

The City by the Bay (S2, E14)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: So I feel like you guys will appreciate this. I don't know if your phone ever gets this way, but every now and then I will play a song on my phone, and it will get stuck there. So like, no matter what else I change it to, whenever I start my car and connect it to the Bluetooth, it automatically goes back to that one song. And I can never get it to come off of it for some reason. Even though I never listen to music. I'm always listening to podcasts.

Teej: I have that same problem.

Rev: So what has been happening for the last -- almost month -- now: I have my volume jacked up because I'm listening ... Like right now I'm listening to The Magnus Archives, and it's very quiet. It's very good, but it's hard to hear in the car. I start the car, and what blares out of my car's speakers is the Sea of Thieves music.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Nice.

Rev: [hums Sea of Thieves intro] It's that huge flourish of an opening. So that was my morning. How you guys doing?

Tass: Good, good.

Teej: Mine is like ... I downloaded like 100 classical -- classic pieces of music. Like, you know, orchestra type music and everything. And the one that comes up is like some symphony that's very sweet and quiet and everything. And I'm like, "Oh. That's nice to begin my day with." Yeah, all right.

Rev: It's a funeral dirge.

Teej: Yeah. It really is. Like, going to school now. I guess so.

Jake: My car has a tape deck, so I can't relate.

All: [laugh]

Teej: What's tape?

Jake: Yeah. Yeah ...

Rev: Just a reminder, we are now into October and we have the Halloween costume contest going on. The deadline for that is November the 4th. So again, all you got to do is send us a photo of you dressed in costume and enjoying some Halloween festivities, and we will enter your name into a drawing for one of our hoodies. And if you can get our logo in there somewhere, or something related to the show, we'll put your name in twice. You can submit those photos through the website or through the email -- at thecast@thecritshowpodcast.com.

Tass: How many can the cast put in?

Rev: Um ... No.

Tass: Oh, OK. [whispers] I'm gonna put six.

Rev: [chuckles] Oh no. He's gonna use aliases. And he's going to dress as one of the characters from Alias.

Tass: You're never going to know because I'll have a costume on.

Rev: That's true. I won't recognize you.

Teej: Both the Marvel Alias and the Jennifer Garner Alias from CBS?

Rev: Yes. That's all of Tass's costumes this Halloween. Just different Jennifer Garners.

Tass: [laughs] I dig it.

Rev: We do have the time slots for our games at AcadeCon. So if you're going to be there in Dayton, Ohio -- this is on November 8th, 9th, and 10th -- we will be there on the 8th and 9th. I will be running Monster of the Week, Tass will be running Worlds in Peril, and Jake will be running All Out of Bubblegum. And so on the 8th, we have sessions of that at 6 p.m. All three of us are running our game sessions at the exact same times, so you can sign up for one of those slots. And then on the 9th, we will be going at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Those are all four hour slots. You'll come, create a character, play through the game with us. We'll have everything you need there, including bubblegum.

And then lastly, I had said last week that we had some projects coming up with NerdsSmith. So the first one that I have to announce is that starting October 30th at 7 p.m. Eastern -- that is Wednesday, at 7:30 Eastern time -- I will be in their new livestream show Obscurum, which is an actual play of City of Mist. I have been very excited to play City of Mist. And so when they had the auditions for that show, I was very excited to get into the cast. And Nyx will also be part of that cast.

Tass: Oh, nice.

Rev: And so that will be about 16, 20 weeks. Were going to take some time off for holidays. But that will be every week as we tell the story of these characters and Obscurum. And I will say this: we love to talk about like, alternate worlds, and, "Oh, what is this person like on this world?" And, "What's this person like on that world?" My Obscurum character is a character from this show, and I'm showing one of their other lives.

Tass: Oh! Do we get to know yet?

Rev: Do you want to know?

Tass: I -- yes.

Rev: You're going to learn about a different version of Alexander White.

Tass: OK.

Teej: Doc White?

Rev: Yeah. So I'm very excited about this. So you can find that show on [twitch.tv/wearenerdsmith](https://www.twitch.tv/wearenerdsmith). And that'll be, again, October 30th, starting at 7 p.m. Eastern. I feel like there's something else that I should be announcing, but I can't for the life of me remember what it is. So I guess until next week when I get a second chance, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Rev: On the sail, they have painted some kind of luminescent sphere on their sail to mask their approach, and that the moon is directly behind them.

Teej: I'm going to yell down to the captain, "Monarchs of the Moon on the starboard side!"

Jake: I want to hold out a hand to shake and just be like, "Hell of an attack, Captain."

Rev: LEIF: I thank ya.

Jake: "Look, this has been a real ride. But if you look around, you will see that there is a living cannonball tearing through your people, there is a monstrosity of a dwarf tearing through your people. We know what you are, and how to kill you. And we've got more than enough manpower to do it. So, with no further bloodshed, who sent you at us?"

Rev: LEIF: He's the leader of The Monarchs of the Moon. His name is Pardum. Well, he sets all of the missions that the smaller ships go out on from his Man of War.

Rev: And we see a shadow fall over T.J. And he gets clubbed in the back of the head with a huge fist, and falls to the ground.

Teej: I want to turn over and see who assailed me.

