

City of Neon Lights (S3, E4)

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. Rev here. Just a few things before we get into today's episode:

On July 28th at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, we are going to be doing a special Twitch stream of the new game Grounded, which will have launched that day. It is about a group of kids who have been shrunken down and are lost out in the wilds of their backyard. Kind of like Honey, I Shrank the Kids. So you can follow us at [Twitch.tv/TheCritshow](https://www.twitch.tv/TheCritshow), and make sure to tune in on July 28th at 8:00 p.m. for some miniature hijinks.

Also, if you could go to thecritshowpodcast.com/survey and fill out our listener survey. We have got a handful of questions for you that will take a few minutes for you to answer, and it is information that will help us as we move forward -- trying to figure out the kind of content we want to make, and where we can look to find new listeners as we go. So again, that is thecritshowpodcast.com/survey. At the end of the survey, you'll have the option to submit your email through a separate form to be entered to win one of five prizes, including a set of official Gen Con 2020 dice from Crystal Caste, a copy of Rapsallion by Magpie Games, as well as some of the swag that we have. So again, that is thecritshowpodcast.com/survey. And if you could take a moment to fill that out, it will be very helpful for us as we move forward.

And with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX:

RECAP MUSIC

Tass: "We're doing a job and we fell into this hole, and we kind of found this. And it is my impression that Jake found the thing that belongs to Baba Yaga and just took it back to her, because it's hers."

Rev: STROHM: About three minutes now before the next group is due to be in here. And if Maddie has not handed me her item, she won't be able to enter. And that would make Maddie very angry.

Jake: "Maybe we give her the key and offer to fight for her."

Rev: MADDIE: I suppose if there's gonna be any chance that you're gonna step in for my fighter, you would indeed have to fight. Make sure that you're as good as, if not better, than the ones I've been working with.

Rev: And Maddie raises her hand and gives a gesture, and you hear a small bell ring. The ghoul, Hounde, raises both fists in the air and looks like they're getting ready to slam them on to the ground.

Jake: I want to try to submit him.

Rev: How do you want to do this?

Jake: I want to get him in basically a crucifix hold.

Rev: And you hear a pop in his shoulder, and he lets out a yelp and taps his hand.

Jake: I let him go and get off him immediately.

Rev: Jake, you are standing there, facing a humanoid shape made of thousands of ants

Jake: As he charges, I'm gonna raise both fists and just smash them down on the pincers.

Rev: You mistime this, because T.E.C. is moving so fast. And they get this mandible around you and start to squeeze. And Tass, up in the stands you hear, echo through the arena, the dull crack of ribs breaking.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Rev: Tass, sitting up in the stands, you hear the sound of Jake's ribs break, and then you hear a sea of tiny voices chanting ...

Rev: T.E.C.: [Overlapping] Submit, submit, submit.

Tass: "Oh, bub!"

Jake: Damn, I wish this wasn't just one point into unstable. Because like so far, I get the impression that I could take one more hit and not die. But I could also take one point of damage from fighting in this condition, and die. I'm gonna try to trap it again.

Rev: Ok, so you're going to try to trap it, with ...

Jake: With me in its mandibles, yes.

Rev: Uh-huh. Yeah, I think you can try that. What will happen if you succeed is that it will essentially freeze around you.

Jake: Nope. That's a five.

Rev: So you reach down and try to summon these chains again, and you notice that all of the antennas start to flick pretty quickly, like they know what you're about to do. And they put the squeeze on instantly, and it is bad. You can feel the broken ribs starting to press into vital things inside of you. So you take 1-harm, armor-defeating, as it continues to squeeze you with these giant mandibles.

Jake: Fuck. I tap out

Rev: And as soon as you lay a hand on it and tap, it disperses and turns back into its humanoid form.

Rev: T.E.C.: That was very good. That was some interesting things you could do, there.

Jake: "My god, T.E.C., you are a formidable opponent."

Rev: T.E.C.: Yes, I've trained for many years to be possibly entered into this competition.

Jake: [Weakly] "Yeah, it paid off." [Coughs in pain] "My ribs ..."

Rev: And Samuel comes down after, you tap out, as you're standing there coughing and holding your ribs, and lays hands on you and starts to mutter. And you feel things pop back into the right place.

