

Following the Comet (S3, E5)

SFX: INTRO MUSIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. Just a few things before we get into the episode.

First, a reminder that until August 17th, we are doing a listener survey. You can find that at thecritshowpodcast.com/survey. And if you could take a couple of minutes to fill that out, it would be very helpful for us, as we plan the kind of future content we want to put our time towards. The survey is completely anonymous, and at the end of it, you'll have an option to submit your email address. These are separate forms, so the email address will not be connected to the answers. But if you submit your email, you will be entered into a random drawing for one of five prizes, including a set of Gen Con 2020 Crystal Caste dice, a copy of Rapsallion, and some of our swag from the store. So again, that is until August 17th, and you can find that at thecritshowpodcast.com/survey.

And also, while you're on our website, you can head over to our merch section at thecritshowpodcast.com, and we have all of our shirts on sale from now until Sunday. You can use the code GENCON2020 to get 20 percent off of all of our t-shirts, and GENCON10 to get 10 percent off of all of our tank tops. And that sale goes until August the 2nd.

And with that, onto the episode.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: So here you both stand. It has been a disorienting 30 seconds in this world. You woke up floating in liquid, it was drained, you were dropped down a shaft, and then hundreds of memories were forced into your brain. And you find yourself standing in an alley, fully clothed, looking out into the evening. What are you both doing?

Tass: "Jake?"

Jake: "Yes?"

Tass: "OK. Well, first question answered. When she said a lot more technology, she wasn't kidding."

Jake: "No, she was not."

Tass: "Did you get, like, a download?"

Jake: "I did, yes. That's nice, though. At least this way, we just kind of know everything out of the gate."

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah." And I'm gonna turn and just, looking at him, I'm looking around. And then it also occurs to me, "Wasn't some kind of alarm going off?"

Jake: "I mean, yeah. There was like a flashing light. I don't know that it was like a 'danger' alarm. Maybe it was just more of like a 'stay clear of the conveyor belt' alarm?"

Tass: "Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. God, I hope."

Jake: Do I have anything in my head to affirm that?

Rev: Yeah. So as you start to think about the process you just went through, you get a number of documents that pop up in the corner, and you can scroll through them. And you can see that what you just went through was the process of waking up inside of your clone body. Which is strange, because that's something that you have to have very high clearance for, to be able to clone a body. You've gotta be someone of import and power. And then you were dumped out into an alley. And so as you look through these documents, you do find that this was all done under the table. The bank had bankrolled this, since you are part of one of their expert teams -- The Collectors -- who do work for them regularly. So they had built a station where if you were to perish, they could bring you back. But there is nothing connected to this building. Looking back at it, you can see the chute that you fell out of, and it looks like a trash chute. And the building is very rundown. There aren't any lights on inside of it. And so you do know that the facility is somewhere underneath this building.

Jake: "I'm pretty confident that we're not supposed to exist."

Tass: "Yeah. Yeah. Like, we're clones, right?"

Jake: "Yes, we are clones. Which, from what I can suss out, is not objectively against the rules? But based on how we came out, I think that we are against the rules. Like, we aren't authorized clones."

Tass: "Right. So does that mean the originals are still out there?"

Rev: Yeah. The way you understand it, there are some systems in the original body that when those shut down, the clone is activated. It seems like you both jumped into one of these prepared clone bodies. And when you did, that it activated it somehow. So now you can assume that the other you is out there.

Tass: "Well, shit."

Jake: "Did you see the portal anywhere on the way out?"

Tass: "No. No, it sort of vision cleared out here."

Jake: "Do we need to go back in to figure out where it is? And maybe, like, secure it?"

Tass: "Yeah. I mean, we probably should. We still don't really have a concept of what happens if somebody stumbles through it."

Jake: I'm looking at the shaft we fell out of. Does it seem like we could even go back that way?