Rev: You roll over onto your back, laying on the ground here in the marketplace, and you see this very beefy dwarven woman standing over you. And she's got her hands on her hips, and she chuckles.

Rev: DWARVEN WOMAN: I have to admit, it took quite a while to track you down. Well, get up and dust yourself off. We've got to be getting home, little brother.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: T.J., here you lay on the dusty street of Alpo with this very, very muscular dwarf standing over you. And she has extended a hand out to help you up.

Teej: I'm gonna take her hand, but that's about all I'm doing.

Rev: OK. She pulls you up, no problem.

Teej: I'm gonna dust myself off. "Thank you, lass. But wh -- why'd you hit me on the back of the head?"

Rev: DWARVEN WOMAN: What's the matter with you?

Teej: "What do you mean, what's the matter with me? What's the matter with you? Just attacking people ... You know, out of nowhere?"

Rev: She reaches her hand back, and it looks like she's gonna swing at you again.

Teej: I'm gonna duck.

Rev: All right. Roll Defy Danger with Dexterity.

Teej: Oh, that's a six.

Jake: [laughs]

Rev: You get a giant handprint across your face as she just slaps you clean across.

Teej: "Ow! Quit it!"

Rev: DWARVEN WOMAN: What is the matter with you?

Teej: "What's the matter with --?! I'm just minding my own business, and you're smacking me around."

Rev: DWARVEN WOMAN: Why don't you sound right?

Teej: And then I'm realizing, as this is happening, that I'm someone else.

Rev: Yeah.

Teej: Yeah. I keep forgetting that I am. And I'm going to search my Rolodex to see if I recognize this person.

Rev: You do. It is your older sister, Ingrid.

Teej: "Oh, Ingrid. How's it going?"

Rev: INGRIT: Good. How's it going with you?

Teej: "Good." And I'm still looking through the Rolodex. Like, is there some kind of secret handshake that we share? Or anything that a brother and sister might have that I don't know about?

Rev: I think that as you look at her, the memories start to flash back to you. And it is a rough and tumble household. You know, you said you come from sellswords. And there are tons of memories of her walking through the house and you jumping off a bookshelf and tackling her.

Teej: [laughs]

Rev: You know, her getting up and throwing the bookshelf down onto you. Like, it is a combat whenever you find each other. And it's this way with the entirety of your family.

Teej: That's awesome. I'm going to ... I'm just going to jab her in the face.

All: [laugh]

Rev: All right. Roll Hack and Slash.

Teej: [chuckles] That's a twelve.

Rev: Yeah. You pull your fist back and you jack her right in the jaw, and she staggers back a little bit. And then she smiles and she opens her arms up to hug you.

Teej: I'm gonna hug her. But as I hug her, I'm going to roughly pat her on the back.

Rev: INGRIT: I thought for a minute that all of this living away from the battlefield made you go soft in the head.

Teej: "No, no, no. It's ... I've been hit in the head a couple of times. But, you know, it's been a while since I've seen you." And I'm going through the Rolodex to see if that's true.

Rev: It has been quite a while. It's been about six or seven years.

Teej: OK. And so she's probably changed a little. "You've changed. Look at you. Look at - look at you." And I'm holding her back from me and taking her in. What does she look like?

Rev: She is wearing some pretty rough armor. She has got a very large shield on her back. She has reddish hair that is in two very tight braids down her back. You notice that there is a new scar that runs across her nose and under her right eye. And she has a metal gauntlet on her right hand.

Teej: "Look at you! You -- you've changed. What's with the new scar?"

Rev: INGRIT: Oh, well, difficult work.

Teej: "Oh, of course. Yeah. Us fighters." And I hit her right on the shoulder. [chuckles]

Rev: INGRIT: Look at you! Don't look much different, but you sure sound different. Been in all of these big cities.

Teej: "Yeah. I've been -- I've been around a few times and, you know, just ..."

Rev: And I think as you're struggling with this, you do hear his voice in these memories that you have had.

Teej: And I'm going to do my best to try and do that voice. [Dwarven accent] "Yes. I've been doing pretty well in the cities. Though yes, a lot of me has changed. Just like you have after these -- what -- six, seven years?"

Rev: INGRIT: Yeah. It must be that much.

Teej: "Yes. So I know that you're busy and I'm busy, so ..."

Jake: [laughs]

Teej: "Maybe we can catch up later. I'll be back this way, I'm sure."

Rev: INGRIT: No. Didn't you hear me? You've got to come home.

Teej: "Why?"

Rev: INGRIT: Pa's dying. He's picking the successor, and he's named four of us to fight for it.

Teej: "Including me?"

Rev: INGRIT: Well, yeah. I didn't come find you to be a spectator, or to sell hot dogs in the stands.

Teej: "Oh, that's ... That's great. All right. Well ... Oof. I would love to come. And --"

Rev: INGRIT: Good. Well, let's get going.

Teej: "OK ..." And I guess I'm going to follow her.

Rev: And so as T.J. turns to follow her as she starts walking down the dock, Jake and Tass, you both see T.J. following this large dwarven woman.

Jake: Well, that just seems like par for the course. [laughs]

Tass: "Honin, we don't have time for that."

