play, but it's gonna be the five of us. And I'm gonna run you all through a game of Monster of the Week set in the most drastically changed setting that comes from Codex of Worlds: Bone Spear.

Tass: Yeah!

Rev: Some of the playbooks are missing. All of the playbooks have been revised in some way, some of them drastically, some of them only minorly. There is a new type of monster and a new type of mystery. There's also a different breakdown to the way that characters get gear and a change to a lot of the basic moves. So it's a whole new way to tell a story. So I'm very excited. Hopefully they will hit that goal. If you are interested in that, you can go to BackerKit.com/EvilHat to find out more about the Codex of Worlds.

Megan: I'm gonna play Air Bud.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Tass: He smiles, and you watch his bottom jaw rot to a skeletal jaw and drop away. His body starts to stretch. He gets taller. His skin starts to wrinkle, and his long brown hair turns ragged and gray. Besides the missing jaw, Estin is unmistakable.

Jake: "I can try and go scout ahead, and if I figure out where he is, I can either come back and report or at least start screaming so you know where in the building he's holed up."

Tass: You come across this large metal grate, and you're looking down into a watery pit. There's sunlight spilling into this pit from above. There's deep, dark water below in this pit. But the sunlight is highlighting another kraken, one triple the size easily of the thing that was in the bay. There are tentacles reaching up into dozens of other holes in this well that lead through the stonework of this city. And across from you in another little divot in the stonework of this well, you see Estin sitting with his legs crossed, his eyes closed, his hands on his knees, and with his missing jaw, that same brutal rictus smile.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Tass: Jake, you are looking through this grate in the aqueducts, in the stonework of Last Bay. You're looking across this giant well where there is another of these translucent krakens below in deep water. And across from you is Estin in a meditative state. And there are tentacles reaching up from this kraken that are like guarding him. It seems like they're just taking turns, like waving in front of his little alcove.

Jake: Okay. I would like to backtrack to the rest of the group.

Kim: [Laughs]

Tass: This whole time, Landara, as you're on the roof waiting for action, people are just walking by on the road below, just looking up and giving you small nods and hurrying along.

Landara: "Mind your business."

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: I want to backtrack and count my steps, so I can try and get as precise of a measurement of how far we're going in this direction as possible.

Tass: Absolutely. I don't think you need to roll anything for that. You have the time.

Jake: All right. Once I get back to the tavern, I will go collect Landara off the roof.

Tass: [Laughs]

Landara: "What happened?"

Jake: "Come on. Come — come down here." I want to get everybody back together and be like, "Okay, I think I know where we're going, but I think anybody here could feed information. So we need to get somewhere private before we talk about this."

Landara: "Where's private? Just like where there's not people?"

Jake: "I mean, at least that."

Rev: Does this bar have rooms? Like, for rent?

Tass: No, this is just a little pub.

Megan: Let's get on the roof.

Jake: [Laughs]

Kim: Back to the roof.

Megan: Landara's like, "I know just the spot."

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: You can perch moodily, like Batman.

Jake: Are there any, like, towers? Are there like bell towers around, or anywhere high up that it seems like nobody would be and that maybe nothing could really reach to or be likely to reach to?

Tass: A few. Though I mean, frankly, you're not — you're still on this lower tier. You're just a few crisscross stairs from your ship.

Jake: Oh, yeah. How about that? Yeah. Let's go back to the ship.

Rev: Okay.

Kim: Okay.

Jake: "Okay. So that chute went a long way. It was like an aqueduct or something. And it led to, like, a massive, deep well that had another one of these translucent krakens in it. And it was fuck off big. It was like three times the size of the one we saw before. And its tentacles are going everywhere. They were — they were climbing up out of the well into all the other chutes that go every other direction. I feel like maybe that's how he's like exerting his influence over such a great radius. Landara, do you remember the thing in the well at Clearwater with, like, clear, spindly tentacles?"

Landara: "Yeah, yeah ..."

Jake: "It's ... It's like exactly that. And it seems to be protecting him. He's there. He's in one of the alcoves in this well, and he is meditating. Megan, you were right. But it's guarding him and it's reaching out in every direction. So I can get us back there. I know how to get there. I know how far away it is and like roughly where it is from the surface. But I don't know what the fuck we do about it once we get there."

Landara: "I mean, the thing in the well was what was making the potable water at Clearwater. Do you think that's how he's getting his influence over the whole city? Is this thing making the water that everyone in town is drinking?"

Jake: "Boy, maybe."

Landara: "The one at Clearwater, it just wanted gifts. But who knows? Maybe it could have influenced people with the water it was processing through its weird body."

Kim: Just looking around, has this town seemed like exceptionally well hydrated? Like, do we see a lot of people with water bottles walking around?

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: Is everyone just glowing and like dewy skin?

Kim: A lot of Hydro Flasks?

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: "Well, short of taking away everybody's drinking water for a period of days or something, I don't know how to ... How to overcome that particular element."

