

Ley Line (S1, E3)

Rev: Hey welcome to the Critshow. This is Rev and instead of the normal one solitary floating voice in the void, we're actually all here today for this little bit of introduction.

Jake: Hello.

Tass: Hi.

Teej: Hello.

Rev: Because we want to take just a second to give some thanks. There are some people out there for numerous reasons, that without their help or support this never would have come together. So first off, I would like to thank for all their technical help with the audio equipment and really just teaching us how to do a lot of these things that we didn't know how to do, Jeff O'brien, John Myers, Chris Berchild and Michael Jackson. No not THAT Michael Jackson.

Teej: I'd also like to thank Castle Sound and especially Bryan Schroeder of Castle Sound.

Jake: I would like to thank my girlfriend, Larissa, for being very supportive of me and not minding when I'm gone.

Tass: I would really like to thank Jake's girlfriend, Larissa, for all of her support...

Jake: You mind yourself here. You are on thin ice.

Tass: ...and dealing with me being away for 15-20 hours.

Rev: You guys don't realize how much larger Jake is than Tass. Jake is like two Tasses in a trench coat.

Rev: Also on the artistic side, we would like to thank Emily Callahan and Cassy Sandra.

Jake: And our previous game masters and players who have helped us along our tabletop RPG adventure. Tony and Fritz and Adam and Guy and Todd and Eli and all of my other gaming pals.

Tass: Really, you know I've, I've had a rough time lately so I just want to thank you guys for dealing with me and each other and all of the ridiculousness that we've been through to get this up and I love you guys and whoever came up with that like precooked bacon that you can just throw in the microwave, god.

Jake: I was about to like pat you on the shoulder, like take your hand gingerly in mine, but now I just really want some of that bacon.

Tass: I know!

Rev: I'd also like to thank Harvey. He sleeps on the couch when we all wish we could be sleeping on the couch. In the way of content and structure and inspiration, I'd also like to thank Eddie Webb, Matt Buccie and Zero Fox.

Tass: I would like to thank our listener.

Rev: And we'd also like to thank the Russian bot who is giving us all the reviews and ratings, dasvidaniya.

Jake: Is good. Very much like show, five star.

Rev: I'd also like to thank Cosawesome Studios, Shield Maiden Shots, The Cripple Threat and the JQHQ. And I'm sure there are a number of other people that we should thank and I'm sure we will get there along the way as our addled minds remember. That's all for now. Thank you and enjoy the Critshow.

INTRO

Jake: Have we leveled up yet?

Rev: Are you not tracking it?

Jake: I am, but like is the adventure over? Do we get the extra experience?

Rev: You're like in the middle of a fight.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: No the adventures not, I mean the adventure's over if you die.

Jake: If I die, if I die, do I level up? I'm just excited. I have such, I have big plans for what I want to get next.

Rev: I think when you die, it's like Diablo, you just fall over and everything you own flies off of you into a pile.

Jake: Mmm, No I don't like that, I want to level up instead.

Teej: I kind of like that I'd totally get all the crap out, off his dead body and everything, yeah absolutely.

Tass: We get to loot.

Teej: Nice.

Tass: I didn't know we get to loot it, he said it.

Rev: What kind of tabletop game do you not get to loot in.

Tass: Well that's fair.

Jake: What kind of loot. All right right now, what kind of loot would each of us drop.

Tass: Like our characters or us?.

Jake: Nope, like regular you.

Tass: Oh no.

Teej: My phone, my wallet, my keys. The end.

Tass: I'd drop about 10 slices of fully cooked unchewed bacon.

Jake: Why!?

Tass: Cause that's how I eat it. I just open my gullet like a pelican and just jam it down in there.

Jake: I would drop a rare Pokémon, number 151 Mew dog tag that I got when the first Poke'mon movie came out, because it's attached to my keys.

Rev: Nice.

Teej: Rev,, what would you?

Jake: Oh yeah, you exist in this game now.

Rev: Yeah, I do exist in this game.

Jake: Yeah. Why? Why did you write yourself? How did you write yourself?

Tass: How dare you is what we're trying to say.

Jake: Where do you get off!

Teej: No game master should!

Rev: Well you know what? I was afraid to not write myself in because I know that one of your guy's level up options, is to create a second hunter, so I feel like I had to make myself exist in the world before one of you bastards made me and started controlling me.

Jake: Oh man. Now I want to think about what playbook I would have made you.

Rev: Yeah exactly.

Jake: Is there like an idiot baby playbook?

Jake: I'm sorry that was uncalled for.

Tass: Oh, my God.

Teej: You're a good friend, Brandon.

Rev: You're a good friend, T.J.

Jake: I mean is there a dashing man--.

Rev: Jake, you take 2 harm.

Jake: Okay.

Rev: Yeah. One of the things that I want to have in this game...this game obviously is an homage to so many things. There's, you know, elements of 'Buffy' and you know, 'Ash Versus the Evil Dead' and 'Supernatural' and just everything. One of the things that I really love about the 'Dresden Files' is, I love that you get characters, that if Harry saves them and can help them, they become allies and they might pop up. So I wanted to have myself there kind of as a test for this. I'm in a bad situation right now. So my fate is up in the air and depending on what happens to me will depend on what kind of resource it becomes to you. And I think that'll be a good model for me in the future as we add other people or characters into the world.

Tass: This is gonna be a terrible model for that when we accidentally let your ass die.