Jake: [Yelps]

Rev: Like, it's not a comfortable situation.

Jake: [Gasps]

Rev: And you are stabilized and fully healed, and Maddie makes her way down to you.

Rev: MADDIE: Well, I have to admit, you did much better than I expected.

Jake: "Not me. I did not do better than I expected."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, yeah? Again, these cryptid and monsters, they've been training a long time to work their way up to a chance to be entered into this. This is like ... I don't really follow boxing anymore. What's the top one? Like, the biggest competition to win? Like a heavyweight title of the world, is that still it?

Tass: "Boxing Super Bowl?"

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, yeah. That one.

Jake: "We're not legally allowed to say Super Bowl. It's the big game."

Tass: "Oh, I see."

Jake: "The boxing big game."

Rev: MADIE: Yeah. Yeah, but it's like that.

Jake: "Can I still train with you?"

Rev: MADDIE: With me?

Jake: "Yeah."

Rev: MADDIE: I don't see why not. I could spend a little time with you. I mean not a whole lot in the next two days -- I got to figure out which one of these three is going forward, and spend some time on them.

Jake: "That's fair. You just -- you have made some very powerful fighters here, and it would be cool to be one of them."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah.

Jake: "Maybe not for this competition specifically, but just, like, to be good at it."

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, I'm sure you could probably find all number of supernatural fight clubs out there.

Jake: I'm just, like, thinking and nodding. I'm like, that is fucking radical. Yeah. OK. Side hustle.

Rev: And I think we jump again about twenty minutes later, and you're all sitting inside of Maddie's office. And she is filling out a form, and you can see that it says her official submission to the Monster Mash is T.E.C. And she folds it up and she seals it into an envelope, and as soon as the envelope closes, it vanishes.

Rev: MADDIE: So, you boys think you're gonna stay around, still. Take in the fight?

Tass: "I'd love to do just that, but I think we have a few other things now that are going to take precedent over just watching."

Rev: MADDIE: That's fine. Again, it doesn't start for two days. So if you decide you want to come back and give it a watch, it's a hell of a thing to see.

Tass: "Yeah. If we get the chance, I'd love to."

Rev: And as she gets up from her desk, an envelope appears in the air and falls onto it.

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, I guess I must have been the last one.

Rev: And she opens it up, and she lays out this bracket. And you can see the names of all of the fighters and their trainers, numbered one through eight. And then you can see that the ultimate winner of those eight fights the champion from last year in a championship match. So ultimately, there are eight fights that happen. And Maddie sits back down in her chair, and she puts her elbow down next to the bracket and rests her chin on it, and starts looking over it. The trainers and the fighters are listed down the bracket as follows: The trainer Fez has entered Grimjoy, the trainer Sky has entered Ion Wolf, the trainer Doreen Grey has entered Cheshire, the trainer Jax has LJ, the trainer Maddie has entered T.E.C., the trainer Psych has entered Psycrawler, the trainer The Tinkineer has entered Spark, the trainer E has Jeremy. And the name floating off to the side for the last trainer is one you recognize. Their fighter is named Roaster. And the name of the trainer is Callidus, the leader of Primus Daemonium Familia.

Tass: "Hold on. Jake, isn't that the demon family, or whatever?"

Jake: "Yeah, I think so. I mean, I don't think we met that one."

Tass: "No. Yeah, I just. I remember the name. Huh. Well, I wonder if Infortuni ..."

Jake: "That was the one that we dealt with, yeah."

Tass: "Yeah. I wonder if he would be around for that. That would be awkward, if we go to watch."

Jake: "I mean he couldn't really acknowledge us, right?"

Tass: "That's very true."

Rev: MADDIE: Well I'm gonna take a moment here and go over some of these files real quick. I actually got video on all of these, I think.

Tass: "Oh, awesome. Can we see any of that?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, sure.

Rev: And she sits back down at the desk and pulls a laptop out of a drawer. And she goes through a couple of folders and pulls out some files and drops them into a player, and hits play. And she spins the laptop, so that you can all see the screen as well.