Landara: "No, no. I just want to put the idea in the air that maybe ..."

Jake: "Don't drink the water?"

Landara: "That, and once we attack, the people here might come to defend it."

Kim: "I've never had an encounter with any Estin, but he's capable of wresting control away from things, like taming ghouls and stuff like that. Is it possible that this is something that has happened? Where he has somehow assumed control of the thing in the well, and is using that to exert his influence and also to protect him?"

Megan: "Oh, no. Is the one we killed, was it trying to rescue this other one that he has control of? Because the towns — it was attacking the townspeople who are under his control, right?"

Jake: "But like more of these tentacles just started coming out of the buildings around me when I got close to him. So I think that ... I'm not even sure the one that we just fought in the bay was technically real. I think he might be like projecting, or this thing might be projecting itself other places as a defender. I don't think that one we fought was a real individual separate kraken."

Megan: Is there still chum?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: In the water from it?

Rev: Is the water stew still?

Tass: Yeah. This is a, you know, an active bay off of a river. So, like, it is very quickly dissipating, but there's still a little.

Landara: "I mean, it even could be maybe the big one controls the little ones, or ..."

Jake: "I don't know. I mean, tentacles that look just like that thing's tentacles came out of a building and then disappeared again around me. So I guess at the very least, not all of this is as it seems, vis a vis translucent krakens."

Kim: "If Estin is the one that is exerting control over this kraken then, you know, all we have to do is just take out Estin. I realized when I say all we have to do, that's a pretty major feat probably. And then maybe the big kraken will be chill. I mean, I have money. I have stuff. We could give it a present and then hope it goes away. Doesn't kill us."

Jake: "Yeah ..."

Megan: "You said it's protecting him, right?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Megan: "So we've gotta separate them."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, Kim, you're probably right. He probably does have it ensnared to do his bidding. So if we can break that quick enough, then Landara, we might not have to worry about the people coming to protect it. But if we're slow and we can't break whatever control he has over it fast, then yes, it might be a situation of all these mindless folks are gonna come tearing at us."

Landara: "Yeah. Because at Clearwater, they built that little oasis around the creature. I mean, maybe they did the same thing here in this town. Maybe he didn't bring it. Maybe it's part of the city."

Jake: "Maybe it predates him here. And that's why he's here."

Landara: "Yeah. How do we ... Like do places like this keep any kind of ... I mean, no one seems to be able to talk to us about what actually is going on. Is there like, a library where they're like, oh, yeah, we got this thing that makes water for us? Or ..."

Megan: "I mean, this is one of the circles, right? This is a place where Nash is drawing power from. So it may be that that creature being here is what made it kind of a structural point, that Estin was put here to guard it and keep it as a source of power."

Jake: "Or it could be that this Estin is also mad at Nash, and this was the creature Nash was trying to use to draw power from, and Estin decided to take it for his own."

Landara: "Boy, if we could figure out if this thing was here before or not ... I know this is thinking a little far ahead, but I would hate to kill this thing if all these people, once they snap back, rely on it to survive."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, let's go look for a library or something. I don't know how well maintained those are in a pirate town, but ..."

Landara: "Yeah. I mean, if they've got, like, aqueducts, surely there must be ..."

Jake: "Yeah. Weirdly —"

Landara: "Record of construction or something like, 'Oh, yeah, we had to build it around this giant-ass water monster.'"

Megan: "I wonder how aware the townspeople are of the influence they're under. Do you think if we talk to them and ask them questions, some part of them would be able to think of the answers? I might be able to sense that. Obviously the things they say to us directly will be influenced by whatever control they're under. But if I can push past that psychically, we might be able to learn some things."

Jake: "Maybe. I mean, I was trying to talk to a lot of the folks on the docks and they absolutely could not give a straight answer. But I couldn't discern like to what extent that was taking over their brains. So it can't hurt. Well, unless they then narc on us."

Megan: "Maybe it's buried somewhere and they're still there. I mean, god, part of me hopes not, that they're not aware of everything that's happening and the control that they've lost, but it might be worth a shot. Otherwise, I seem to be getting a good sense of what's happening in this land or what has happened just by experiencing it for the first time. So maybe if we can get eyes on this thing, I could get some sort of idea?"

Jake: "That much we can definitely do. I can get us to a spot where we can look down in, and you can see what I'm talking about."

Megan: "Great. Let's start there. If I'm not able to get something, maybe we can risk talking to people."

Jake: "Okay, follow me."

Tass: All right. So trying to retrace your steps on the surface and make your way up to the third tier?

Jake: Yep.