Rev: Absolutely, absolutely, when I become one with the Soul-bat.

LEY LINE

Rev: Tass, you can tell from your training with IPT and the healing that you've done, that T.J. is bleeding out and he's not gonna make it very much longer.

Tass: I want to slide, if T.J.'s kind of fallen back from it, I want to slide over to him and try to patch him up.

Rev: Roll it.

Tass: That is a, uh, 9. So, woof, do you want stabilized, or healed? I guess to heal you 2 is the more immediate.

Teej: Well, if like I get healed to 2, do I become stabilized.

Tass: That's, I don't know.

Rev: Yeah, this could be incorrect. If anyone out there knows better, you can e-mail us at thecritshowpodcast@Gmail.com. But, I'm going to say that because it is a healing move that it will also stabilize him, because he's healed above that unstable point. It may be wrong since your move specifically says pick one.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: But, then the recovery chart says +4 harm wounds require a healing move, time an infirmary, or hospital, or magical healing. So you use a healing move. So, we'll see what happens. Maybe someone will let us know, who knows better.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: So yeah. You've been healed for two damage.

Teej: Yay.

Rev: Jake, you want that hammer don't you?

Jake: That depends. Can I get it and still hurt this thing? Like, am I running out of time? Cause I can punch it pretty good. Not quite as good, but still pretty good.

Rev: 'Read A Bad Situation'.

Jake: 7.

Rev: You get one hold.

Jake: I don't know how this resolves. I'm thinking, 'what's the best way to protect the victims?' Just in terms of like, I mean, I guess that's it. What's the best way to protect the victims, like what's the best, what's my best course of action in stopping this thing from being dangerous?

Rev: You stand up and you kind of spin around trying to make this decision of do I go back for the hammer, or do I try to just use my bare fists. And in these beams of light you see hair and you see skin and you see a T-shirt. You can see glimpses of me underneath this and you realize that he told you time is short on this thing bonding. And you think because of your ability to harm something regardless of what it is, just that your nature hurts evil, that if you can get up there and grab a hold of the pieces around the areas where you see the person underneath, you can probably pull it away and almost shuck it away like an ear of corn.

Jake: I'm gonna do that.

Rev: All right. Roll 'Kick Some Ass'.

Jake: I'm going to spend a point of luck.

Tass: Yeah, boy.

Rev: Alright. So you are going to use a point of 'luck'.

Jake: To turn that 3 into a 12.

Rev: I'm so glad you did. You move towards this creature and your hands start to glow again and you grab on to some of the goo that's on a shoulder and you grab on to some goo that's right above the face and you start to just pull down and flex. You look like Captain America: Civil War bicep porn pose as you rip this thing away. And you do it so completely that it almost comes off like a wet suit and you are able to put your elbow in and knock me backwards and hold what is left of this thing up to the light and it burns away and there's a moment of silence.

Tass: First thing I'm going to do is slide over to you and check on you.

Rev: Oh God. You have to get to the source.

Jake: Is it the locker?

Rev: Yes, it wont be gone long. And I pass out.

Jake: I want to like pick you up and put you somewhere slightly less out in the middle of everything.

Rev: Yeah there is a concession stand right there you can tuck me in next to M&M's.

Jake: Okay, and I set a box gently on your chest.

Rev: Aww.

Tass: T.J. get back in the rig, man.

Teej: Ok, I get back in...is there some of that stuff inside of it still?

Rev: There's not actually, you open up and you realize that when you got ejected, that it must have got ejected too and just got caught in the back lights.

Teej: Nice.

Rev: So you're inside the suit, you push the lock button, the back closes again, the airbag deflates.

Tass: All right, follow us. And I'm going to lead him through the theater up to that backstage door.

Rev: You make your way down the hallway into the dark room and you see the stairs.

Tass: All right it's down there.

Teej: OK I go down the stairs.

Rev: All right, so you get down the stairs and you can see out of the light that's coming out of you, that there is this goo pouring out of a locker and as your light shines across the room you can see that the goo is kind of churning and bubbling. It's not going away, but it's reacting negatively.

Jake: I want to go up to the locker, I think, and like put a hand on it, and like be like, Get ready to blast the shit, and just open that locker.

Rev: You open the locker and you see a backpack and it seems like all of this goo is pouring out of this backpack.

Jake: I think I want to just hit the backpack with my hammer.

Teej: Just shoot the backpack.

Jake: Yeah, yeah I think I want to just Gallagher this backpack.

Rev: Okay, roll 'Kicks Some Ass'.

Jake: 7.

Rev: As you step forward to try to Gallagher this thing, you do 3 harm?

Jake: I do.

Rev: And you take 2 as the stuff that you're standing in that's been pouring out of this locker starts to burn away the soles of your shoes and into the soles of your feet.

Jake: Oh God. Is that 2 before my armor?

Rev: Yes.

Jake: I like, I'm stepping on fire ants, ahhhh, and like kind of step back and out of the puddle.

Rev: Okay.

Tass: Okay. So I'm gonna pull out the grenade I took from T.J. earlier and say, alleyoop! and I'm gonna chuck that thing into the locker.

Rev: All right, roll it. Kick Some Ass.

Tass: 6.

Teej: Jesus Christ, I'm standing right there.

Jake: God, can I help out? Can I sort of reach out and try and like alleyoop, like Spike it the rest of the way into the locker.