Teej: "Oh, yes. Oh, I have to introduce my friends. This is Walfus and this is Kolvar. They're my traveling companions. We've been -- we've been doing some fighting and we're actually on a mission right now. So if this could wait ..."

Jake: "What's with the voice?"

Teej: [leaning into the accent] "Uh ... What do you mean? I've always had this voice that I've had. Yeah."

Jake: Um ... [laughs] Does that, like, ring any bells for me? Am I supposed to have a voice?

Rev: You definitely hear his voice that he's doing, and it flashes some memories in your head of him talking to you. And yeah, I think in those memories, you hear yourself talking back and you do sound different than what you normally sound like. I think the same thing for Tass, too.

Jake: [Elven accent] "Oh, I see. We've lost our dialects travelling through the world, haven't we? Back to our roots we go, then."

Teej: [Halving accent] "Yes, in the voices that we recognize from each other well." [clears throat]

Jake: [chuckles] "So this is your ... You said your sister, yeah?"

Teej: "Aye. That -- that she is. She's my sister. And it turns out that my Pa is dying, and I have to go and fight to be the leader for the mercenaries, apparently."

Jake: I mean, I want to look at Ingrit, and be like, "Do you want to be the leader of the mercenaries?"

Rev: INGRIT: Oh, well, we all do.

Jake: "Well then there's no harm if he decides to concede his right to compete, is there?"

Rev: And she just starts laughing.

All: [laugh in-character]

Teej: [laughter dies down] "Um ... What's so funny?"

Rev: INGRIT: Well I mean, if you don't come home ... One, you won't see Da before he dies. And two, I mean you'd be ostracized and hunted.

Teej: "It would almost be like you're dead."

Teej: "Uh, yeah. Almost." And I'm going through my Rolodex again and seeing if whether or not I even had a good relationship with my family or even my father or anything.

Rev: Oh, yeah. You are out in the world trying to prove that you would be a fit leader for the Iron Striders, who is the group of sellswords that your father is currently the leader of.

Teej: And I'm having this realization while this conversation is happening. "Oh, OK. Well, is it anywhere near here? Is he around? Or is he at home?"

Jake: [laughs] Where has Pa chosen to die?

All: [laugh]

Rev: INGRIT: No, he's back home.

Teej: I'm going through the Rolodex. Do I know how far away this city is?

Rev: You told the story about the mountain range of Gulger. And this is the city of Gulgeroth, which is just below that mountain range. And it is about a day's travel. It is ... Underground to get there is the fastest way, because the seas there are strewn with rocks. And so it makes it very hard for ships to get through in any kind of expedited time. And so the dwarves who live there actually dug an underground tunnel to get from that continent, which is Vargos, to here.

Teej: Like, to the city of Alpo? Or just to this continent?

Rev: It does come out in the city of Alpo. It was specifically for this continent, because Alpo is one of the largest cities. So that's where they connected it to.

Teej: Gotcha. So kind of their version of the subway. Intercontinental subway.

Rev: More like the Chunnel.

Teej: Oh, OK.

Rev: Isn't that the one that connects two continents?

Teej: Yeah. France and England. "Well boys, it's about a day's worth for me to get back home under a tunnel. So I'm wondering if we shouldn't go to this place, because it's just a day out of the way?"

Teej: "How about we huddle on this?"

Jake: "Yes. Let's have a group huddle."

Teej: OK. And I guess we'll get into a huddle.

Rev: And she is still looking you very confused. But she takes a step back.

Jake: "OK. Grandpa is expecting us. And that's like priority one. So I feel like we need to stick to that, right? Like, what you would be doing for this family, we're doing for a dead man. When we're gone, Honin's not coming back."

Teej: "I know. And so it makes no sense, even if I win this thing, that I'd be passing it on anyways. Because somebody else would fight over it. So why not just kill two birds with one stone and just say no, and go?"

Tass: "Only point of interest I can think of, and it's very conditional. What if we need an army in this world?"

Jake: "Why?"

Tass: "I mean, Nash is here. He's doing something. I mean, if we have the potential for backup. Even if that's just him going to stay in good graces and not take over, he'd be in the good graces of this mercenary army. That's pretty dope to have up our sleeve, right?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "But that's if. If, if, if. That's a whole lot of if, when really the only super pertinent goal is to find Grandpa and make him safe, and see what he knows about what's going on here."

Jake: "OK. Maybe we can like, negotiate with her to give us a couple days to find Grandpa and get him home first? And then we go do this?"

Tass: "OK. I mean, yeah. I like that. Because that would probably reflect poorly if we're like, 'Hey, we're in the middle of a thing.' You know, if your leader's in the middle of a mission and then somebody's like, 'Hey, come home and see your dad.' And they're like, 'Yeah, F this.' Like that isn't really the sign of a good leader, right?"

Teej: "Oh. Yeah. Like so I need to, like, show her that I have to keep my promises, that sort of thing?"

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah."

Teej: "Oh, OK."

Jake: "Yeah. Swing this as like a ... I'm a leader. I commit to what I promise to do, and I do it to the end."

Teej: "Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. OK. And break." [Dwarven accent] "Sis, is there any way that we could maybe have a couple of days to go and finish our mission. Because, you know, it would look bad on me if I were to go back on my word. Because I promised these two I would help them with their mission, and everything."