Tass: No problem. So as you make your way, of course, there are still a few people down here on the first tier by the docks. It seems like there's a few people out like cleaning up the mess from the attack. Few people give you little waves and smiles that recognize that you had helped them. You're able to make your way up to a large entryway, a gate that

leads to the second tier, and it is fully open. There aren't exactly guards there, but some people like posted there that just are sitting around talking, drinking, and give you smiles and friendly waves as you go. The second tier seems to be more of a market type area, but it is almost deserted. You know that the scope of this city is for many, many, many thousands of people. And it seems like there are maybe a couple thousand total left in this whole city. So this whole tier is like almost a ghost town with the exception of a couple of people kind of walking here and there. But when you make it to the gate leading to the third tier, you hear a lot more people. Up here, it seems to be a lot more housing. And as Jake is leading you kind of in the general direction of where he thinks this well could possibly be, you make it to a large crossroads and you can definitely see a ton of people making their way up and down this strip that is full of like food carts and little businesses, people selling fun trinkets and toys and things. It's much, much busier. You have come up what is just called Main Street that leads all the way down through the tiers of the city. You are at the crossroad to Copeland Road.

Kim: Oh ...

Landara: "He said don't go down. Can we cross it?"

Jake: "I ... I have no idea." Which way do I think we need to go to get where we need to be? Is it down Copeland Road?

Tass: Absolutely. You would think a left turn here would lead you maybe two or three total blocks to where you're pretty sure that well is. And then you notice a distinct lack of people if you were to turn right. Like it just turns into a ghost town down that stretch of road.

Jake: "Unfortunately, where we need to be is right down there where all of the people are and where we're not supposed to go."

Kim: "I mean, maybe the don't turn down Copeland Road was more of just a, like, that would be smart because there's a scary thing down Copeland Road. Not like, you know, turning down Copeland Road is fatal or cursed in some aspect — like we have to do this, right?"

Jake: "If we want to get eyes on the thing, we do."

Landara: "I mean, you were able to get eyes on it from a different vantage point. Maybe like we talked about, oh, are the people possessed by the water? Like maybe Copeland Road is he knows, he's open to the sky there."

Jake: "So he's just got throngs of people here to protect?"

Landara: "Yeah."

Jake: "How inconspicuous do we think we can be?"

Landara: "Negative one?"

All: [Laugh]

Kim: "I can blend in anywhere I go."

Jake: I put on my mask. "I'm just a little boy. I can go anywhere."

Megan: How many people here have blue hair?

Tass: It's about every third person. It's really popular color.

Megan: Oh, great. I'm fine, then.

Rev: Looking down at the people milling around, does anything seem, like, unusual about their patterns? Are they actually accomplishing things, or are they just moving around and then moving back and then doing the same thing over and over again?

Kim: Are they just doing NPC idle animations?

Jake: One person keeps walking by us and going, "Well met. Well met."

Kim: "Let me guess, somebody stole your sweet roll?"

Jake: [Laughs] "Do you get to the Cloud District often?"

Kim: [Laughs]

Jake: Oh, I'm a fucking kill that one.

Tass: I think if you just kind of chill and watch for a few minutes, it seems like people are really going about their business. But this is the party stretch. Like there are some much nicer — you know, you'd call it a tavern instead of a pub, and little restaurants and stuff, as well as all the food carts and small businesses. So people are coming and going, laughing, talking. Some people are leaving the road, like they're heading off into the higher or lower tiers, and then others are filtering up. It just certainly seems like the place to be.

Rev: And as all these people come and go, does the number of people seem to stay about the same that are present?

Tass: It does seem about like that, absolutely.

Rev: Yeah. So I think that after we've watched this a while ...

Landara: "Everybody's moving around. There are people coming and going, but the number of people in that area is staying consistent. As a group of seven go, a group of three and a group of four show up."

Megan: "What does that mean?"

Landara: "I don't know. Maybe there's just that many. Like, I can really manipulate 40 people at a time, or something. So I've always got 40 people directly above where I know there's an opening to me."

Jake: "I think we can make our way over there. And as long as all we're trying to do is lay eyes on the thing, we might not draw any fire. Like maybe they won't be triggered unless we tried to get in there or do harm. But if all we do is walk up and look, like it seems anybody can theoretically do, maybe it's okay?"

Landara: "But like the guy who gets vision said don't turn down Copeland Road, right?"

Jake: "Yes. Like you've never had to do something you weren't supposed to do."

Landara: "No, I know, but someone's, like, I had a vision."

Megan: "But visions aren't certain. Visions aren't guaranteed. It's kind of like this thing will happen if all of these things line up. We can change the future. Nothing is set in stone. So ..."

Kim: "That's true."

Megan: "As long as we are careful. Yes, it seems like based on that vision, it's a very dangerous situation, but that's kind of how we live. So we're just gonna have to be careful and be ready to run at a moment's notice. Really, I think that's it."

Landara: "If this is what you guys want to do, that's — I will totally go along. But like, there wasn't a vision of like, if you turn down, this thing will happen. It was just don't do this."

Megan: "If there was a distinct reason for us to not go down this road, under no circumstances? Maybe he would have told us that, right?"

Landara: "Didn't he?"

Megan: "He just said, don't turn down Copeland Road. But he didn't say, if you do, you're gonna spontaneously combust."