Rev: Sure. Yeah you are right upfront. This is all your business if it goes wrong.

Tass: Oh, baby.

Jake: 10.

Tass: Baby doll. Yes.

Rev: All right. So yeah, you spike this thing.

Jake: I just go, "Dunk, boop!" and slap it into the locker.

Rev: Yeah it goes into the locker and it explodes. The locker shatters as does part of the back wall. So you all stagger back and you're able to shield yourself from the blast. There's smoke, there's debris.

Jake: Is there's still sloshing.

Rev: Roll 'Read A Bad Situation'.

Teej: I'll help him out.

Tass: By shedding light on the area.

Teej: By shedding light on the situation.

Rev: Okay, you're gonna step sideways. I like that you're just assuming he failed.

Jake: It doesn't matter. You can't help me out. I got 5.

Rev: Yeah. You think it's gone. You think that the gray stuff is gone. That grenade seemed to destroy whatever it was that was allowing this thing to manifest into this world.

Jake: I think we did it and I'm going to start moving into like the smoke where I know the locker last was.

Rev: And as you do you feel something start to crawl up your leg.

Jake: I think I was wrong.

Teej: I'm going to shine light on his leg.

Rev: Yeah there sure is stuff on the ground still and it's starting to make its way up his leg and you can see in the light now, even through the dust, that the backpack is shredded, but there are like miscellaneous items there and this stuff is still pouring off of them. Roll 'Protect Someone' because you're gonna try to use this light to get this thing off of his leg.

Teej: Yes, I am because gross. I got an 8 on to 'Protect Someone'.

Rev: And 'Protect Someone' allows one hunter to protect another hunter by possibly putting themselves in harm's way. Which is exactly what happens on an 8. T.J. leans in to burn this thing off of Jake forgetting again that he left the fingers off of this mech and you see the goo slide back inside the suit. Much more of it than previously is rolling up inside of the suit. Like it is almost the reverse effect you see coming from the locker.

Teej: I hit the eject button.

Rev: Roll 'Act Under Pressure'.

Teej: 10.

Rev: You think for a minute. This thing is gonna go up your hand, you're not going to push the button, but you hit it and you eject backwards. So you guys hear the suit of armor close and start to creak and groan as it is filled to bursting and starts to crack and light start to pop and go out.

Teej: Jeez, I'm digging through my pockets. I got nothing else.

Rev: Yeah. As you dig through your pockets you find that ticket stub that you found outside by Tass's car. As you look at this ticket, you glance up in the light of the armor that's starting to fail, you still see that there are a bunch of items inside of the locker. That backpack was destroyed, but there are various items inside of it.

Teej: Well investigate the locker then.

Rev: All right, roll it.

Teej: That would be an 11.

Rev: You get a hold two.

Teej: 'What is being concealed here' in correlation with those items in the locker.

Rev: So inside the locker you see that there is a note pad. You see that there is like a lunchbox. It's all beaten up and you see an old copy of the script for Macbeth. And as you look closer it seems like the stuff that is pouring out of the locker is actually coming from this open script.

Tass: What are you doing?

Teej: This shit is coming out of this book.

Tass: OK well step back then.

Rev: 'Kick Some Ass'.

Tass: A 6.

Rev: T.J. steps back to try to help you get out of the way and in doing so kind of steps into your line of fire, which causes you to shoot into the ceiling and some debris falls on you and you take one harm.

Tass: Is that physical? Yeah. Okay then, ugh, and I'm okay though.

Rev: So you see these guys...

Teej: Laurel and Hardy over here.

Rev: The room is now almost completely dark as these lights shatter on the suit.

Jake: I guess I want to take a swing at the script.

Rev: Okay. Roll it.

Jake: Okay. Hold on.

Tass: Oh, thank you.

Jake: 11. I like, hold the hammer up like, commanding the lightning, and just bring it down on the script as hard as I can.

Rev: Great. You hit this book and you see that the light that you hit it with condenses inside the book and spins around and then shatters out. And you see the book blow to pieces and all of the shadow and all of the inky goo just dissipate. And as the suit uses the last of the battery, no longer straining from the pressure inside, because the entity inside has been destroyed, or sent back to where it came from, the lights go out. But the normal lights kick back on and you're able to see this greenroom with lockers and couches.

Tass: I'm gonna sit down and bleed from the nose for a little bit.

Rev: Okay. You guys are reclining relaxing on the couches, just trying to catch your breath. Everybody's a little bloodied, a little beat up and you hear shuffling in the room upstairs.

Tass: Son of a bitch. What now.

Jake: I leap to my feet, hammer at the ready.

Teej: I roll off the couch that I'm laying on and begrudgingly get to my feet.

Tass: I just remain laying on the floor and point the shotgun in the direction of the opening.

Rev: After a couple moments, you see a slightly brighter light. A flashlight pointing down the stairs and kind of sweeping around.

Jake: Oh.

Teej: Hello.

Rev: Hello.

Teej: Rev?

Rev: Yeah. Did you kill it?

Tass: We think.

Rev: Good. And he starts coming down the stairs.

Jake: And it is just normal you?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Okay.

Rev: Yeah. Holding the mag light.

Jake: Then. Yeah. I'll, I'll lower my weapon. Are you OK?

Rev: Yeah I think so. Holy crap. Thanks. Like how the hell did you do that?

Jake: We found a script. A book.