And the first one that comes up on the screen is Grimjoy. And Grimjoy is a naga, and they have two Assassin's Creed style blades that come out of their wrist, but you can see that they are made of the same material as like a scorpion's tail. They stand about six and a half feet tall, but that changes depending on how low on their tail they're moving around. Sometimes they're only two feet off the ground, sometimes they're eight feet above the ground. They're very quick and they dart a lot, and try to get submission holds on the people you see them fighting.

The next one that comes up is Cheshire. And this one's a little weird to watch, because all you kind of see is almost like a Predator field. You just see something invisible moving around, and then the opponent gets these gashes on them -- what's clearly claws lashing out. But then you do get a brief moment in one of the clips of when the person is down, a smile appears in the air.

Tass: [Chuckles]

Rev: The next is Iron Wolf. It's a werewolf biker. And you've seen this outfit before. They've got a chain around their waist. They don't ever use it. But they are wearing a Monarchs of the Moon leather jacket,

Jake: "Those sons of bitches."

Tass: "Oh my god, this is great."

Rev: The next up is Psycrawler, which looks like a maelstrom of purple and pink energy. And it seems to lash out at people, as if it's diving through them and then appearing on the other side.

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, that one's a little more difficult. From what I understand, that one's just a collection of bad dreams and memories and negative emotion.

Tass: "Wow. How do you subdue that?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, that's a phenomenal question.

Rev: The next up is Spark. What comes up on the screen is a mechanized suit. And then you see five little gremlins made out of electricity jump into different parts of it: two in the leg, one in the torso, one in each arm, and they start to move it around. And it's almost like Voltron. They fight as one. And it seems like they have a connected hive mind.

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah. Normally they don't allow physical things like weapons and stuff, but apparently this one's OK, because it's required to keep them on this plane of existence. Like, if they're outside of it too long, they just dissipate.

Tass: "Huh. OK."

Rev: Next is LJ, and all you see on the screen for the first couple of seconds is just a grassy meadow. And then the whole meadow starts to shift and flux, and it rises into the form of a hill giant -- literally made out of the hill. And the opponents that it's fighting are much smaller than it is. You see things that seem like they should tower you that pale in comparison to the height of this creature.

Tass: "Wow. How do they even get that in the arena?"

Rev: MADDIE: Oh, the arena changes, based off the needs of the fighters. Like, it's never the same arena twice.

Tass: "OK. Very cool."

Rev: And then there is Jeremy, who looks like a completely normal human being, except that his arms and legs are tentacles, and his head looks like it has the mouth of a kraken.

Jake: "What's, uh ... So what's his deal?"

Rev: MADDIE: Apparently he's an amazing grappler, and it takes a lot to get him to submit. He's conditioned to deep sea, and so putting pressure on him doesn't get him to submit, because he doesn't feel it.

Jake: "Uh-huh."

Rev: And he's wearing, like, khakis and a white button down shirt with short sleeves and a tie. And he's got a name badge. Like, it looks like he just came from his job at like Best Buy.

Jake: "What is he?"

Rev: MADDIE: From my understanding, he's some kind of ... Uh, how do I say this? Sometimes you're on the sea a long time and you get lonely.

Jake: "OK. Yeah, that's what I was wondering."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: And then the last is the winner from the previous year: Roster. Roster is eight feet tall, enormous wings, and radiates heat. You can see on the footage that there is just pulsing waves around them. Wherever they step, it leaves char behind. And he opens his mouth and huge gouts of flame roll across the ground, but then they start to move and shift, and it seems like he is able to control the fire, once it is outside of his body.

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, there's a couple of these. I think it'll be pretty difficult for T.E.C., but I think that T.E.C. is my best option for a lot of these. And a lot of it comes down to, you know, what the draw is we get -- who we gotta go against, and where'd it end up being. We could be in a place that's really bad for us, or it could be really beneficial. It just all depends on the luck of the draw.

Tass: "Yeah, fair."

Rev: MADDIE: Well, I'm gonna take this footage and start making up a plan, find some people I can get to spar with T.E.C. Need anything else?

Tass: "No, I don't think so. We have some errands we have to get done ourselves. But if I can get back for this, I sure want to."

Rev: MADDIE: Yeah, maybe I'll see you both a couple of days. And when you get back, we'll set up a time, Jake, for you to spar.

Jake: "Nice."

Rev: And she picks up the laptop and leaves the office and heads down to the training room.

Tass: "Well, hell. Back to Baba?"