Rev: All right. Roll Assess, and that is with Edge. When you closely study a person, place, or situation, or when you quickly size up an opponent or a charged situation, roll Edge.

Jake: Thirteen.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3. And you can ask one of the following questions: What potential complication do I need to be wary of? What do I notice, despite an effort to conceal it? How is [blank] vulnerable to me? How can I avoid trouble or hide here? What

is my best way in, way out, way past? Where can I gain the most advantage? Who or what is my biggest threat in this situation? Who or what is in control here?

Jake: What is my best way in?

Rev: So as you look up, you do see the chute that you fell out of. But you can tell that the dumpster a little further down the alley looks like it's a permanent fixture, but you can see, just at the base of it, that there is a little bit of light coming out. And so you think that if you were to go over and fiddle with it somehow, that there's a hidden door there.

Jake: Can I hold on to the other couple hold for the moment?

Rev: Sure.

Jake: All right. "I think that dumpster is, like, concealing a different way in." And I wanna head over to the dumpster and see if I can figure out how to make it move.

Rev: You go over to the dumpster and start to look around, searching it. And you do find underneath it, just barely high enough off the ground for your hand to fit, that there is a keypad underneath. You can't see it, but you can feel it there.

Jake: I think I'm going to spend another hold to ask what potential complication do I need to be wary of?

Rev: You think that if you were to enter the incorrect code, it would probably burn this facility. Because it is illegal -- this shouldn't be here. And so if they get the sense that someone is trying to get in, they've got measures inside of it to wipe the proof of its existence away.

Jake: "Well, here's a keypad. But I think that if we goof this up once, this thing goes up in smoke. Like, literally."

Tass: With the idea that we came out of this, are there memories in this mind about, like, what the code would be? Or is that ... Like, whoever kind of runs it, that would have that?

Rev: Yeah, whoever ran it would have that.

Tass: OK. All right, then through the eyes of an Infiltrator, do I feel like this guy has the tools to get me in here?

Rev: Why don't you roll Covert Entry?

Tass: OK.

Rev: And read to us what that does, exactly.

Tass: Covert Entry: When you attempt to infiltrate a secure area alone, roll Cool. 10+, gain 3 hold, 7 to 9, gain 1 hold. As the MC describes the infiltration and the security measures that you must overcome, you may spend 1 hold to describe how you overcome the obstacles, and choose from this list. That's an eleven.

Rev: All right. You get a hold 3. So the first thing you are facing here is a keyed entry.

Tass: OK. So I think the first one on the list probably is my best, here. Bypass a security system.

Rev: Yeah. You slide your fingers around the keypad and just instinctively start to type. How do you think you know the code to this?

Tass: I think that after this was all set up through the company and, you know, he was told that it's there and that, you know, this exists, I think he came and did the footwork by himself to figure out how to break in, if he needed to.

Rev: Yeah, you are able to type in the correct key, here. And the dumpster hisses and slides to the side about two feet, and you can see that there is a hatch on the wall that goes into the building.

Tass: "OK, we're in. Hurry."

Jake: I would like to spend my third hold here. How can I avoid trouble or hide here? Like, we are just in an alley on a city street. I want to know how we ... How this goes unnoticed from here.

Rev: Yeah. So I think that, having knowledge of security systems and having staked out a number of different places, this hatch is familiar to you. You've seen this model before. And you know that on the other side is a matching keypad. So you can type the same code in there, and it will re-conceal the entrance. And then it might just be a matter of coming out the way you came out originally.

Jake: Ok, yeah. Then I will ... I will hustle in.

Tass: I will hit the keypad again and make sure everything closes right back up the way it should.

Rev: Yeah. So you both get inside of the small hatch, and on the other side is a keypad. Tass taps the numbers back in, and you hear that hiss again, and the dumpster slides back into place. You're both standing inside of a very small room that has a ladder that goes up. It's very dark in here. You can't see much of anything.

Jake: Is there enough light that the light amplification on my Cybereyes would work?