Rev: No, no, no, I mean, how the hell did you pull that thing off of me?

Jake: You know, just channeled some divine might.

Tass: He has god powers.

Jake: And ripped it right off of yah.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: Wait what? Which god?

Jake: Unclear.

Rev: Oh, yee!

Jake: Norse?

Rev: That seems...

Jake: Presumably. I hold up Mjolnir.

Rev: Oh, Night Mage, The God of cosplay.

Jake: No, I don't think so.

Rev: No, that's not who you get your powers from?

Jake: I don't know. I haven't messaged him to ask, I could, hold on I'm going to get out my phone and get on Facebook Messenger.

Rev: All right.

Jake: *texting* Night mage are you my God? Question mark.

Rev: For anybody out there listening, if you don't know Night Mage, you should find him. He's one of the kindest cosplayers out there and he's actually got a presidential award for the amount of charity work that he did in I think two thousand, and I'm going to say the wrong date so I won't say one.

Jake: Oh, wait, they got the three dots. Looks like he's responding. No, this is just a winky emoji. I'm not sure what that means.

Rev: It says, new phone, who dis?

Rev: We are on Facebook. You know who dis is.

Rev: Sorry. Unclear. Can't, the signal's bad.

Jake: Breaking up.

Rev: Going through a tunnel.

Teej: Oh did you also see my sweet armor that I made.

Rev: Oh, did you...why does it look like Tass's car?

Tass: *deep sigh* Okay. This is all gonna be kind of a shock to you bub, but, um, we are honest to god monster hunters. I know, I know, it's hard to believe. It's a little crazy. It's my first mission. I still don't believe it. We just saw a monster. It was crazy.

Rev: What? This is your first mission?

Rev: Yeah, that's pretty damn impressive you guys took out a soulbat on your first mission.

Tass: Yeah, well we, wait. What the hell?

Teej: You know what a soulbat is?

Rev: Yeah it's, it's like, whenever someone has a widely held superstition, something that people really believe in superstitiously and get really passionate about and angry about, like that energy, that anger has a ramification on the world. And soulbats are able to condense that. They're able to use that as a portal to come through. And then if they attach to the host, then I mean the anchor of course doesn't matter after that point, but then they're bonded to it and they're in the world and they can feed off of negative energy.

Jake: I look at like, you and I look at Tass and I'm like, is he who you called?

Tass: No.

Jake: How, how do you know all this?

Rev: Well, this is part of what I do. The guardians of the ley lines. A big part of our job is to just research and to know stuff about creatures.

Jake: All right. News to me.

Rev: Well, I mean in all fairness, I think everybody's maybe keeping a few secrets, and I kind of look at all three of you around the room.

Jake: Well OK fair.

Tass: Ok. So these ley lines. What's, what is the. Let. OK. Let's say, they, these two don't hunt monsters like I, you know I work with an organization, so it's they probably don't know what it is.

Rev: Oh, that's fair.

Tass: Exactly. So why don't you explain it. Explain it for them, so they know.

Rev: So ley lines are kind of where magical energies from other worlds, or other dimensions collect. And so they're areas of great power where magic works better, where if you could find a way, you can, you can channel the magic and maybe do things that you normally couldn't do before. Things that were above kind of your abilities, or the things that you can normally do, but more powerfully.

Tass: More, yes more powerfully set, what, what happens there.

Teej: So kind of like the Sanctum Sanctorum, like in Dr. Strange?

Rev: Well kind of. There's, there's more than just the three and we don't really know where they all are because they're, almost think of them like gold veins in a mountain. You don't know where it is until you stumble across it and then you don't know how deep it is until you kind of prospect in it.

Teej: Ohh.

Rev: So yeah, like I don't live here to to guard it. I just, it's one of the ones that I am supposed to check on when there's a problem.

Teej: So there's one here in Indianapolis.

Rev: There's one here in the basement of this theater.

Jake: Oh they're like that small of scale.

Rev: Yeah yeah. It's like a crack. You know it could be anywhere from 20 feet long to maybe only half a foot.

Jake: Oh. Who do you take orders from? Like, you're saying this like somebody tells you to do this?

Rev: Yeah. It's really just, it's The Order of the Ley Line. I don't like that. You asked me that question last night. I sure didn't come up with a better name, in the in-between.

Tass: Ok. So we're kind of piecing this all together. Clearly some stuff was going on. Why did you come here to check on this?

Rev: I think for the same reason that you did, someone died here. So, I just wanted to make sure that everything was all right. And when I got here, that thing, the soulbat, was waiting. And not like, oh I went and interacted with whatever was anchoring it. I mean it was waiting in the door and it was on me.

Tass: Like it ambushed you?

Rev: Yeah like it was, it it was like a trap.

Jake: Is that normal?

Rev: No not at all. You have to interact with the thing that is its anchor for it to even have a remote chance of trying to bond to you.

Tass: That leaves a lot of unanswered stuff.

Jake: So what do we do now is it done? Did we get it?

Rev: I assume, I mean, what did you guys see?

Jake: A copy of Macbeth with a bunch of the goo pouring out and we smashed it and blew it up and seemed to go away.

Rev: Well that makes sense. I guess a copy of Macbeth in an old theater. There's plenty of animosity and ill feelings around that I'm sure. I can't believe people put so much weight in that superstition.

Tass: Well it worked.

Rev: Yeah it sure did.