Jake: "Yes. What kind of message would it send to the rest of the mercenary company if their leader-to-be had abandoned a mission that he was honor bound to, to come home?"

Rev: And she sighs.

Rev: INGRIT: Let me see the contract.

Teej: "I left it in Knottermore by the Bay with their local mayor. You might have heard of Baba Yaga?"

Rev: Roll Defy Danger with Charisma.

Teej: OK. That is a six.

Jake: Damn it.

Rev: I think that you know as you say this aloud, that inside of the leggings on your armor, there is a compartment, and you realize that it's empty. And you know that the contract that a member is currently working always sits in that compartment. And the oath that the Iron Striders give is, "The contract is binding, and we move forward till the job is done." So if there is no contract there, there's no binding contract between you and that person.

Teej: Well, fuck.

Rev: And she -- yeah. And she just ...

Rev: INGRIT: What's going on?

Teej: "What do you mean, what's going on?"

Rev: INGRIT: You don't seem to remember anything.

Teej: "I remembered you."

Rev: INGRIT: Did ya?

Teej: "Well, yeah. I just needed a few hits to remind me, that's all."

Rev: INGRIT: And you remember the way that we work. The contract you left back in -- where was this, now?

Teej: "Knottermore by the Bay."

Rev: INGRIT: Hmm.

Teej: "And the only reason I don't have it," and I show her my leg compartment, "is because the ... The contract-ee insisted that she keep it."

Rev: What are you two doing?

Jake: Strongly considering spilling the beans in their entirety. But I think for the moment kind of watching and waiting to see how this plays out.

Tass: Yeah. I think this is just full-on biting my fingernails, just waiting to see if something else absolutely has to be said.

Rev: Like, are you watching just the two of them? Are you looking around the marketplace?

Jake: Honestly, probably not. I think I'm pretty enraptured with this argument.

Tass: Yeah, same.

Rev: So I think about that time, she raises her hand and she snaps her finger, and half a dozen dwarves step out from the crowd with weapons drawn.

Rev: INGRIT: Get him to the tunnel. I don't know what's going on with him, but he's not right. We'll figure him out at home.

Rev: And these dwarves step up and grab on to T.J.'s arms, and a few of the other ones lower their spears around him.

Teej: [struggle sounds]

Jake: I think I'm going to look at Tass, and then I'm going to sing the buffing song. [laughs] I think it's time to hurt some folk.

Tass: OK. As he's singing, I want to go big horn sheep, baby.

Rev: OK. And what are you doing?

Tass: I want to essentially try to just ram at least one of them that's grabbed T.J. I want to knock him the hell off.

Rev: All right. So Jake, roll Arcane Arts. And Tass, roll your Shapeshift, and then Hack and Slash.

Tass: That's an eight for my Shapeshift.

Rev: OK, you get a hold 2.

SFX: [Jake rolls]

Jake: [laughs]

Tass: What do I get, baby?

Teej: Oh, no ...

Jake: Punished, probably! I got a four.

Tass: No! Jake ...

Rev: All right. So Tass turns into this big horned ram and starts to charge at the group. Jake starts to sing, and you see that she almost recognizes this song. Like, it should not be possible that she knows the song. But she steps forward in front of the group, and her gauntlet starts to glow. And she punches Tass directly in the horned head as he charges at the group. Tass, you take 17 points of damage.

Jake: Whoa.

Rev: And as this hits, there is a flare of magic. And as you hit the ground, you are a halfling again. All of the magic that had transformed you, dissipates.

Tass: [pained] "Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god. Everything hurts."

Jake: Does this trigger anything with my Bardic Lore? First encountering this item that seems to have something to do with spells and magic?

Rev: Sure, absolutely.

Jake: I get to ask the GM any one question about it. What is it?

Rev: I think that you recognize it because it is a very powerful artifact. You recognize this as Juraund's Anti-Magic Gauntlet. And that the name is exactly what it is -- when it comes into contact with somebody, it dispels any magic effect that is on them.

Jake: Jesus. OK.

Rev: So Tass, you have tumbled backwards onto the ground and you are back in your halfling form, and you see that she walks up and she draws the shield off of her back, and she raises it up like she's going to bring it down on you. And you see a very sinister looking spike at the center of it. And at the same time, four of those other dwarves draw bows and take aim at you, Jake.

Rev: INGRIT: On my mark. Let's get rid of these problems.

Teej: "Stop! Stop it right now."

Rev: INGRIT: What?

Teej: "I'll go with you. And they won't be any more trouble for you. Will you, boys?"

Jake: "What the hell are you doing?"

Teej: "I'm trying to save your life, is what I'm doing. And this is how I'm going to do it. I'm gonna go with her. You two are going to look for James Francis Tincher. Do you understand? Because looking at these boys here, it seems to me that you wouldn't stand a chance against 'em."

Jake: "What if you don't stand a chance against them? What if everything goes sideways and you're by yourself?"

Teej: "Then ... That's the way it has to be. And there's a bigger picture to think about, here. The whole universe -- you know that thing?"

All: [laugh]

Teej: "Didn't know if you were getting that or not."

Jake: Fuck. This is a really scary idea, to let him go by himself. But it seems very much like we're going to be executed if we don't.