Landara: "I ... Listen."

All: [Laugh]

Landara: "I got nothing except what I came into this world with, and visions from a stranger."

Kim: "Listen, I've had a lot of visions of bad things that didn't end up happening. And we usually had to at least go a little bit down the route of the bad thing happening in order to

prevent the ultimate thing from occurring. So I ... I understand your caution. It's very wise. But I do think we need to walk down this road."

Landara: "And I would feel a lot better if there was a complete vision. If he was like, if you went down a Copeland Road, then you're gonna explode. But there wasn't a vision. It was just, hey, don't do this thing."

Kim: "Clearly, he's not as experienced of a seer as I normally am."

Jake: "You are not wrong, and this is not a good idea. And there have been times that we have tried to only make good decisions. And you know what we got done? Fucking nothing. So sometimes we gotta make bad decisions so that we can make progress, so that we can get to the good decision." Can I spend another bond with Landara to ...

All: [Laugh]

Kim: This is incredible.

Jake: Can I spend my last bond with Landara already?

Tass: Please do.

Jake: I think that explanation. Because I remember how we got Grandpa Tincher out of Isolation. That it was not the plan that we came up with, it was Jake falling from the sky and teleporting away at the last second, and then using that as a recall point later. So ...

Landara: "Yeah. All right."

Megan: "Also, I'm really curious about what's going on down there."

Jake: "I have a thought I want to run by you all. I don't know if it's a better idea or a worse idea. You said, Landara, that there's just — there's the same number of people here constantly, right?"

Landara: "Yeah."

Jake: "So what if the alarm trips when there's not the same number of people? What if we need to basically snag someone and tag somebody in at the same time?"

Landara: "Oh, like snatch four people as they're getting ready to go in?"

Jake: "Yes. Remove them as we put ourselves in, thus not triggering. Or it could trigger when the specific people are not there anymore, and that also could worry me. But you said that they're rotating out. It's not the same people all the time."

Landara: "I will give you this: That makes me feel a little better. Because at least it was like, well, we had this wild theory of a number. It didn't pan out, but at least we tried something other than just turning down Copeland Road."

Jake: "Okay. Well, let's see if we can't watch for, like, four people that get too close to the edges, and just one of us yoink one of them and another person step in, and then we stay balanced."

Kim: "Okay."

Jake: "Then maybe we can sneak in here."

Landara: "All right."

Jake: "I'm not going to be ideal for the yoinking. Small hands."

Megan: "Yeah, but you're grabby."

Jake: "I am. I could — I can get a tail around a neck."

Megan: Like, is there a child here?

Jake: [Laughs] Hopefully this isn't by, like, gross weight.

Kim: Yeah. Do we have to find, like, our approximate doppelgangers?

Rev: Yeah. It's like the sandbag and the idol.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: All right, so posting up and trying to wait for this opportunity?

Jake: Yeah. Four opportunities, I suppose.

Tass: And you want to do this all at once, like a group of four, so that you can try to scoop out and then go in, right?

Jake: I wouldn't ... I wouldn't think necessarily we gotta get all four at once, as long as we are pulling one and subbing in a different person simultaneously each time.

Megan: Yeah. I'll go first in case something goes on. Unless something happens, then maybe I can make it to the wall quickly.

Rev: What about like, two and two? That way if you just vanish, you aren't alone.

Megan: That's a good idea.

Jake: Smart.

Kim: I'll go with Megan.

Tass: All right, so then we'll start with Kim and Megan, looking for a pair to come in. One of you row me just 1d6.

Megan: One.

Tass: Fantastic. It only takes about an hour.

Megan: Oh, my gosh.

Kim: Woo!

Tass: To find a good opportunity. And you being who you are, you are able to snatch these people easily without a fight. Describe what you do. Tell me what we see.

Jake: You being who you are.

Kim: You being who you are.

Jake: Famed kidnaper.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Famous abductor.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: It's abductress, actually.

Tass: Yeah.

Megan: Okay.

Rev: These people don't even have stat blocks.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: Yeah, yeah.

Megan: Um ... Well, it's kind of like a party, right? You said everyone's kind of, like, excited?

Tass: Yeah.

Megan: I think it's just kind of like, as they move towards the barrier, I just kind of, like, slip an arm in their arm and kind of do a little, like, dance twirl and spin them out as I spin in with Kim.

Kim: Yeah, I think just like utilizing the stun aspect of my rapier. Just when ... I'm just gonna give them just like when they're spun my direction, I just pull out my rapier and just give them like a quick little tap on their forehead and take their spot.

Tass: So you get this little double tap situation going, and these people are out cold and you're able to just walk onto the main strip here of Copeland Road. As you step on, the full force of the music hits and you are able to see down the way that there's a few minstrels playing and there's music coming from all the different little taverns and things along the stretch. But getting out to the center of the road, about three blocks down, you can easily see this large stone structure that is this very artistic well that takes up most of the center of a street. It's actually at a crossroads itself.