Jake: "Oh, yeah." I look at my watch. Make sure it hasn't been an hour yet. "Yeah, we gotta go back. I told her to wait an hour."

Tass: "Oh, OK."

Rev: And you both appear outside of Yaga's cottage.

Jake: Is the door still open?

Rev: It is.

Jake: Walk calmly and slowly inside.

Rev: You walk inside and she is sitting at the table, and she's playing a game of solitaire.

Jake: [Laughs] "Hey, sorry about that. We're back. We're ready to listen now."

Rev: BABA YAGA: Oh, no worries. What were you up to?

Jake: "Somebody else had taken the skull, so we had to take it from them. So we were just kind of smoothing that over on the way out."

Rev: BABA YAGA: Ah, yes. I'm glad you were able to retrieve it. I had the sense that something was amiss around it. Something felt off. I'm glad you were able to track it down and return it.

Tass: "So what do you got for us?"

Rev: BABA YAGA: The world that you're going to is not drastically different from our own. Perhaps more technology, but also more suffering. No nature, no fresh air. There is much darkness there. When I searched memories about the Alkali Corporation, it was unclear exactly what it is, but it is large and powerful. I had assumed, knowing your histories, that if this is the place you're looking for, there's something from it that you want. With that knowledge of knowing that there is something desired from that place, the only thing I can tell you is to head to the Brick Alley Market, and follow the comet's tail.

Tass: "A dark place, a lot of technology, a lot of suffering. Well, we can work with that. I appreciate that very much."

Rev: BABA YAGA: Yes.

Tass: "Well, OK. I guess there's no time like the present, huh?"

Jake: "Yeah, I can't think of anything else to do before we go, considering no time will pass while we're gone."

Tass: "Yeah. All right, man. Let's head back. I'll send Margaret a message, just to let her know that we're jumping through again."

Jake: "OK."

Rev: And the two of you step out of Baba's cottage and, in a burst of flame, vanish.

SFX:

CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: And now it's time for end of session experience.

Tass: Ooh.

Rev: Did we conclude the current mystery?

Tass: Yeah, looks like we did.

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

Tass: I don't think we did. Except maybe ourselves, which never counts.

Rev: Did we learn something new and important about one of the hunters?

Tass: No, I don't think so.

Rev: And did we learn something new and important about the world?

Tass: Yeah, there's this huge monster battle

Rev: Yeah. There is a whole supernatural existence going on that is not part of your world.

Tass: Yeah. And like, very connected people have to do with it, so it's kind of a big deal.

Rev: All right. So you both get one point of experience. Does anybody level up?

Tass: That is just enough for me.

Jake: I technically leveled up when I lost my fight against T.E.C., but there was no reason to do the level up since then.

Rev: All right. What are you both gonna take?

Jake: I am going to take a move from another playbook. I'm going to take Burn Everything from The Hex. So when you Use Magic to inflict harm, you can choose to

inflict 3-harm, area, magic, obvious, or 3-harm, ignore armor, magic, obvious. Which interestingly does not have fire as a tag. So I imagine that -- I mean, it's just magic, but it kind of looks like a fire wash, just to fit thematically.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: With what I do.

Rev: I guess that makes sense, because The Hex that we had was fire based. But that's not a requirement for Hex, is it?

Tass: Correct.

Jake: Yeah. It all -- like, it's all kind of phrased under the assumption that fire is your Hex's thing, but it's never explicit in the text.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I'm not picking anything particularly flashy, but I need it. I'm gonna up my Tough from a -1 to a 0.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: Here you are, back in the underground lair. What are you doing to prepare?

Jake: "Rev, do you need anything before we take off again?"

Rev: REV: Like what?

Jake: "I don't know. Groceries? Or like, answers. Do you need to have a conversation about anything? We really kinda had to ... Had to move on and get stuff done, after your situation."

Rev: REV: I don't think so. I've been trying to make sure that I understand how ...

Rev: And his head turns to the side, and he looks at the computer.

Rev: REV: How to run that thing.

Jake: With my kind of newfound magical ... Not newfound, but newly refined magical aptitude. Does this whole shit make any more sense to me?

Rev: The magic part of it makes sense.