Tass: OK, so we destroyed the book. The thing stops coming, but how would it be out. Is it, how do I ask you this? After we got it off of you, it came after us. Is there any possibility that that designer interacted with it, still died in the process, then the thing was just free and looking around for someone?

Rev: I don't think so. It wouldn't kill someone unless it had a host. Like, it's smart enough to know that it's got to bond in this world to be able to stay. Like, they actively work to get across that barrier.

Jake: The guy dying didn't have anything to do with the soulbat that coming into existence probably.

Rev: I mean, not as far as I could tell, but I mean, like I said, I kind of walked in the door and it was on me. So, I didn't get to, I didn't get to inspect where the guy had died.

Jake: Let's go do that I guess.

Tass: That's not a bad call.

Rev: Yeah. All right.

Teej: OK.

Rev: Actually, um, you guys mind coming with me for a minute? I should go check the basement.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: Ok.

Rev: So, I lead you guys upstairs and through the back of the theater into another hallway and we go into the costume shop and at the back of the costume shop there is a door and I pull a key out and I unlock the door and we start to go down those stairs that are behind that door. Is there anything else that you guys want to talk about, kind of as we're travelling?

Teej: So when did you start this again?

Rev: Gosh about 15 years ago.

Teej: What!?

Rev: Yeah, I mean that's why I travel so much. That's why I live in different places it's kind of--.

Teej: You said it was theater stuff.

Rev: Well, I mean, it was. I still had to find regular work, being a guardian of a ley line doesn't really pay the bills.

Jake: Also technically this was theater work, because it happened in a theater.

Rev: The guy who gave me this location, I think he has a little bit, at least, of a sense of humor. But, before I was just kind of floating. They don't have as many people as there are ley lines. And so, when you first join, it's, it's kind of like, well, here all the ones that need to be checked on, you do it now.

Teej: All this time you could have told us about this and we could have had so much fun.

Rev: I mean, if you think that going into old buildings, walking into the basement and then reading books at night instead of sleeping on ancient rituals and monsters is fun then absolutely.

Teej: Well now that you mention it...

Rev: Yeah. No, I don't think it's the same kind of stuff you guys might be doing it night.

Jake: So how many ley lines do you know of?

Rev: I know of four.

Jake: How many like, total, does the organization know exist?

Rev: That, I don't know. I just know the ones that I have been given the locations of to check on.

Teej: Compartmentalized information, so if he ever gets caught by the enemy...

Rev: I think it, in part, might be that they go away, or you know it gets used up for some purpose if you know someone's casting a really large spell, or doing something you know I think sometimes some of that energy goes away I've seen one I used to know we're like seven were and I've seen ones just be empty.

Tass: Wait, back up, T.J., what did you just say?

Teej: Umm, about compartmentalized information?

Tass: No, the...

Teej: And if the enemy ever caught him?

Tass: That, that.

Teej: I meant like--.

Tass: Is there any kind of concentrated situation that would be working against you guys? Something like, I don't know how to even word this, werewolves that band together, you know. Is there something that would have placed the soulbat here?

Rev: I mean not that I can think of. It's not like these are things that are...I guess think of them like natural resources.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: They're there and people need to use them sometimes and so we tell people the location and so they can go and use that energy. I mean, I guess I don't know the process of how you get, "Yeah you can use this one." I don't know how you apply to use a ley line, now that I think about it, but I can't imagine that if you know about 'em, as long

as you're doing something worthwhile, that you get turned down. So I don't know who would be against us.

Tass: OK.

Teej: Alright, well let's get down to this basement, I guess.

Rev: Yeah. You guys start to go down the stairs and there's a strange smell coming from the basement.

Teej: What does it smell like?

Rev: I'll tell you as soon as I finish the description of the environment.

Teej: I'm so sorry.

Rev: Coitus interruptus. You can see very dim light flickering off the walls and something about the room feels hollow. You can't exactly place it, but it just feels empty. like if you've ever been inside of a large cave in the dark, it just feels empty.

Tass: Something doesn't feel right and I get my shotgun out.

Teej: What does it smell like?

Rev: Lavender and sandalwood.

Jake: Oh that's pleasant. So it's a pleasant smell.

Rev: It is. It seems like burning candles.

Jake: Oh, alright, well that's a little more questionable.

Rev: This doesn't seem right, Tass I agree this...and I start to go down the stairs faster.

Jake: Oh, God, yeah. Following, following close behind hammer already. I guess I'll just go ahead and follow behind Jake.

Rev: You guys get to the bottom of the stairs and you see that there is this fairly small room ,maybe 10 by 10, at the bottom of the stairs. And that there is a crack running along what almost looks like a cobblestone floor. And the cracks maybe three and a half feet

long and a couple of inches wide. It's wider in the center than it is on the edges and some candles around it are flickering.

Teej: Is this crack like humanish size--You said three foot long, but how deep? Like is it, can, can I tell whether or not it's deep or...I guess I don't understand the crack.

Rev: It's been a while.

Teej: Yeah, it's been a while. I'm gonna go look into the crack.

Tass: Sexy.

Rev: Hearing you say that, Jake pulls his pants up. I didn't realize they were, they were drooping. Yeah, so you push your way, kind of past everybody, and you can see that I am standing there really puzzled, looking at the candles and you walk up to the crack. What do you do once you get there?

Teej: I um, I...

Tass: Go on, give me detail.

Rev: This is getting Worse and worse.