Megan: Is there anyone around it?

Tass: You can actually see that there are several like pulley systems set up along the sides, and these really cool little alcoves that are built into the side. And people are just walking up casually and bringing up water and they have these cool mugs that they scoop out some water and walk off, and just are talking and sipping. And some people are just leaning against it and smoking and chatting away. And nobody's really like posted up per se, but people are just hanging out around it, around the strip, around the little areas where buskers are doing their thing and so on.

Megan: Yeah, I slip my arm around Kim's waist and I whisper to her, "Laugh like I'm saying something really funny."

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: And then just kind of like walk with her and lead her up to the well.

Tass: Okay. You make your way along this strip, and certainly a lot of people notice you because it seems like everyone's having a great time. They're waving at you. There are people trying to sell things to you. And as you approach, like the well's maybe four feet, a big wide stone lip with these little alcoves built in so that you don't have to — you know, even like little kids could come over to the little alcoves built along the sides to use the pulleys. But you get up to it, no problem.

Megan: I was gonna say, we take a selfie here. What did our phones turn into in this world? Because they were like flashlights last time.

Kim: [Snorts]

Megan: We kind of had, like, access to them as phones, but they didn't work the same way.

Jake: Just turned into rectangular rocks.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: What all does a cell phone do? It's a map with a torch on it.

Rev: With Amazon fire.

Megan: [Laughs]

Kim: It's like a lantern that's also attached on those old timey cameras.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: There's a weird little symbol on it you can touch and it'll tell you what song is playing in the background. It's really great.

Megan: Yeah, I'm just talking to Kim and just really nonchalant what we're having for dinner as I like lean over the edge to try and get a look inside this well.

Kim: I am just still right next to Megan, my arm around her, laughing, smiling, trying to appear not at all anxious about what might happen next.

Tass: I think Megan, give me a Size Up. Kim, I'll get to you in a moment.

Kim: Sure.

Jake: [Laughs]

Megan: Nine.

Tass: All right. You get a hold 1, or you can stick your nose somewhere you shouldn't to get an extra.

Kim: Don't do that!

Jake: Hard to argue that you're not.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: Already doing that.

Megan: I guess what strange secrets lie just beneath the surface?

Tass: I think you are able to look over the edge here and instantly get an idea of what's going on, as someone that uses mental effects yourself. You look down and you see this deep well of beautiful, crystal clear water, and none of the things that Jake had described. And you realize, oh yeah, there's illusion shit. You know what a mentalist can do. That there is some effect going on to not let people see what's actually down here. But you know what to look for. You understand how this stuff works. So I think you're able to kind of like tug Kim along and like get different angles and focus to kind of break through, like almost use your willpower to look through this illusion. And so after a minute or two, you're able to pierce it and see this thing far below. It's much darker. The water is much, much further away than what it seemed in the illusion. But you see the bulbous body of this thing floating, with the dozens and dozens of spindly tentacles reaching into all of the ducts. While Megan is looking at this. Kim, will you go ahead and give me a Hoodwink to play this casual for the both of you? And Hoodwink, I don't believe we have talked about. So when you hoodwink someone with a clever lie or disguise, roll +Polish. On a hit, they've bought your story for now. On a 7 to 9, the deception is more fleeting than you'd like, or it works far too well. And that's my choice.

Kim: I'm just throwing it out there that being best friends with Megan is neither a lie nor a disguise.

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: I was gonna say. I was like, this is ... The only lie here is that we're not worried.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: Yeah.

Megan: We're legitimately talking about what we're gonna do later, and what we're gonna have our dinner.

Kim: Yeah, yeah. So with my +1 Polish, that's a six.

Megan: Uh, can I spend my last bond with Kim to give her a +1 here?

Tass: Absolutely. You know, you're in on it. You're dragging her around as you're getting your visual angles. So that pops you up to a seven. And you know, nobody's accosting you. Nobody's really giving you any more than just the general friendly waves or acknowledgments as you all kind of scoot around and get comfy over here. So Megan, you have a clear view of this. And again, like now, just a very distinct idea of how powerful either its or Estin's magic is to cover this entire well with this illusion to keep people from seeing what's here.

Megan: Great. I'd love to use Lorekeeper to see if I can figure out anything about this creature.

Tass: All righty.

Megan: Boxcars. So that's a thirteen. So you tell me a story about it, and I will choose something you can spin to your advantage. So yeah, looking at the history of this thing, trying to figure out is this being just a part of this town, this community? Is it an existing fixture in this community that's being manipulated? Or, what's going on here?

Tass: Okay. So I should have asked the first time and I sure didn't. But I think we need to see it. Like, how does this manifest as these stories come to you? Is it just in the form of

knowledge? Is it like some sort of set of images, like a movie playing in your head? Like what does it look like?

Megan: I think I have blank pieces of like parchment in my like messenger bag that has all the, like, inks and stuff in there. And I think I just kind of shuffle through them, and the story just kind of plays out in ink on the page as I learned this information, and then fades away.