Rev: Yes, absolutely. So Tass, it's very dark in here. You can just see the ladder going up. But Jake, you can see, fifty feet up, there is a steel catwalk that spans across this darkness. And you can see a number of dark metal pods up there.

Jake: "Oh, I can see."

Tass: "What?"

Jake: "Yeah, I think my techno-eyes must be accommodating in here."

Tass: I think that probably sort of tracks. As he says that, I'm realizing that these memories are more active, instead of the usual Rolodex we've had, you know?

Rev: Mmhmm.

Tass: So I'm like, "Yeah. Oh, yeah. You absolutely do have, like, Cybereyes. That's so Cool."

Jake: "So it looks like this ladder goes up, and then there's a catwalk that kind of cuts across the space. That's pretty much the only place for us to go."

Tass: From having checked the place out before, would I know if there are, like, guards or anything else here?

Rev: No, not that you're aware of.

Tass: "OK, I think we're good. Like, I get this feeling I could have disabled the security entirely, instead of just getting us in. But I don't think we want that. We want to keep everything up and running just fine, right?"

Jake: "Yeah, I feel like we want to leave no trace, here. Take only memories."

Tass: "Yeah. I think I've got something for that too, as far as us having come in. So, yeah. All right, let's do the thing. I'm going to probably need you to take the lead here on this ladder. I can hardly see."

Jake: "Oh, fair. OK. I mean, it's a ladder. It kind of only goes one place, but ..."

Tass: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

Jake: I'll start climbing the ladder.

Rev: You both start climbing up this ladder. And again, after about fifty feet you come to a catwalk. And you can see on this catwalk, folded in, are about a dozen giant metallic arms. And then above them, about twenty more feet, are these hanging pods. And you can see that there are six in total. Two of them are empty, and the other four are filled with this green, viscous fluid, with people floating inside of them.

Jake: Do I see the portal?

Rev: Very, very faintly. You can see it suspended in the air, between the two metal pods that you fell out of.

Jake: "Well, there's the portal, just floating up there."

Tass: "I guess that's fairly good security for it."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, it seems tough to just access." Like, does it look like there's anything, like, climbable? Not that I intend to try to climb anything right now, but does it seem like there is a way to get to the portal from here?

Rev: Just looking around the room and reliving the moments of falling and being caught by these arms, you think the only thing that might be able to reach that portal is one of these arms. Maybe two of them combined -- you're not quite sure that one would even reach.

Jake: "Yeah. I mean other than, like, bringing in a ladder or something, like, from what's already here. Kind of seems like you need to fire up the system again to get the arms to reach out, and that'd be the best way to get to it."

Tass: "OK. And hopefully nobody's coming here for any reason anyway, so we might be OK. If I just make sure and keep this up and running and leave it as if nothing has happened, we might be golden."

Jake: "Yeah. I mean, do you think that you've got a way to, like ... Can you change the password to get in here, or anything? Like do you think that could go unnoticed, but just so that nobody could come in the back way except us?"

Tass: "It's a really, really good thought." I have a guy I gotta ask. Give me a second.

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah, you think you absolutely could. But you do know from Jake's previous answer that if someone who knew the right code came along and put it in, it would no longer be the right code, so it would destroy this facility.

Tass: Right. Right.

Jake: Mmhmm.

Tass: What I have in mind, as the player, is simply using one of my hold from Covert Entry for "escape notice." And just how I had that in my mind as manifesting as if there's anything that, like, logs the doors being open or the codes being put in, stuff like that, it sort of wipes away that those events had happened.

Rev: Yeah. You get a sense, being in here, that while there is a lot of technology in this room, there's almost no security. Like, they don't want to keep records of this place existing. So you don't see anything, other than that initial failsafe to get inside.

Tass: Nice. OK, so it really is ... Like, hiding it is the security.