Teej: "And don't worry about me, all right? I've got my big boy pants on." And I'm going to take myself by the belt and I'm going to just kind of shift my pants a little.

Jake: I want to -- am I close enough that I could, like, lean and just vaguely whisper at him? "She's wearing a gauntlet that punches the magic out of things. Just ... Just keep that in mind."

Teej: "Oh, yeah. Yeah."

Jake: "OK."

Teej: "OK, thanks."

Tass: "We can't just let you go. We have to do this. We have to complete the mission."

Teej: "And you two will complete the mission. But without me, because I'm going with her. Otherwise there won't be anybody to complete the mission. You've got to do it. Besides, all you got to do is take him back to Yaga, and I'll meet you there."

Tass: Hoo, boy. I think I stand, spitting blood as I do. I'm in no position to fight anymore.

Rev: How many hit points do you have left out, of curiosity?

Tass: Oh, one, two ... Two. Two.

Jake: [chuckles] Oh my god.

Tass: "I hate this. I hate it."

Teej: "I know. But it's got to be done. Don't worry about me. I'm the tank now, remember?"

Tass: "I'm also selfishly a little worried about us."

Jake: "Strength in numbers."

Tass: [sighs] "All right. Just ... We'll try to find you as soon as we can, OK?"

Teej: "Same."

Rev: She looks around at the group and nods and puts her shield back onto her back. And as she does, the other four dwarves re-sling their bows over their shoulders.

Rev: INGRIT: All right, boys. Let's get moving.

Rev: And she turns and walks off with T.J.

So Tass and Jake, here you stand in the marketplace. You've got a barrel of plums, a barrel of pickles. And there is the bag of grain that T.J. was going through to check for the quality. What are you gonna do now?

Tass: Apparently, take two trips to get all this back to the boat.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Yeah, take all this shit back to the boat, and let them know that Honin will not be joining us on the rest of this journey because he had to go take care of other business.

Rev: Who are you telling?

Jake: Cordelia? She seems like she's kind of in charge of the ... What's the word?

Teej: She's H.R. for the boat.

Jake: Kind of. Yeah.

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Rev: CORDELIA: Thank you. I suppose that means you have a little more room to stretch inside your state room.

Jake: "Hell yeah."

All: [laugh]

Rev: And she makes note of the two barrels and the sack, and has them taken downstairs.

Rev: CORDELIA: Thank you for replacing these. Very fortunate that they didn't get away with more.

Jake: "How long is it before we take off again?"

Rev: CORDELIA: We've got about six hours.

Jake: "Six hours to kill. What do you want to do?"

Tass: "I ... I don't know. I had considered, since there's just two of us ... You know, I haven't actually spent any time with horses. I don't think horses are actually in my Rolodex. So I thought about like finding maybe a stable or something, and seeing if I could tune in on that."

Jake: "Sure, man. How long does that take?"

Tass: "I mean ... Several hours, probably."

Jake: "OK. I mean, I might go take in some of, like, the art and culture around this place while you do that, then. Maybe learn something about this town, I don't know."

Tass: "Yeah, that's a good call. I don't think it would hurt to just start learning. Like, who ... Who likes who, you know what I mean? Just in this wide world, who are sort of the good guys, who are sort of the bad guys ... Yeah. Good call."

Jake: Can I use ...? So one of my moves is A Port in the Storm. When you return to a civilized settlement you've visited before, tell the GM when you were last here. They'll tell you how it's changed since then. So we've established that I've been to Alpo, because I've been to the museum.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I'm going to say that was like half a century ago, probably. Like elves are old, and it's been a long time since he was enlisted. But I think that as part of a stopover, like when he and his unit were going from place to place, they ended up in Alpo for like an overnight or a couple of nights. And that was when he took the opportunity to go look

around at the museums and learn some stuff about history and magic, and whatever. But what has changed about this town since then?

Rev: Structurally, not a lot has changed. It has always been a very beautiful and ornate city. You know that they have a lot of interest in the arts here. There is a place where they do concerts, they do plays, they have museums. They also have an academy here for various arts, which is very rare. And the thing that has changed since you were here last is you notice that some of the colorscape has changed. There used to be a lot of silvers and blues, and there's a lot more purple and gold now in some of the trimming and in some of the roofs of these buildings. And you actually know that that happens when there is a change of leadership, and that the castle on the hill is owned by the Sweetleafs -- they're ones who founded this city. And it must mean that whoever was in charge when you were here last, that their heir has now taken over the city.

Jake: Hmm. Well, this place used to look like the merchant district, but now looks like the mage quarter. So ...

Tass: I hate that I just ...

Jake: [laughs]

Tass: I just feel that so hard. OK.

Jake: "Yeah, there's been a change of leadership here. So I wonder if it's been a change ... Like if, you know, Nash and Bennari are taking over, or something. Or if this has been like a rebellious change. I might actually head up to the castle then, while you do your thing. And see who's in charge nowadays, and what the deal is."

Tass: "OK, good call."

Jake: Before we actually split off and go do our own thing, I should probably heal him, because he's in real bad shape.

Tass: Yes, please.

Rev: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Roll it.

Jake: Kay. Ten.

SFX: All right, roll your healing.

Jake: That's very good. That's fifteen.