Tass: So the story that you get from these sort of pages that appear to you is that this was a creature that someone found and put here ages ago. That it is, to that person at least, was a known magical entity that empowers people. And all it asks in return is to be able to live in clean, warm water. To be somewhere where it is in a pure place that it can be comfortable and be allowed to grow. And when it filters that water and people drink it, it's extra rejuvenating. Like a glass of this water would keep people from being thirsty for several days. It strengthens people a little, and so on. So yes, this place was built for it ages ago, with the idea of it being a staple of this community and something for them to be known for. They built the aqueducts around it and so on, so that they could filter this pure water throughout the city. But then the pages shift a bit, and you see this map of this continent. And each page that you see, this information shows the map going from west to east, like pieces of the map darkening, being blotted out, names being crossed off. And then finally, that dark aura settles over the map over Last Bay. And the next page shows this being at the bottom of the well darkening as well, having this like ink run through its body. And the pages show people seeming confused as they drink, people hallucinating, people literally throwing themselves off of mountains because they think they're walking along a path. People slaughtering each other because they think they're seeing enemies instead of friends. Just this absolute madness setting in. And one of the last pages is this grinning face without a bottom jaw, looking down into this massive well. And I think this is more of a flurry of images: the thought that, again, this thing can do what it can do because the water is kept pure. It's kept to its liking. And because it gets to filter its power through that, it becomes stronger. So if the water was not like that, it would not be as strong.

Megan: Kim, as you see me going through these pages, I think I'm just staring more and more intently, trying to follow the story as these ink blots kind of materialize on the page and then fade away and I flip to the next one. And I think I'm just getting closer and closer to them. And when Estin's face pops up over the top of the well, like, you just see me

drop the pages and curse under my breath and I dip down to scramble the back up and see the last couple of pages, and put them back in my bag. "Landara was right. This is a being that has been here for a long time and is being used and corrupted."

Kim: I think still trying to maintain our ruse, I just sort of laugh and go, "Great! Did you see everything you need to, babe? I see some jewelry over there that looks really cute. I'd like to take a look at."

Megan: I just nod my head a bunch and follow you.

Tass: All right. Are you just moving away from the well, or are you getting off of the road?

Kim: Yeah. I mean, I think we've seen everything that we need to. So I'm gonna try to lead Megan off of this road, preferably back towards our friends. Except, you know, like, trying not to make it seem like we're just immediately bolting and running away off of this road. Like, keep our carousing.

Tass: Yeah, no problem. You get around the corner and reunite.

Rev: Yeah. I think, like, as they come around the corner, Jake and Landara let go of the other two people that we were like, keeping in a conversation.

Jake: Just shove them back in.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: "Go! Get in there!"

Tass: [Laughs] I love it. Okay.

Jake: "I mean, go have fun, you crazy kids."

Megan: [Laughs] Yeah. When we're all together. "Landara? Yeah. It's exactly like you said. It was something that was here that was helping people. It uses the water that it's in. It likes it to be, like, warm and clean, and it's able to make the water like extra good and rejuvenating and really beneficial for the people that drink it. But this whole continent,

everything has been corrupted. And now this thing is too. So yeah, you're right. It's the people drinking the water. And it can only do this if the water is clean and pure. So maybe if we contaminate the water, mess up the source somehow, then it won't be able to affect other people."

Landara: "So like, if we make the water that it's in dirty, it gets weaker?"

Megan: "I don't know if it physically gets weaker, but it won't have the ability to affect the people that are drinking it. Its abilities, its power is drawn from the purity of the water."

Rev: So, you know, while Megan and Kim were in there and now that they're out, did we see any change in the environment, the people? Like, is everything still cool on Copeland Road?

Tass: I love the question. Let's see a Size Up.

Rev: Nine.

Tass: All right, you get 1 hold.

Jake: I'd love to help, but unfortunately, I've spent all of our bond manipulating you into making bad decisions.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I think it's just, what here is useful to me or my crew? Like, man, I'm scared of Copeland Road. Is there a reason to be?

Kim: [Laughs]

Tass: So I think maybe this is something that you noticed while they were on the street, and just didn't change since they've come back. Initially, you were like tracking these normal people and like their comings and goings and the numbers and that kind of thing, and you got a good idea there. But now with this idea of like the danger that could be outside of that and like what could have tracked them and so on, what's very difficult to notice the first time around were the intense amount of kids that are hidden. Like, uh ...

Like just dead ass, like a Where's Waldo spread of like just a tiny little head with the eyes kind of looking out from a window, like behind some shades. Or a very dark shadow that just looks like a bunch of burlap sacks, but you see an eye poking out of one, and so on. And what you are tracking is that they're just sort of keeping tabs. I think that the gist that you're getting is they're looking for something that seems out of place, but maybe don't know specifics of who or what to look for. And that hasn't changed since the girls got back.