Rev: Yeah. You don't even see like an operations panel for the arms and stuff. It seems to be manually activated when the pod activates.

Tass: OK. "Yeah. I mean, I think I can cover that we were in here, but I don't want to change anything. There's not really much going for this? I mean, I think you have kind of the same sense of this place as I do. Like you know, there's there's a lot of ... Well, cybertech. Like, a lot of very advanced security, for ... Well, everywhere. But this one's just off the grid. So I think if we kind of reset everything, it being hidden is gonna be our best bet."

Jake: How are the pods arranged? In like two lines, facing each other?

Rev: Yeah, two lines of three.

Jake: "I mean, I guess as long as one of those three people doesn't die, you know? Because I don't know about you, but I at least got like a very brief glimpse of the pods across from me when I came to, before I dropped. So I think the only way we'd be noticed, other than someone coming in the back way, is if one of the three facing our now empty pods died, and that's the first thing they saw, was that those ones were empty."

Tass: "Yeah. Man, even this whole thing is very disorienting. Maybe even if they do see it, they wouldn't track that it's anything other than the stuff that's supposed to be here."

Jake: "Or we can cram mannequins up in them, and fill them with Mountain Dew."

All: [Laugh]

Rev: How did you crack the code to the way that they create clones here?

Jake: Every clone is just all jacked up on Mountain Dew.

Tass: "Yeah, man. I just ... Yeah, I think we're good. I mean, as good as we're gonna be, because I don't know how to cover that."

Jake: "I don't either. And I don't have any magic here to do anything about it, so ..."

Tass: "Same."

Jake: "All right. Well, let's get out of here and cover our tracks."

Tass: "OK."

Rev: So do you want to go back out the way you came? I will throw out there that, at the very end of this walkway, you do see the top of a chute.

Tass: The chute. We're doing the chute.

Jake: Does the chute seem survivable, if the arms aren't letting us down?

Rev: Yes. You get the sense, from where the arms are placed, that this must be the final place they deposit you.

Jake: OK. Yeah, I'll do the chute.

Tass: Yes!

Rev: Like head first? Feet first?

Jake: No, I think I'm trying to, like, spider climb. Like, wedge myself in and, like, gradually go down, so I don't just hit the ground.

Tass: Water slide, feet first.

Rev: Yeah, yeah.

Jake: And he goes second. [Laughs] So I'm like crawling down and then just get feet in the base of my neck, and we both tumble out.

Rev: But yeah, you both come out into the alley again.

Tass: "OK, so ... I mean, we got the name Brick Alley Market, yeah?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "OK, I think that's the next step."

Jake: "OK. Are we just gonna hope that we don't come across the regular us-es? Or anyone that knows them?" And I hold up the capsule and I go, "I packed two pills."

Tass: "Yeah, that's true."

Jake: "I mean, I guess we can just wait until maybe, like, they have us pinned. You know, we can try to ignore them until it's literally impossible, and then hope we can convince them to take the mysterious pills. But we're gonna have to be careful about who we interact with out here. Because if they have just talked to the other us and then they talk to the us-us and we don't know that, we could make shit bad."

Tass: "Yeah, that's true." How does the memory work for us in this? Like, is this like a download from whenever they created the clone? Is this something updated?

Rev: So you're trying to check your most recent memory?

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: Your most recent memory is dated today, about 13 minutes ago, and it is laying down and going to sleep.

Tass: Oh, OK. "Wow. So this is like very current. They just download their memories up to a few minutes ago. I don't know about you, but I just went to bed."

Jake: What about me?

Rev: Your most recent memory is dated today, about 75 seconds ago. And it is you sitting outside of a building on top of another old burnt down building, with a notepad out, looking in through a window. And you can tell that you are scanning, looking for someone.

Jake: OK. "No, mine was like awake and active. So it seems like once we kind of came online, that stopped. Now we're making our own memories."