Tass: I need it. I need it so bad. OK. Thank you. That almost tops me off. So that's -- we should probably stop there, for our own safety.

Jake: Well, do you carry any bandages?

Tass: Oh yeah, I absolutely do.

Jake: Oh, yeah. Then yeah. You can top yourself off.

Tass: Yeah, that's true.

Jake: If you have to.

Rev: All right. So Tass ...

Jake: Looks at a horse. [laughs] For four hours.

All: [laugh]

Jake: Tell me your secrets!

Rev: Just looking it dead in the eye. But he has to keep shifting, since they have their eyes on the side.

Tass: I imagine my Studied Essence is just me literally trying to mirror in halfling form. Just all of the little poses and the mannerisms.

Jake: Have you seen the videos of the girls who do dressage as horses?

Tass: Yes, absolutely.

Jake: It's just that.

Tass: [laughs]

Rev: So, yeah. This will take you out of the scene, so to speak, for the majority of the remaining time before the ship leaves. So Jake, so you're gonna go up to the castle.

Think like, Buckingham Palace. So there is a place where you can tour, but there are guards. And there is the place where the royalty actually lives, which is not accessible.

Jake: OK. Well then I think I would just make my way into sort of the public spaces first, and see what sort of information I can drum up. Because I've got my elf bard move also. When you enter an important location -- your call -- you can ask the GM for one fact from the history of that location. And, you know, I certainly don't think I would have come here.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I think it would have been ... It would have been uncouth for like just an enlisted travelling to come to the castle when they were on stopover. So I mean, the fact I want to know is what was this shift in leadership that I've seen reflected through the city?

Rev: So as you travel through this public area, you see lots of portraits, you see lots of sculpture. There is even some performance going on. And the change in leadership was the father stepping down, and his son is now the ruler here, and his name is Sven. So the transition from father to son was not violent. It was not any kind of an overthrow. It was a passing on.

Jake: It's common for that to come with kind of like a ... I mean, a color change, literally?

Rev: Yeah. It really is just to reflect the artistic taste of whichever Sweetleaf happens to be the leader at the time.

Jake: OK. So knowing still that this is the Sweetleaf line and that they're amicable and this wasn't like an overthrow or anything ... Either do I know or is it information I could gather being here, like, whether they're allied with the Dead Isles?

Rev: Yeah. Why don't you Spout Lore.

Jake: Okie dokie. Oof. Nope. Five.

Rev: So you do know from that I think that the Sweetleafs and Alpo have not ever been a part of any war. They have always been a neutral location. That's why you were able to come here before and kind of restock before you made your way across the sea. Who were you in a war against?

Jake: So we were in a conflict with Rhymeshore, which is actually on Vargos. It is like the very southern edge of Vargos, so just the closest place you would make land from here

to Vargos. But they were essentially trying to like bogart trade and passage through their waters. They were like pirate-adjacent, but as a government. So they were kind of like, you know, nobody goes through here without paying us protection money, you know? And clearly, everybody had a problem with that, with hindering free trade on open water. And so it became an entire military conflict.

Rev: And so that's part of the reason that Gulgeroth created the underground and under-ocean tunnel from that continent to this continent, was to try to get around that embargo.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: So with them being neutral amongst the wars, they have always traded with anybody that has something to offer. And you do know that they actually trade specifically with Bennari and the area that he is in charge of there. They exchange writings, like poetry and opera and plays, because Bennari's group, having a different point of view on life as undead, have written some things that Sven has found very fascinating.

Jake: And in turn, Bennari finds the things that they create fascinating?

Rev: I don't know that that's the direct correlation. He does get something from them. You know, you assume that there's got to be an exchange back and forth. You know that they get plays and music from the Dead Isles. You're not quite sure what they get from Alpo.

Jake: OK. So we're not going to get any help here, is what I think. Like, they're not ... They're not going to ally with us against the Dead Isles. They are Switzerland.

Rev: Yeah. You've never heard of them allying with anybody in a confrontation.

Jake: OK. Well, that's good to know. Yeah, I think that's all I'm out here to learn.

Rev: OK. Where you gonna go next?

Jake: I'll head to the museum now. It is time to go research the crystals.

Rev: OK. There is a donation box at the museum.

Jake: Yeah, of course there is.

Rev: [laughs]

Jake: What's a normal ... [laughs] What's a normal amount to donate to the museum?

Rev: Three coin.

Jake: Sure. Three coin it is. You know what? Five coin.

Rev: Ooh.

Jake: I'm a patron of the arts.

Rev: That's fair.

Teej: [sings] Hey, big spender ...

Rev: So where do you want to go in the museum?

Jake: The section that I remember learning about the red crystal. I want to study up on all that ... All that magic, all those correlations.

Rev: OK. It is actually in the same wing that it was in before when you were here 60 years ago. So you head into that wing of the museum. And there is a large display of different colored crystals. There are tapestries on the wall that depict how the crystals enhance people. And so you see, near the red crystals, people doing feats of strength. And there are books laying out at each section that talk about great deeds that have been done with the various crystals. And it also talks about the locations in which they can be found and how they're mined. It really just goes through the whole process of mining them, shaping them, fitting them into magic items, and things like that.