Landara: "There are kids here. You said Estin was a bunch of kids. I haven't seen any other kids. There's a bunch of kids here, like hiding in windows and potato sacks and shit."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "Doing what?"

Landara: "Like it seems like they're just watching to see, like, if anything seems suspicious. But, like, they don't exactly know what. Just anything."

Jake: "All right. Well let's get out of here real cool and cas, then."

Landara: "Oh, right. Because, like, we know what Estin looks like, but he doesn't know because it's not the same ... Oh, fuck. This is weird. I was thinking, like, oh, he's gonna recognize us. But he's not, because this Estin doesn't know us."

Jake: While Landara is, like, visibly Charlie boarding, I'm like, putting an arm around her ... Or, I'm grabbing her hand because I forgot I'm a child.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: And just walking. "Huh. Yeah. Good one." Trying to walk away from Copeland Road.

Megan: As Jake starts to do that, I go walk over in front of him. "If there are no children around, maybe you're standing out a little more than you were hoping you would, blending in as a child."

Kim: "Oh, right! And you're the only person that's actually interacted with this world's Estin. Or at least a child version."

Megan: "You might be better off as a monkey."

Landara: "Oh, god. Yeah. Unless you got another mask in there that looks like those children."

Jake: I ... Who's wearing a big coat? Are any of you wearing a big coat?

Megan: I've got a capelet that would be like a long cloak on you.

Kim: Yeah, I also have a little cape.

Jake: I just scramble up onto Megan's back, under the capelet, and hold on very tight. And just hide.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Yes!

Kim: Like a backpack!

Tass: All right. So where you going?

Jake: I mean, one level down is basically a ghost town, right?

Tass: Yeah. Mhmm.

Jake: So we could just backtrack a little bit here and probably find a place to lay low for a moment and convene.

Tass: Yeah, I don't think you have any problem finding some very obviously deserted alleyways and things like that.

Megan: "So on top of using the water to mind control everyone, he's also put up an illusion over the top of the well. Kim, I don't know if you got a glance in there?"

Kim: "Yeah, I peeked it a little bit."

Megan: "What did you see?"

Kim: "Yeah, just like clear water. Looked delicious, actually."

Megan: "Yeah, that's what everyone's seeing. I had to, like, mentally push past the illusion, and it was ... It's kind of like one of those, like, puzzles where you unfocused your eyes and you see the picture behind it. I had to get it, like, just the right angle, and then I could actually see that it was much deeper and darker and see the creature that was down there. So he's also got this illusion up to deter people from seeing what's really going on."

Jake: "So we still think that Estin is controlling this thing? Like it was corrupted anyway, and then he just kind of jumped on that?"

Megan: "Yeah, that's what it seemed like. This kind of shadow came over everything first, and then he showed up."

Jake: "Okay, so we can dirty up its water and lessen its influence on the town, or at least hopefully lessen its ability to protect him, and then get in there and take him out?"

Landara: "What can we do to make water dirty and cold? Didn't you say like it wants clear, warm water?"

Megan: "Yeah. I don't know how much there is we can do about the temperature, but I think, you know, there's gotta be stuff that we can pollute it with. What's something that we can use to make the water not be clear, but also isn't gonna kill this thing? We don't want to kill it."

Landara: "Alcohol. Get it drunk."

Megan: "Oh, that's good."

Jake: "I mean, I'm sure there's no shortage of alcohol. There's also no shortage of seawater, which I assume this thing doesn't like. If it wants crystal clear, fresh, well water, then maybe we could dig in from underground and just flood this thing from the ocean. I don't have the equipment to do that. I'm not sure how we would go about it."

Megan: "Yeah, getting it drunk probably won't kill it. And also, disorient it."

Landara: "Because you've got, like, ink and stuff. But then we're also possibly getting the townspeople to drink that same stuff. So we want to make sure it's something that's not toxic to the people."

Megan: "Open a distillery." [Laughs]

Jake: I was gonna say, is there ... Like, where does alcohol come from? Is there alcohol produced in this town? Is there a way to determine that? Is there a distillery of some kind, or — I don't know how you made fuckin' rum.

Tass: You can look around, ask around. It is a huge city with very few people relative to the size of the city. But absolutely. You want to just kind of look around for the best way to get a lot of alcohol, I guess, is the overall search here?

Jake: Yes.

Tass: Okay. So I'll jump ahead then and say, finding alcohol's not gonna be that big of a problem. Like as you look around? No, I think like making your way up through the different tiers of the city, like there's not really some active brewery going on. There's just not nearly enough people for something like that to still exist. But there are plenty of taverns open. There are plenty of little warehouses that ... There are plenty of little warehouses along the docks that seem to still have people coming and going and dropping things off maybe on occasion — or they could have been there for a long time, you don't know. But certainly there are barrels full of various kinds of alcohol that you could get a hold of. Just depends on which kind of thing you want to pick and try, if you want to utilize that. Like, how do you want to get what from where.