Jake: All right. I mean, I would spend a little bit of time then, with him. Like, kinda shaking out the details and making sure that we both think we understand things the same way. You know, he's not like, "Oh, I thought it was this." "Oh, I thought was this. Oh, shit. Well, what is it?" Like, trying to hone this down, so that we're both on the same page about it, at least.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Um, I think I would just be doing the stuff that Nash Rev had been doing to prepare ,while they're looking that stuff over. Like, wheel over some gurneys and stuff like that. You know, in theory. I know that we'll just be right back, but you never know. So I'm just going to have all that stuff set up and ready for him.

Rev: Yeah. About a half hour passes for you and Rev to go through all of the components and make sure that everything is in the spot where it seems like it's supposed to be, all the candles are lit, and the incense placed, the correct lines drawn ... And he kicks on the computer.

Jake: You know what's rough, that just occurred to me? Like, we know that the way the paper works is technically time keeps rolling here, but when we toss it through and then go back after it, it kind of like rewinds all of that. So when we're like, "For you, we should just blink and be back." And then we step through, and our bodies do collapse to the ground. And he goes, "Oh, shit. Oh, fuck. This is -- oh no, we did it wrong this time! They're not coming right back." And when we actually come back, he forgets all that.

Rev: Yeah. Everybody here still lives a life for the entirety of the time that you are gone. You just rubberband time back to when you left.

Jake: "All right. Man, I wish we could spend some more time here, and I could stay in my actual body and do some stuff. But yeah, duty calls. Let's go." I will pull the things out of the pocket dimension that we need to take with us. So I'll throw the slip of paper in the capsule, and the Altoids tin that's got the money and pills in it. That sounds a lot more insidious when I say it like that.

Rev: You'll have to take them out of the tin. The tin a little too big, I think, to fit inside the capsule. Are you taking all of the pills and all the change?

Jake: How many coins were there?

Rev: Eight.

Jake: If we take it all, we could accidentally lose it all. But if we don't take enough, we could end up needing it. Maybe half? Maybe half of each?

Tass: One and a half pill?

Jake: Let's take two pill and four coin.

Tass: I like it. I'm in.

Rev: All right. So you load up the capsule with the four coins, the two pills, and the slip of paper. Rev begins to chant a couple of words, makes the familiar hand gestures, pushes his hands out towards the first circle. And the energy pulses out, and pulses out, and pulses out, and the portal appears.

Tass: "All right, let's do the thing." And I'll step through.

Jake: Same.

Rev: You both step through the portal. And again, you're hit by this sensation of vertigo as the bright flashes of light fill your vision. But then everything is dark and wet and warm, and everything sounds far away. And the only thing you can hear is your own heartbeat. And you're breathing, and it's relaxing -- calming, almost.

SFX:

MUSIC STARTS

Rev: And then you feel a jolt of electricity burn through your system, and all of your muscles tense and your eyes shoot open. You're floating in a green, viscous fluid, inside of a metal pod with a glass front. And you look out, and you see other pods just like the ones you're floating in, and inside of them are human bodies. You try to scream, but there is a tube running down your throat. You instinctively reach to pull it out, and you're momentarily blinded by a pulsing light. The viscous fluid starts to drain out of your tank, and then the bottom opens underneath your feet and you plummet into darkness. You're jerked to a stop as half a dozen metal arms catch you. You're blasted by jets of water and buffeted by hot air. You're aware that the arms are now moving you like marionettes and putting clothing on you and strapping gear onto you. But you're only vaguely aware of it, because a loading bar has filled your vision. And as the bar fills, you are flooded with images, sounds, smells, a whole lifetime worth of memories. And as these elements flow into your brain, the bar fills, and when it hits one hundred percent, everything blacks out, like a TV shutting off.

And then it's right back on, and you're tumbling to the ground, landing on your hands and knees in an alley. You feel asphalt underneath your hands, and it smells dirty and oily. There is a dumpster, and in front of you, a garbage truck floats by, maybe six inches off of the ground. You can hear the chatter of people around you. You are both disoriented and distracted by all of the sound and the light around you. But because there are two of you here, you instinctively accept the fact that you must be with one another. As you stagger out of the alleyway and look down the main street, there are neon lights and vendors peddling wares out of carts and storefronts. There are old broken down cars driving by. But about a hundred feet up, you can see the bottom of other vehicles passing over. And the higher you look, the cleaner and the shinier it gets. You have the thought, "Where am I?" And as you do, a map pops up in the corner of your vision, and it shows your location in the alley. And then it zooms out and zooms out and zooms out, and you can see you're in the colony of Los Angeles, one of the last remaining cities on earth. Welcome to The Sprawl.