Jake: I mean, I've got like five more hours to kill. So I think I am very thoroughly going through everything here. Like, I am reading every plaque. I am looking at every exhibit.

Rev: As you go around, roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3.

Jake: What here is useful or valuable to me?

Rev: So as you look around this room at the exhibit, I think the first thing that you start to notice is that almost nobody comes in here. This exhibit has been here for a very long time. And so people pass by and they glance in and they see that it's the same thing, and they don't come in. So for a large chunk of the time that you're here, you're here by yourself. But as you are looking at the tapestry by the orange crystals, you notice that there are some scratch marks on the wall next to the sconce by the tapestry.

Jake: What happened here recently?

Rev: It looks like that sconce moves. It looks like it can be slid.

Jake: I want to activate that and see what happens.

Rev: So you reach up and you grab a hold of the sconce and slide it in the direction of the scuff marks. And you hear the grinding of stone coming from your right.

Jake: Oh, what is it? I want to look.

Rev: It's the tapestry to your right.

Jake: Like, stone grinding behind it?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I want to part it and see what happened.

Rev: Yeah. So you pull the tapestry away from the wall, and it's a pretty tight fit to try to even get your arm there, because the table holding all the books is pretty close. But you see that a stone door has slid open.

Jake: Does it lead to a hallway or a staircase or a ladder?

Rev: From what you can see here, it is a hallway with stairs in it.

Jake: So for my last hold, I think I'll go with what should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: You realize that that made a lot of noise when it opened. And it's very dusty. It seems like this has not been opened in a very long time. But you do see a flicker of

orange on the stairs, as if there is a torch lit somewhere further below. So it seems like this is not empty.

Jake: Is there a mechanism on the inside of this that if I closed it, I'll be able to get back out?

Rev: Yeah. I think that you look around for a moment, and you can find that there is a switch on the wall right inside of here that would open it again.

Jake: I'm going to close it behind me, then.

Rev: OK. So you flick this, and the stone door slides sideways, and pulls in and seals.

Jake: And I'm going to go explore this spooky place.

Rev: So you start to head down the stairs, and the stairs start to spiral. And you come to a hallway, and there is a door on your left, a door on your right, and then it opens up into a much larger room in front of you.

Jake: Is that much larger room like visible from where I am? Or do I need to -- would I need to advance in to see what's ...

Rev: It's pretty dark. You can see a faint glow. There are torches along this wall, but you can see additional orange glows inside of the room.

Jake: I want to peek that big room first.

Rev: All right. Roll Discern Realities.

Jake: Two. [laughs]

Rev: So Jake, as you start to creep into this room to get a look at it, you trip forward on a lip that you did not see and you stagger into the center of the room and fall onto the ground. And the slight orange glow that you saw gets brighter and brighter as you realize that there is an orange gem in the ceiling that is glowing down on you. And you lose 3 points of Constitution.

Jake: Whoa. Does this seem like it's an effect of being under this orange crystal? I mean, what did I read about orange crystals while I was going through the museum?

Rev: They deal with how sturdy you feel, how lively you feel. And you feel exhausted as you are bathed in this orange light.

Jake: OK. So being that my area of expertise is spells and magics, when I first encounter an important creature, location, or item ... I'm going to go with whatever this thing is. I mean, I know it's a gem, but like whatever -- it's like a trap or something, almost.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I can ask you one question about it. How do I reverse this effect?

Rev: So as you lay on the ground and you look up at the orange gem in the ceiling, you can see that it is placed inside of a very intricate piece of machinery that is attached to the ceiling. You think the only way to reverse this effect would be to somehow reverse engineer this machine. That whatever this machine is, its purpose is to drain a target. And the only way to reverse it would be to somehow design a piece of equipment that could do the opposite. I would ask you how you know that, but I think that in this moment it is Jake having seen T.J. work on Weird Science machines. This is not something that Kolvar would necessarily know, but Jake sees a lot of strange technology. I don't think I will ask you how you know, because I think this is a Jake is feeding the information, not Kolvar.

Jake: Does this game work the same way? I assume if I lose my Constitution, my max hit points go down?

Rev: So yeah, you'd go down by 3.

Jake: OK. Is there anything else in here? Like looking around, is there ... Did someone trigger this? Is there somebody watching me?

Rev: Yeah. So as you are sitting in this orange light, you have looked up and you have examined the machine. And you start to peer out of this dome of orange light around the room, and a figure steps forward into the light, and you can see very gray skin under dark robes.

Rev: CRAZED VOICE: Oh. Oh, I had not yet got to the point of testing on namegivers, but I'm ... Oh, I'm glad that it seems to be working. [giggles] Yes, this is all very good. This ... Oh yes, they will be pleased. Tell me. Tell me. How do you feel, hmm?

Jake: I'm going to open my mouth to respond, and instead I am going to shout a Deafening Note.

Tass: [laughs] Oh my god.

Rev: All right, roll it.

Jake: Oh my god. That's so bad. That's a four.

Rev: You open your mouth to scream, and you see a shimmer of metal come from the darkness behind him. It is large and it is fast, and you take 13 points of damage.

Jake: [quietly] Jesus.

Rev: As you see, from the shadow, this giant iron golem come into the circle and clamp its hands around your mouth and start to squeeze. And there is a brief moment of panic, and then unconsciousness.