Tass: "Makes sense. Yeah, if mine went to bed like 15 minutes ago or whatever it was, that would obviously be the last thing I'd remember."

Jake: "So that's good. At least this isn't like a two-way relay, and they're not remembering what we're learning right now, and vice-versa."

Tass: "I hope not."

Jake: OK, yeah. I want to access the Internet in my brain, or whatever is happening to me, and figure out where the Brick Alley Market is.

Rev: Yeah, that same map that popped up and showed you that you were in Los Angeles appears. And you think the Brick Alley Market, and it shows you that it is 7.8 miles away, and it makes a walking path and a little pop up -- like an ad -- asking if you would like to have a driver arrive at your location. And there are three or four other small ads that pop up, offering the same thing at discounted prices.

Jake: "Do we want to get a Ryde? Capital R-Y-D-E?"

Tass: "I guess so." So how does this work exactly, as far as, like, the money?

Rev: So you each have a number of credits in your account that you can use. The money here doesn't really matter as much as your Cred does, and your Cred is on your character sheet as well. But that's not Cred like credit, it's your street cred. It is your ability to trade on your name to get assistance, to get physical things, to get people to owe you favors, etc.

Tass: OK.

Jake: I have 5 Cred.

Tass: I also have 5 Cred.

Rev: So yeah, I think something like hiring a taxi is irrelevant, financially.

Jake: How do we spend this? Is it like a debit card situation? Or do we have like an implant?

Rev: You have a bracelet essentially, that has any of that information. You scan it when you go in places, and it will deduct the finances from your account, if they are there. You know, as soon as you have that thought, that money in this place is very rare -- like physical money. So it has more worth.

Jake: "Hey, that's nice to know, because we have some coins that can turn into physical money. That might be worth extra, here."

Tass: "Oh, that's true. If we use these people's Cred, we can probably be tracked by that, right?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: "All right. So we can walk for a few hours, we can chance being tracked ... Or we can try to use some of the coin, but that seems like a lot of expenditure for just a ride somewhere. But I mean, I guess it's worth it, if we don't want to be followed."

Jake: "What was it, 7.8 miles? I mean, that's, you know, two and a half hours." [Laughs]
"We'll get there." I want to, like, feel what I have on my person and see if I've got car keys.
Or, like, the key to a bike lock, or anything.

Rev: You do. Inside of your jacket pocket, there is a key fob.

Jake: I want to lock it, to see if I hear a honk.

Rev: You push the button on the key fob, and the map actually pops up again. And you can see that fourteen and a half miles away, it blinks twice. And it has a little indicator, saying that this is where your car is located.

Jake: Oh. "Well I have a car, but it's much further away than the alley."

Tass: "Oh, fair."

Jake: "And also probably in use by the other me." Does it seem like ... I don't know if I could piece that together. The last memory I saw and where I'm seeing the car on the map. Can I like, figure out if those are the same place?

Rev: Yeah. You look at the map, and on the map you can see that it is a four story building that is owned by the Alkali Corporation. And across from it, it is a derelict building.

Jake: "Yeah, it seems like that's where other me is. So that's also a silver lining. If I can keep track of where the car is, I can roughly keep track of where he is."

Tass: "That's a great call. OK."

Jake: "I mean, let's just hoof it. I want to get a better idea of what this place is and where we're going and stuff, anyway. There's no better way to do that than on foot."

Tass: "I agree."

Rev: You take the time to walk to this location. And as you go, you see a lot of the city. It is more of what you've already seen outside of this alleyway. There are huddles of

people trading goods and selling items out of their windows. Sometimes even only fifty feet above, there is loud, raucous music. There are neon lights shining down, cars flying overhead. Lots of things get dropped on, around, and near you as you travel from places above. There's a heavy odor here of motor oil and burning garbage sometimes, rotten food. But then you get to other areas where the smell starts to clear up. And you both notice that as you pass by these places that have a nicer element on the ground floor, that they're always connected to one of these corporations -- it is a floor level entrance. But on some levels, it kind of reminds you of Vegas, because there are bright, shiny attractions, and then broken down buildings that are hollow and dark. And then the very next block, it's back to lights and energy.