SFX:

MUSIC FADES

Rev: So before we get into this story, why don't we describe your characters in The Sprawl?

Tass: OK. I am ... How do we say this? I'm in the body of? I am playing?

Rev: "In the body of" works.

Tass: I am in the body of Concord, The Infiltrator.

Rev: And Concord is not their given name. That is their handle, correct?

Tass: That is their tag, yes. So he was born Josh Feeney, and goes by Concord now. So The Infiltrator is the playbook in The Sprawl that is kind of a sneaky individual. And there's a lot of different options for them to be more of like a face, whether they're tricking their way into or out of places, or more of the cat burglar-esque version of that, which is what I went with. My stats are a +2 to Edge, +1 to Style, +1 to Meat, +1 to Cool, 0 Synth, and -1 to Mind. He has what are called skillwires, that are these like implants that you can insert a chip that makes you better at something. And I was able to pick two. So the ones that I went with there were martial arts and breaking and entering. And Covert Entry is the move that he starts with. So that is essentially his move to determine how well he can get into somewhere, and bunch of tags to pick from there on varying levels of success. And then I get to choose again whether I'm a Cat Burglar or the Face, and I went with Cat Burglar. So that gives me some fun stuff, too, when I break and enter, of having the option to take things with me as I go. And then the last thing that I picked for this, the extra move I get, is Mother Duck. So when I infiltrate a location, I get my team in as well.

So yeah, a lot of the gear and stuff is set up to assist with all of these different endeavors. And I think his main kind of physical feature when you look at this guy, because of the skill wires that were implanted to be able to enhance him: his skin is purple. There's something about the electricity, the wires, everything that's through him that has shifted his skin to be more synthetic at this point. And so that's why he chose to start going by Concord.

Rev: And that is not an abnormal feature in The Sprawl -- at least, in the world that we have created. That people with skill wires have this color shift in their skin.

Tass: Right.

Jake: I am playing as Bryan Martinez, a.k.a. Machinez. I am playing The Hunter. The Hunter is sort of like a surveillance investigator type. I have +2 Edge, -1 Style, 0 Meat, +1 Cool, 0 Synth, and +1 Mind. My cyberware is cyber eyes. I have robotic eyes that have the ability to record and encrypt data and light amplification. I start with two moves by default. They are Ear to the Ground, which is a move that lets me circulate among a neighborhood or a group of people and research to gather information. And It All Fits Together -- I'm a master at making connections between seemingly unrelated events. So at the start of a mission, I can roll Edge, gain some hold, and spend some hold throughout the mission to ask questions from the research list. And then I picked Eye for Detail -- I am also a master at tailing people and staking out locations. So when I perform surveillance on a person or place, I gain [intel] and role assess.

So he is pretty, like, sharp of mind and like perceptive. Good at noticing things. Not especially charming, not an especially physically intimidating person, but he is kind of a curmudgeon. He's kind of a taller guy with like a mop of curly black hair and a scraggly beard that I don't think people get along with naturally. He's not much of a fighter, so he's got a taser and a little pistol for when it comes down to it, and some vaguely armored clothes to protect himself some. And somewhere out in this world, a nondescript sedan.

Rev: And you had picked an actor when we talked about this originally, didn't you? For what you pictured Machinez as?

Jake: Yeah, he's Jason Mantzoukas.

Rev: Yeah. So Jason Mantzoukas mixed with, like, Harrison Ford's Blade Runner.

Jake: Yep.

Rev: Just put him in that costume, and ...

Tass: Jake helped me with mine. We settled on equivalent Dave Franco.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So just kind of a small, wiry dude.

Rev: Just a purple Dave Franco.

Tass: Yup.

Rev: So like with Dungeon World, we created these characters with the characters in mind, not with you as players in mind. We created the characters that you would play in this world. The one thing that I do want to change is that you each had filled out your directives. Each character has a set of directives that when they do X, they get experience, and it's different for each character. And we had picked those before, based around the character you were developing. But I do want to change those now to be the directives that you, Tass and Jake in this body, would find important. Because I think that matters, since you are piloting these bodies now.