Tass, you have spent the required time to study the horse, and you can become a horse now. You've got about two hours before the ship takes off. What do you want to do?

Tass: I think I'm just kind of running around in horse form. Just showing it off. Tromping down the streets.

Jake: Untitled Horse Game.

Tass: Yes!

All: [laugh]

Teej: Just causing mayhem.

Rev: Stealing keys, posing as fake horses to get bows on his neck ...

Tass: I have an idea for this horse, too. Can I ... Can I describe the horse?

Rev: Yeah, please. Absolutely.

Tass: I think this is gonna be one of the first ones that is off of the color scheme, since I'm observing something that's from somewhere else.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I like the idea of this big-ass, like almost Clydesdale-esque horse. Like, I looked for something that isn't necessarily fast, but is just sturdy and has endurance. So I'm picturing like this big silver horse, with its mane being like red and orange. Like that idea of strength and endurance and constitution is something that is bred into these horses from whatever land they're from. And then add ram horns.

Rev: Excellent. So you do that for two hours. [laughs] Is that what you do for two hours? Let me rephrase that.

Tass: I mean ... I do. I think I tromp around like that for a little bit, but then I'm just gonna go back to the ship and wait for Jake.

Rev: OK. So you get back to the ship and it is five, ten minutes before they start to set sail. And Jake is not back.

Tass: I think I'm kind of in a panic. Like, did he already go to the bunk? Like, is he here, and I'm just an idiot? And so I look around all over the ship.

Rev: All right. Tass, roll Discern Realities, since you are searching the ship.

Tass: That's a nine.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 1.

Tass: I think with the idea -- like, you know, I'm kind of searching for him. But just, what should I be on the lookout for?

Rev: So as you go around looking for Jake, you don't see any sign of him. And all of his stuff is still on the ship. But you do notice that there is a crate that has recently been loaded on -- it was not here before -- that has very strange markings on it that you have not seen before while you have been in this world.

Tass: OK. Oh, man ... As much as I want to, you know, check every loot box, so to speak ... I think I have to be true to myself right now. And I think that that's maybe a checkmark in the back of my mind, and I am tunnel vision looking for Jake.

Rev: OK. So yeah, you make your way back to the top of the ship. And they are pulling the gangplank back. Everyone is getting into their positions, and you do not see him anywhere.

Tass: "Hey, where's the captain?"

Rev: As you ask that question aloud, you see that he is up by the wheel.

Tass: I think I'm running up there. "Hey, can I, like, pay you to just hold on for like an hour?"

Rev: CAPTAIN KAY BROADSTONE: Sorry, this ... We've got things on here that are delicate, time sensitive. We've got to get moving.

Tass: "One of the guys had to go because he had to go. And we just knew we were going to get our losses there. But the other one isn't back yet. Like, I just need a minute to go look for him, please."

Rev: CAPTAIN KAY BROADSTONE: I'm sorry. I can't control it. We've got to go. You can -- you're more than welcome to hop off before we take off. But once this hits the time, we're off.

Tass: "Shit, shit, shit." I'm just running over to the side and just looking out. Just scanning the crowd. I mean, just anything to see if I can spot him.

Rev: Yeah. You do not see him anywhere.

Tass: "Oh, god. Oh, god ..." I don't -- I don't know. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do. I think the first thing I do is transform into a bird. Like, just, I don't even think I think about it. It's like just owl, whatever. The first thing that pops into my head.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: That is a nine. Math.

Rev: OK.

Tass: And I want to ... Oh my god. Yeah. I think what I have in my head is just to go straight up in the air, you know? And with bird vision, see if I can invoke something to scan further than just the docks, to see if I see him coming down the roads or anything.

Rev: So you fly into the air and start to soar through the air above Alpo and you look around with your enhanced vision, and you don't see any sign of him. And as you start to

circle, you see the Scoundrel's Fortune start to set sail, and they have the wind at their backs. They're making a pretty good clip. And you know that it won't be very long before you would not be able to reach the ship again.

Tass: Shit. I ... I think I have to ... Oh, I'm never gonna forgive myself either way. Cause I let T.J. down by letting his grandpa go. I'm the one with the device to communicate with him. Or I'm letting Jake down. I think I have to trust Jake. I think I hear T.J.'s voice. Like, in the way that he was very firmly saying his grandfather's name, and that he's gonna go and be by himself. And ... Oh my god, I'm never going to forgive myself. I fly back to the boat.

Rev: The camera follows Tass back to the boat as he lands. And he transforms back into his halfling form and stands at the railing, looking out back towards Alpo. And we follow his gaze, and the camera ducks in and out of the city. And we see T.J. being escorted down some very dark stairs towards a very large tunnel that leads underneath the ocean. And we go through the stone and travel underground and come out into the runed room that Jake has been knocked unconscious in. And we see the pale, frail figure raise his hand, and a portal opens, and the metal golem carries Jake through and the figure follows.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

Carolyn: The Critshow is a Critshow Studios production, edited and produced by Brandon Wentz with music by Jake Pierle. You can find more information about us at thecritshowpodcast.com. To keep up to date with upcoming live shows, contests, and other special events, follow us at The Critshow on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. For even more weekly content, join us at Patreon.com/TheCritshow.