Jake: It's like Vegas and The Narrows of Gotham.

Rev: Actually, that's a good -- it really is very similar to a lot of the area in the Arkham games.

Jake: All right.

Tass: This is wild. I think I'm just going through kind of memory track here, too. And just putting context to a lot of this. And just, you know, seeing how powerful these corporations are, and things.

Rev: Yeah. I mean, these corporations are the top. They are the three that prop up what is Los Angeles. This is a world where not many other cities still exist or can thrive. There was a Third World War that destroyed a lot of farmland and a lot of smaller cities, and so people packed together again afterwards, to just be close to one another. And there are four or five other very large cities left around the world. And you see, I think, on a scale that Los Angeles is what this is called, but it takes up way more land mass than that. It spills into Nevada and Mexico. It takes up all of California. They have everything broken up by neighborhoods, now, and the whole collective is called Los Angeles.

Tass: OK.

Rev: There are light rails that travel stories above the road, and there are also subways that go deep underground, and you know that these travel to all parts of Los Angeles. So after a few hours, you both make it to the Brick Alley Market. It is set up inside of an old

basketball court, and there are just rows and rows of tents and little shops and carts that are being pushed up and down the alleys. It is very, very crowded here.

Jake: I wanna look around for a comet. Like, a sign or a poster or a banner, or something.

Rev: Why don't you roll Assess?

Jake: Nine.

Rev: All right, you get 1 hold.

Jake: What do I notice, despite an effort to conceal it?

Rev: So as the two of you walk around the marketplace, you do notice there's a place selling meatballs on a stick. There is sauce coming off of it on the sign, and it looks just like a comet.

Jake: And does that sauce tail seemed to be, like, pointing a direction or anything? Or does it seem like that kind of is my way point?

Rev: You would think that is your way point.

Jake: OK. "That street meat place over there is what we're looking for, as far as I can tell."

Tass: "Oh, yeah. OK, what do you think? Do we just go up and talk to whoever's running it?"

Jake: "I guess. We didn't really get that part, did we? Like, are we going up and saying hi, we're with Yaga. What you got for us? Or ... I guess first of all, I'm going to order some of the meatballs."

Tass: "Well ... Yeah OK, that's fair. She did say follow the comet's tail. Is it that we're supposed to follow who works here? Or is it follow it to here? Oh, god. We should just go up and get some meatballs."

Jake: OK. I'll walk up and order some meatballs, and kind of see, like, who I'm talking to. If there's any trappings of like a corporation at the cart, or anything like that.

Rev: Yeah. You both walk over to this cart as the most recent patron steps away. And on the other side, serving the meat, is a young woman in her early twenties. She has got knotted blue hair, and she smiles, looks up at you.

Rev: MEATBALL VENDOR: Can I help you?

Jake: "Yes. We will have two meats on sticks, please."

Rev: MEATBALL VENDOR: Here you are.

Rev: And she holds out the scanner.

Jake: Oh, man. We weren't willing to get tracked for a ride, but are we willing to get tracked for meatballs on a stick?

Rev: You need a move that says any time your belly compromises the mission, you get experience.

Jake: Yep.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: I'm going to gesture to Tass for him to pay, and give a knowing nod. "Don't worry. I've got a plan."

Tass: I will.

Rev: OK, yeah. She scans the bracelet on your wrist, and she hands you two meats on a stick. Indescript meat on a stick

Jake: As we're like going through the transaction, I think I'll be like, "You know what your sign reminds me of. It looks like a comet, doesn't it?"

Rev: And she looks up.

Rev: MEATBALL VENDOR: Oh, yeah. With the sauce flowing off of it. Yeah, I could see that.