Tass: Yeah, totally. I agree.

Rev: So let everybody know what your old directives were, so they can get a sense of the characters that you have made. And then also let us know what they have changed to, now.

Jake: So my original directives were Behavioral: Describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience. And the code was, "I'm bad to bad people." And Compassionate: When you put aiding the powerless ahead of the mission, mark experience. Honestly, I kind of feel like both of those could stay the same. But one of them, I think, makes more sense that I didn't choose, which is Vengeful: when you harm [blank] or their interests, mark experience. And I think that will be Nash. So I think I will replace the adhere to the code one with that. But I will keep Compassionate, because I think I'm still aiding the powerless.

Tass: Nice. Mine originally were Financial: When you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit, mark experience. I think, for cat burglar, pretty good. And then Violent: When you deliberately choose to use violence to overcome a problem when a non-violent option exists, mark experience. Yeah, I just -- I can't imagine either of those really applying, but the other two match up pretty well. One of them is Intimate: when you put your friend [blank] -- and of course, I'm going to put Jake -- ahead of the mission, mark experience. So, you know, saving them in a bad spot when we should be doing other

things. And Network: when your membership in [blank] hinders the mission, mark experience

Rev: Initially, I think this is meant for when you build the world of the game, you come up with companies, with organizations that run the place. And I think this is meant for one of those.

Tass: Yeah. But yeah, since that doesn't exactly apply, I just put "our earth." Like, you know, and just the things that I'm gonna have to deal with if, you know, I know that we're gonna have to do what we have to do and get out. And if we have to make promises along the way or, you know, be expected to pay somebody or, you know, things that we may not have time to do, that's gonna be a problem.

Rev: Yeah. And with all of the information you both downloaded about this world, and of course, the time we spent together creating this world when you made characters, I'm just gonna give a little info dump for you and the listeners. This is all stuff that you would know, now that you've got these files downloaded in your head, but just so that everybody has a sense of the world that you are now standing in.

So as stated in the intro, this takes place in LA.

Jake: [SoCal accent] LA ...

Rev: [SoCal accent] LA ... There are three corporations that run the majority of this town. There is the Alkali Corporation, which deals in cybersecurity. They do information protection, information storage, transfer, information acquisition, as well. Their motto is, "We have the key." There is The Bank, and they are literally the only remaining lender of money. And because of that, they are self-regulating. They deal in finance, housing, retail, and food. And their motto is, "One for all." And then lastly is Codex Artillery. They are military and heavy industry. They deal in weapons manufacturing, cybernetics, private policing, and vehicle manufacture. And their motto is, "Building a better future."

The technology here is very advanced. And the more money you have, the more advanced it is. If you find yourself in a position where you do not have very much money, most likely anything you have -- the place you live, the thing you drive -- is on the ground, still. Industrial things, things owned by the city or by one of the corporations, things that

you see doing government labor, float just slightly off of the ground, maybe six inches to six feet, depending on what it is. And the higher up you go, the more powerful the technology is. Which allows them to have flying cars and flying tanks for the military, things like that. So it is a very vertically stacked system.

The Sprawl also uses some mechanics that we have used in some of our Let's Plays, but never in the main show. So I'll go over that just for a moment. The Sprawl uses clocks, which is a way that we can track our damage. We can also track our standing with corporations. And it's a way for me to also track some behind the scenes threats. And so your clock is at ... It's either at 0:00, 15:00, 18:00, 21:00, 22:00, 23:00, or midnight. And so when you get to midnight, that means that if it's your harm clock, you're dead. If it is a corporation or a threat, they're gonna take a hard move, they're going to do an action towards you. That does not mean that they won't do other things towards you as the clock advances, because there's also a legwork clock and an action clock. And those have specific ramifications on them, as that clock ticks forward. We'll get into those as we play the game.

Another thing is that The Sprawl is very phase based. So you'll hear me say things to them like, "OK, now we're in the Legwork Phase. Now we're in the Action Phase. Now we're in the Get Paid Phase." I'm gonna say those out loud, just so everybody listening has a sense, in the structure of the game, how those phases work. But other than that, we will still tell the story the same way that we normally do. So we won't quite be as cutscene oriented as I think The Sprawl can normally run. Because a lot of times with The Sprawl, you cut away and then you're back into the next thing. And so we'll tell more of the story as we follow you through the world here.