Teej: I'm going to...

Rev: If you say "finger this crack" I'm gonna kill you.

Tass: Oh, no. While he's deciding I'm looking around to see if there's anybody down here, well.

Jake: Likewise yeah.

Tass: First I'm even just gonna put a hand on your shoulder and say, Did you light these?

Rev: No, I didn't even put them here.

Tass: Oh okay. So yeah. And I'm really going to kind of look around the space see if there's somebody down here, or signs of somebody being down here.

Rev: How are you looking around, just in the sense of the lighting of the room?

Tass: Are all lights out besides these candles?

Rev: There are no lights down here, just the candles.

Tass: Just the candles.

Jake: So like are the edges of the room engulfed in shadow?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I'm tempted to say that we kind of like...where do those stairs come into the room? Like in the, like in a middle of a wall?

Rev: Yeah.

Rev: I'm tempted to say that we just kind of break off either side and just kind of literally hug the wall, because we'll be able to see the candle light and you know just kind of loop around and plan to meet on the other side.

Tass: And yeah, Rev, can you try to hit, hit these corners with your light?

Rev: Yeah. Yeah. And I absent mindedly hand you the flashlight and bend down and start looking at the candles.

Tass: Okay. So then yeah, I'm going to start making my way around and have that literally like flashlight on, the flashlights aiming where the shotgun is.

Rev: Roll 'Investigate A Mystery'.

Tass: Okay. That would be a 9.

Rev: All right. You get a hold one.

Tass: I guess I'm gonna be asking, what happened here? Kind of in regards to leading to what, how are these, how do these candles exist?

Rev: As you're scanning around the room, you're panning the light across the walls, down to the floor, across the room to Jake and you can see that when the flashlight goes over the ley line that there's a little bit of reflection from the sides of it. It's almost like

they've been glassed. And just thinking about what was said earlier, about them being kind of a repository of energy, you assume that the stone, the rock, whatever is coming through the floor here. What the floor is made of was distorted by the energy pouring out of it, which you don't see. And you see the candles. And as you get around the room, you realize that they're not randomly placed. There is a pattern to them and as you turn your flashlight back towards the stairs, you can see that there are footprints in the dust on the stairs and only one set going up. So it seems to you that someone may have done some kind of a ceremony here recently.

Tass: OK. That ain't great. Somebody else was definitely down here. I'm looking at the pattern of the candles to see if it sticks out as anything, I don't know, obvious, I guess, like a pentagram. You know, something that's like maybe unholy or more like neutral or...

Rev: Yeah. It's not a pentagram you can just tell that they are, you know there's ten of them. And as you go around the circle, the spacing between them is not symmetrical, but it is a repeating pattern.

Tass: OK. Jake, I don't think there's anybody else down here. I think they did what they wanted to do and left, and then I'm gonna come over, you know, back towards the middle with you. What do you think? This looks, I mean is this, I don't even know the right word. Is this dry?

Rev: Yeah. No it's, it's gone. The energy is gone.

Tass: OK, so somebody came down, they sucked up all of the energy, they left and then this Soulbat starts doing crazy things in a very powerful way. Unless those things were happening in tandem, maybe...

Jake: Maybe that thing was to keep anyone who showed up from getting down to the person that's, that was sucking up the energy.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: Maybe that was a distraction.

Teej: Or maybe the ley line was used to keep the soul back in check?

Tass: Well I don't think it was in check.

Jake: I mean maybe what you said first they drained and then then Soulbat got loose.

Teej: That's what I'm saying. Yeah.

Jake: I mean, I guess we don't know unless we go try and find whoever this person was, that was down here.

Tass: Well, we have vaguely some tracks here, we can try to follow something back out.

Jake: Um, uh, Yeah. If you think you can follow the tracks. I'm, I'm with you.

Tass: I'll try.

Rev: Yeah. I don't know any one person that could channel this energy into something. It takes multiple people to do it.

Tass: Well I think only one set left, so sacrifice?

Rev: Do you point out the the footstep on the...

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: And it's, you all get a chance to kind of look and you can very clearly see the four sets of footprints that belong to the four people down here in the room and there is only one other set down and then up.

Tass: Oh there is just one. Oh yeah. I guess you're right. Look there's only one total, like...

Jake: We're dealing with somebody who's impossibly powerful, like...

Rev: Or impossibly knowledge-full. I've, I've not seen this pattern of these candles before, and I pull out a little notebook and I scribble out the pattern and pick up one of the candles and pocket it.

Jake: OK. I was just about to ask, what's going to happen if I could put them out, like if you thought it would be OK for me to put them out. Do you think these are sustaining anything now or?

Rev: No. I mean everything is gone.

Jake: It's weird that they would just...you know what? I guess it's not that weird. I was gonna say, it's weird that they would just leave their candles here, but I guess if you're like, "I possess all arcane power," then eight dollars worth of candles probably doesn't matter that much to you.

Rev: Yeah, that's probably true.

Tass: Okay. This has just turned into a time crunch boys, and I'm gonna turn and start heading, heading up, see if I can even remotely try to follow some tracks.

Teej: We'll follow him I guess.

Rev: All right. So how are you going to try to track these?

Tass: Um, I'm literally going to, you know, follow the the path in the dust with the flashlight, um, you know, that we could clearly see. And then once we get up there, do my best to see which direction--like if the, any of that dust that was disturbed going up and down continues in a direction.