Jake: Were there aqueducts that ran further up from the well?

Tass: Yes, absolutely.

Jake: We could just plant a bunch of like barrels of alcohol at openings to aqueducts and just knock them all at once and let gravity do the work for us.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: That's what I was thinking.

Tass: I can't believe you've done this.

Kim: I love this.

Rev: I think the next thing that I would want to, like, scope out is — this might be a little later, but when the nighttime comes and things are supposed to close, like do they? Or do they stay open?

Megan: What do the people do?

Rev: Yeah. Like, does the bar just stay open 24 hours? Or is there a time where it closes, and then we could heist the bars of their alcohol?

Megan: Do these people get to sleep?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Are they just on watch all the time?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Okay. So is that kind of the next step, then? Is just taking a little time and scoping out the night life?

Jake: Yeah. Do some reconnaissance through the night, figure out what people are up to, what places at a higher elevation have alcohol, and then maybe we can formulate the plan the next day for how to deliver it.

Kim: Are we specifically looking for, like, one certain type of alcohol, or are we just getting a mess of stuff? Because like mixing our liquors like that is really gonna fuck some people up.

Jake: I think we're gonna have to take we can get.

Kim: [Groaning] Oh, god.

Jake: I don't know that we can just — I don't know that we can be all like, but I only want clear grain alcohol.

Kim: This is a real jungle juice situation.

Megan: Yeah.

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: Hell yeah.

Megan: [Laughs] We can't just be like, "Okay, let's go up to every single person and be like, what's your drink of choice?"

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: I think we just have to, like, mix this all together. It will absolutely be a jungle juice situation, but also that's probably good. Because if these people are being mind controlled and could be turned against us, we want them as fucked up as possible.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Where's the Hawaiian punch distributor?

Rev: Yeah. I was gonna say, I need to find a bunch of big pieces of fruit, too.

Megan: Get a bunch of pineapple slices in there. Ugh.

Tass: Okay. So we want to keep an eye on the businesses, especially around Copeland Road. You want to find alcohol, preferably on the higher tiers, and just kind of keep an eye out here. So are you all doing this all together? Like, are you sticking together and checking things off, or are you splitting up to divvy up the tasks?

Jake: Feel like we should stick together.

Megan: Yeah. We don't know this place well enough, I think, to split up yet.

Kim: Yeah. Especially knowing that, like, some aspect of Estin has seen Jake. I especially don't want him splitting off somewhere.

Rev: Yeah. And like, not knowing what happens when the sun sets and rises.

Tass: Okay. So then, which of these errands is step one?

Jake: I suppose as long as we have daylight, it's just scoping out places on the upper tiers that have alcohol.

Tass: Okay. I think there's still gonna be a roll, but a fairly low stakes one. Because as you get up to the fourth and the fifth tiers, they are even more ghost towns than the second tier had been. It really seems like the most of these very few thousand people are third tier and mainly down at the bottom, at the docks. So somebody just give me a straight Vinegar roll, for just looking around on these top tiers that you know are a little more run down, condemned, and see if we can find anything.

Jake: I can do it. Eleven.

Tass: You find an old tavern that is broken down, boarded up. But as you bust in and look around at the back, it's full of kegs of various things. It's probably old, but that's only gonna make it a little stronger, probably.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Aged.

Tass: Next on the list, I suppose, as you're gauging this town, as it starts to get dark, are you gauging the whole town as far as what closes? Are you just heading down to that main strip?

Jake: If we know that there's mostly only people on two of these tiers, then ... I mean, it seems like we'd want to put an even effort between them, right? But we don't need to worry about 3/5ths of this place.

Megan: Maybe just bouncing between. Like hanging out in tier two, and kind of looking at three and one as it gets later.

Tass: So those of you keeping a closer eye on the dock tier notice that, yeah, as it's starting to get darker, people are filtering into the taverns in a little more force, but most of the rest of the businesses are actually closing. People are making their way to homes or taverns, essentially. Who is keeping a real close eye on Copeland Road?

Megan: I will.

Tass: All right. As the nightlife starts to pick up, you do immediately notice that a lot more people are actually filtering up here. Like, in greater numbers than what you had seen during the day. But go ahead and give me a Size Up.

Megan: Seven.

Tass: You get hold 1.

Megan: What strange secrets lie just beneath the surface? What's going on on Copeland Road?

Tass: I think you're just getting really good at seeing through this illusion bullshit. Because as more people filter up, you notice the kids moving around, actually. Like they're coming out of hiding. Like the first vibe you get is that since there are more people here, it seems like a steadier eye needs to be on things. They're just filtering through these crowds in a little more detail to keep an eye on everything. But what really sticks out to you, because you're able to sort of do that thing like you're looking through one of those magic eye pictures and see through this illusion? That while absolutely, yes, you've seen a form of Estin using his illusions, what's actually happening here is when you can really focus, you realize that they aren't kids and they aren't Estin's illusions at all. They are the tentacles.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

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