And I think with that, the last thing really is to talk about the clocks that you currently have, because of the bodies you're in and the things that they have done in this world. So with the Alkali Corporation, your clock is at 15:00. That means you've just got one tick against you. With The Bank, you have a clean slate. And with Codex Artillery, you are at 23:00. Which means that one more advancement on that clock, and they will take a hard move.

So because you both have had this data dump into you, I think this is a perfectly fine time to talk about the backstories of these characters, and why they have these standings

with the corporations that they have. Because these advancements were all generated by results of things that you picked in character creation.

Tass: OK. So Josh Feeney used to just be kind of like a petty thief. Fairly smart, he was OK what he did, but not particularly great at it. And he actually had gotten caught trying to steal from The Bank. But they kind of have feelers out for stuff like this, when people actually do a fairly good job. What they did was they took him aside and said, look, we can either prosecute, or we can do something high risk, high reward for you. What we have in mind is we're gonna send you to Codex Artillery, and they have kind of a different way of doing the skillwires, that we want to know exactly how it works. So if you go there, essentially pledge your allegiance to them, that you'll go under these trials to be the person to take on this new technique for skillwires, and then bring that back to us? You know, not only will you be very well paid, we'll keep paying you to use that, and do what you do best.

Rev: Yeah. And I think in the narrative of this world, skillwires used to only work for a skill. So you are one of the handful of people that have multiple skills wired into you.

Tass: Nice. OK. So yeah, he essentially did this. And he went there, and he did very well. He was the one that got put up for this. And, you know, eventually they did the process that turned his skin purple. And that's mostly just flavor for, you know, success on his being sneaky in certain times. It's not quite camouflage, but almost. So he broke out with this and went back to The Bank. He works for them steadily. But of course, now he's on Codex's list.

Jake: Bryan Martinez was originally kind of just a freelancer. His ideology is sort of like, the world sucks and bad people run it, so I'm gonna do my best to get one over on those bad people. So he's ... I mean, he's just good at keeping an eye on things. He's good at being low profile. He was good at kind of collecting information and doing, like, small scale blackmail. And like Tass said, The Bank has feelers out for that sort of thing. So they actually found him and they recruited him, and they paid for his cyberware to make him better at this thing. They actually paid to have him implant the eyes, so that he could be better at his surveillance. So now The Bank sends him out to gather dirt on whoever. And he is ... He doesn't consider himself a bad guy. Even though he's working for some bad people, he is working against more bad people. And so that is worth it to him. So whatever The Bank sends him out to do, you know, as long as it's, like, corrupt member

of Codex or something, he has no issue. The only time he might have a problem is if they send him to do something that is against someone who, like, means no harm. And for the most part, like violence-wise, he keeps his hands clean. The exception being if somebody, like, tries to actually take action against somebody who he doesn't consider bad -- who is like downtrodden or, you know, innocent in the whole thing and they are just going to be a victim -- then he will do something about it.

I think one of the examples of that is at some point, he was sent out to scout a Codex employee. This guy named Teddy. He kind of does like the under the table deals for Codex. Like, they deal, quote unquote "legitimately" in weapons all the time, but when they need to get equipment to someone that nobody's supposed to know about this, Teddy is the one that brokers the deal. And he was brokering a deal with Alkali, to give them weapons so that they could force people out of this tenement building, because they wanted the property. And the reason The Bank was interested was because Concord had figured out that they were bypassing The Bank. Like in this transaction, The Bank should have had their hands in this, because it dealt with real estate and money transfer, and they were trying to keep it fully under the table so they didn't involve them. That's what got him into it. But when he discovered that this was like -- the objective was just to force these people out of their homes for no other reason than they wanted the property to do what they wanted with it? That was one of the few times that he got, like, violent of his own accord. That he kind of put the screws to Teddy to stop this deal from going down, and obviously put himself on Codex's shit list, more than he already was.

Rev: All right. And with that, join us next week as we delve into The Sprawl.

SFX:

OUTRO MUSIC

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