Jake: I was really hoping that she'd be like, ah, the password.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Right this way!

Tass: While this exchange between the two of them is going on. And then, you know, I've come up to pay and like stepping back, I'm trying to keep an eye out for if there's something, like, that I should know here. If there's something odd about this place, compared to the other businesses ... Like, I'm not sure exactly what I'm looking for, but I'm looking for something that would stand out, to give me a clue about what to do to follow the comet. You know what I mean?

Rev: Sure. Roll Assess.

Tass: OK. Fourteen.

Rev: You get a hold 3.

Tass: I guess, just kind of after studying the exchange, I just need to hit this one again: What do I notice, despite an effort to conceal it?

Rev: So during this interaction, the thing that you notice is when she brings out the scanner to scan your bracelet, it seems like it's hodgepodge. It is not a market scanner sold by The Bank. It is something that they have pieced together themselves. So that means that the transactions going on are not being fed from her side through The Bank.

Tass: OK. Would it make sense to ask, who or what is in control here?

Rev: You scan up and down this aisle, and you see that everyone else here is using scanners as well when they scan people's money. There are very few instances where

someone is handing over a bill or a coin. And you see that all of them, other than hers, are The Bank brand scanners. Some of them have been modified, some of them have been cobbled together, but they all still have the telltale information that lets you know that it is being routed through The Bank. And along those lines, you actually don't see anything related to, or built by, the three major conglomerations on her cart or on the equipment that she is using, but you see that all throughout. So it seems like she somehow has managed to piece together a living entirely on her own, without the help of any of the corporations.

Tass: OK. I would know that that's impressive.

Rev: Yeah, not even impressive. Almost impossible.

Tass: OK. Can I hold the third for the moment?

Rev: Sure.

Tass: OK, I think I'll just kind of head nod for Jake and, you know, wander off a little bit. "Yeah. She's just ... She's not connected to anybody. Like, her scanner isn't The Bank's. Like, none of her stuff seems like it's running through the corporations that run everything."

Jake: "So do we think that she's, like, our point of contact? That she's like a neutral -- a neutral party?"

Tass: "Maybe. I mean, she's gotta have some pull with something or somebody, or be just a very capable human being. If she can run like that, if she can live like that ... That seems almost impossible, here."

Jake: Do I have any knowledge in my head of like a non-cooperation group? Like is there like an underground in this world that exists totally independently?

Rev: Not in any of the knowledge that you have with these corporations, going through the files that you have access to working for The Bank. They would simply not allow that.

Jake: "I mean, if there's a network of people like that, I don't know about it."

Tass: "Yeah same, man. I don't know. I don't know what to do here, besides either literally just stake this out and see what she does, or just approach and ask."

Jake: "Let's hang back and try to follow her, I guess. Or like search the cart when she leaves it behind or something. I mean, that took us to the comet. And as far as we can tell, there's nothing else here, except maybe what she knows and isn't telling us. So ..."

Tass: "OK."

Rev: So describe to me, how are you doing this?

Jake: Does she seem busy?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I wanna look around for somewhere that we could have a sightline to her, but isn't like a direction that she would be looking. Like, if there's something ... I don't know if any of the buildings around her are derelict, or anything like that.

Tass: Can I use my last hold here? For how can I avoid trouble or hide here?

Rev: Yeah. Looking around this area and looking where her cart is located, you do see that there is, on the second story of the building next to this basketball court, there is an overhang that creates some shadows down, covering the second floor window. So even the neon lights and things like that don't reflect into that window.

Tass: "Oh, there. Right up there. We can keep a sightline and stay in the shadows."

Jake: "OK." What kind of building does it seem to be?

Rev: It looks to be mostly apartments.

Jake: Head that direction.

Rev: All right. You both head outside of the marketplace and around the corner. Are you just walking into this building? Are you trying to sneak your way in?