Rev: OK, roll 'Investigate a Mystery'.

Tass: Uhh, I don't think I keep very good track of that with a 4. Oof!

Jake: Good.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: So you get to the top of the stairs and you try to follow the tracks, to see if there is any of the dust making footprints that they picked up on their way up the stairs. You go over to the wall and you kick on some of the additional lights to try to get a better view and you can actually see, now that the theater is really well lit up, there's a number of windows on the dome above the audience. And you can see that some of it is uncovered and this light is actually shining out of the dome, but you're not able to see anything.

Tass: Shit, I think I lost it. I don't know what to do at this point boys, besides sweep the theater again. But, I'm assuming if their whole goal was to get down there and inhale a bunch of magic energy, that they've probably gotten out of here by now.

Jake: I wanna look around for exit points. Like, whatever the closest exit point is to this doorway, to see if there's a door outside that has been opened recently.

Rev: The closest one to where you are right now is the one that you guys came in. Kind of that hidden door.

Jake: Does anything seem different about it? I mean this is kind of vague, but I want to see if it, if it is ajar, like for starters. Or if it seems like something's been knocked over, that wasn't knocked over when we came in.

Rev: Sure, sure.

Jake: I'm like, I want to peek out into the alley and see if anything's out of place out there.

Rev: And you're so, you're trying to see if it's any different from when the two of you, Jake and Tass, ran out of the building in the dark. I think that was the last time you used this door was when you both sprinted away from the monster, when it was backstage.

Jake: Yeah. So I don't know what I would be able to pick up different.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Except, there was some light in the alley, right?

Rev: Yeah, mmhmm.

Jake: So I might be able to notice something actually out the door, being different. So, I want to open the door and poke my head out in the alley and just see if anything seems different from the last time we were out here, before we came back in.

Rev: Okay. Yeah. You don't really see much difference. All of the random bric-a-brac and stuff that was in this alleyway. The door was closed, you remember Tass closing it when you guys came out. Now that the lights are back on inside the theater, you see the pieces of the stage light that you remember when you guys first came in, was on the ground and got stepped on and, but no, you don't really see anything that sticks out as different, or out of place, compared to what you remember.

Jake: Okay, then back inside I would want to look for what I think may be the next closest exit point would be, if there is a window somewhere, or, did I notice the dome? Would I notice the windowed dome?

Rev: Yeah, when he looked up and saw the light was coming out of it, you could see the dome there, yeah.

Jake: I don't suppose there's anything leading up to it, is there?

Rev: There is. If you get up into the grid and then climb up some ladders, some scaffolding, you can see that there is a walkway around the base of this.

Tass: Might as well.

Jake: That could be an exit point, yeah.

Tass: Let's go see what we can see.

Teej: Yeah absolutely. I want to lead this because I love going up into grids and heights and things like that.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: He does.

Rev: Where, uh, where do you guys want to go up into the grid at?

Teej: I'm going to go look for the sound booth, slash light booth, to see if I can find the entrance to the grid from that area.

Rev: So, you remember when you were up in the grid, that the sound booth and the light booth was at the back of the house. So, you probably can deduce that if, maybe you go out into the lobby and go up the stairs inside of the lobby, that one of those sets of stairs might eventually lead up to the booth.

Teej: Gotcha. I'm going to head that way.

Rev: Okay. Are you guys gonna follow him?

Jake: Yeah, absolutely.

Tass: Yep.

Rev: So you guys go through the lobby. You go up which set of stairs? Left or right?

Teej: Left.

Rev: Okay, so you go up the stairs. It takes you to the balcony. And then, in the back corner of the balcony, there is another set of stairs that kind of go in a half circle and take you into the back of the booth.

Teej: Okay, I'm gonna go up into the booth and see if I can't find that entrance to the grid.

Rev: All right. It's unlocked. Inside the room there is a ladder in the corner. You can see goes up to a trapdoor in the ceiling of the light and sound booth.

Teej: Oh nice. Hey check it out guys.

Rev: And from up here you can see the whole stage. You can see the whole grid from the windows at the front of the booth.

Jake: Can I reach that trap door?

Rev: Yeah if you climb the ladder.

Jake: Oh.

Rev: Like, the ladder is attached, it's a permanent fixture.

Jake: Okay, I'm gonna do that.

Rev: Okay.

Jake: I'm gonna climb up, at least, up to where I can get a hand on it and just kind of look back down at them and wait for a thumbs up and give a shrug and then open it and continue up.

Teej: I'll follow him.

Rev: Okay. Is anybody doing anything else inside the booth? Are you all just following up the ladder?

Tass: Is this is maybe a fresh spot that I could, kind of check around to see if there's been any recent activity?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Okay. So, I just kind of want to look for anything knocked ajar, footprints, you know, signs that anything's been pushed aside, or movement.

Rev: Okay, 'Investigate a Mystery'.

Tass: Okay, oh baby. How about an 11?

Rev: All right, so, you get a hold 2.

Tass: What's being concealed here?

Rev: You look around the room and you see some old paper plates. There's an empty soda can. You can see that the chair has been scooted out from the dust. Again, nobody's been up here in quite a while. You think that it might have been the designer who is scoping out the space, but you can see that the paper plate, it's got some food crumbs on it, but then there's also a number of crumbs a couple of feet to the side, just on the table. And it seems odd to you that someone would bring a plate up into this space to eat and like eat over it and then just suddenly stop eating over it and leave the debris of their food on the table. Especially someone who's used to a space like this, that would take care of it and want to make sure that it stays pristine, for when they're taking apart any electronics, or any lights, or any sound equipment, or anything like that.

Tass: Ok. Ok. So, then I kind of want to take that information in mind and mix any time that I've spent in a theater with all of this, much more fresh recent kind of monster training in mind and try to piece together what happened here.

Rev: So, as you look around the room and you think about, when you've been in the back of rooms like this, where designers are sitting, or technicians are programming, or running a show, you know for the most part they come to the chair, and they're in the chair. The chair is usually the spot where they can see the stage best and you see a chair for the stage manager. You see a chair for the light board and you see a chair for the soundboard. So you've got those three chairs that you're used to seeing up here, but you see, dead center in the window, that there are some footprints. Like someone came and stood at the center of the window and was looking out of the window. You feel like

someone else was up here, that someone came up these stairs at some point, found what was left of the food, ate it and watched the stage for some reason.

Tass: Ok. That's creepifying. I'm going to just go ahead and haul, haul up the ladder then, after them.

Rev: All right. So you guys are climbing up the ladder. It's about 20 feet before you get to the lip around the glass dome. So when you get to the top of the ladder you can get out on to the lip. It's pretty thin. You know that this really is only here to either hang lights off of, or to attach something to so that you could clean these windows.

Jake: So, does it look so thin that I don't think I could navigate it on foot?

Rev: You could, but it would be tricky.

Jake: And there's no safety if I fall? I fall into the stan--into the seats?

Rev: Yeah. Picture like a clothes rack inside of a closet, like a really heavy duty one. It is braces coming out from the edge of the bottom of the dome. And then, are series of pipes that make the big circular ring around the bottom.

Jake: OK.

Rev: So it's wide enough that you could walk on it. You would essentially have your hands against the glass and then the other side of you would be to infinity.

Jake: Good. So from where I am, just at the top of the ladder, do any of the windows seem to be open, or broken, or anything?

Rev: Roll, 'Investigate a Mystery'. What are you looking for exactly?

Jake: I am, I am just like, because I sort of pop out a hatch, right? Like...

Rev: No, uh uh.

Jake: No, no I opened...

Rev: The hatch in the light and then climbed up about 20 feet.

Jake: OK.

Rev: And now you're at the bottom of this ring.

Jake: OK. Um, I am just looking around. I know that there are windows up here, or glass up here. I just want to scan around, like every bit that I can see above my head and see if any of it looks broken, or open from where I am...

Rev: All right.

Jake: ...Before I bother to go try to maybe navigate this.

Rev: Yeah. Roll, 'Investigative a Mystery'.

Jake: uh, 10.

Rev: You get a hold 2.

Jake: What happened here? Like did anybody, as in, did anybody pass through this area, or does it seem like this has been disturbed or manipulated?

Rev: So, as you look around, you do see that one of the windows, the hinges are open a little bit and there's about two or three inches showing at the bottom and you can see that these, if you push on the bottom, would swing out and lead to the roof.

Jake: All right. Um, so, I think I know that something went out there. That's what this seems like. I think I want to go with, "What sort of creature is it?" Just like, based on, maybe, the size of the window and what it would take to maneuver to it, would like, would I assume this was a person? Do I think that some sort of monster could have even made it? Like, could a quadruped have even navigated this and things like that?

Rev: You think that anything with enough upper body strength to hold its own weight, to pull it up onto this pipe and the thumbs to do so, could have done it. It's not really-- there's a huge range of things in your head that could have opened this window. Anything with the ability to, you know, push open a hinged door could do it.

Teej: Including a trained chimpanzee.

Rev: Especially. T.J. spoiled the final arc.

Tass: Oh, no!

Tass: So, sorry guys.

Rev: The orangutan did it.

Tass: King Louis, baby.

Jake: Okay. So, I want to look back down the ladder and explain down the ladder to them. There is a window up here and it's open and it seems like it leads to the roof. I would guess somebody either came in, or went out through it. It's kind of a bitch to get to, but I can try, or I don't know if there's a better way to get to the roof in this place. Do you guys know anything else about theaters? Would there be easier roof access?

Tass: We can certainly look. I definitely think somebody went that way. I honestly think whoever it was, was literally standing up in that booth watching us until it, it, he, she saw us coming because, yeah, there was definitely somebody up there just standing and watching.

Jake: So should I go for it? Do you want me to try and go out this window?

Teej: Well anything's better than hanging on this ladder.

Jake: Ok. I'm going to try and navigate my way to and through the window.

Rev: All right. Roll, 'Act Under Pressure'. This is a very difficult pull-up. It's a difficult walk across just on your boots. And then to push it open and climb out the window.

Jake: God, if this goes wrong, it goes so very wrong.

Rev: Not inaccurate.

Tass: Oh, no!

Rev: What did you get?

Jake: I got a 4.

Tass: Oh, no!

Teej: We should probably start helping people out.

Jake: Yeah I could've used a boost.

Teej: Yeah.

Rev: You wrap your leg around the pipe, but the metal on metal contact of your armor and the pipe don't give you the traction you need. And as you pull yourself up, your legs suddenly slip from the pipe. Tass and T.J., you see Jake's eyes widen as the unexpected weight of his lower body wrenches free his grip and he plummets towards the ground below.