Tass: I would think I would want to try to be quiet about it and try to, you know, sneak up there. So with that in mind, could I use my Covert Entry?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: That would be a ten. Are there guards here?

Rev: Not that you see.

Tass: OK. So I think what I would want to do is bypass a security system, escape notice. And I hate to just disable a security system if it's, you know, this is just somewhere for other people. But I think yeah, I think I need to. And as stated, you know, that's when I'm doing this alone. But the extra move that I had chosen, as I said earlier, was Mother Duck. So when I infiltrate a location, I can get my team in as well.

Rev: Yeah. So Tass walks over to this building and begins to tap into the keypad on the front door. And after a moment, it powers down and the lock clicks open. You both head inside and up the stairs, and it seems most of the people here are asleep. And you do make it to the door that leads to those series of windows, and you are able to get the lock on that door open as well. It seems like this is storage. There's a lot of merchandise in here, and it's actually a lot that you saw being sold down at a couple of the different booths inside of the marketplace. But you're able to get over to the window and post up and watch the cart and the woman working at the meat on a stick cart

Tass: While we're sitting here watching, I actually have a thought and turn to Jake. "Hey, what the hell was the plan you had?"

Jake: "With you paying for the meat?"

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: "Well, your guy's asleep right now."

Tass: "Oh, my god."

Rev: [Laughs]

Jake: "So, like ... Well, but --" [Laughs] "I mean, but really! Like, my guy's awake. So if people get, like, push notifications in this world, we would be made instantly. At least now we have until your dude wakes up."

Rev: Wait, wait, wait. What if he's got push notifications?

Jake: I hope he's got Do Not Disturb on.

Tass: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

Rev: About an hour and a half passes, and the marketplace starts to empty out. And everyone starts to pack up, and you see her doing the same thing. She is taking down the sign, rolling it up. She's packing away everything into her cart, and she starts to head out the front, rolling it with her.

Jake: And for what it's worth, I think I have had my eyes recording, just as we've been watching her for this last hour and a half or whatever.

Rev: OK.

Tass: Also, since you did describe us going through kind of a storage area, I think my Cat Burglar move comes into play, here. So that reads as, you specialize in infiltrating unconventional access points and maneuvering through locations by unconventional routes. During your infiltration, you'll have opportunity to steal incidental portable items that might be useful later. After you've spent all of your Covert Entry hold, infiltrating a secure area, you gain 1 [gear].

Rev: All right. So mark 1 [gear]. And [gear] is nebulous in this game. You can produce something that you need, as long as you can narratively describe why you would have access to it, and you will spend then a point of your [gear].

Jake: [Gear] is just to items what [intel] is to information.

Rev: Yes.

Tass: "All right, man. Time to move?"

Jake: "Yeah, I suppose so."

Tass: And yeah, I think I'll sneak us back down and try to keep a safe distance and follow,

Rev: So as you both tail her, it's about three o'clock in the morning. Both of you roll Act Under Pressure to follow without being noticed or drawing unwanted attention.

Tass: OK.

Jake: Eleven.

Tass: Also eleven.

Rev: All right. You are able to follow her, no problem. She goes down about three blocks and then makes a right and punches a code into a storage locker, and the large door rolls up and she moves the cart inside.

Jake: Would now be the time to use my Eye for Detail move? You are a master at tailing people and staking out locations. When you perform surveillance on a person or a place, gain [intel] and roll Assess.

Rev: Yeah. Roll it.

Jake: That is a nine. With my +1 forward from my last Assess ... So, a ten.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 3.

Jake: I will go with what is quickly becoming old reliable. What do I notice, despite an effort to conceal it?

Rev: You noticed that when the wind blows through this area, there's a little bit of dust. You can see there are a series of blue beams crossing the left open entrance to this storage locker.

Jake: What is my best way past?

Rev: You think you would have to find a way to hack into the system to shut the lasers down, or find a way to reflect them back onto themselves to pass through.

Jake: And how is [blank] vulnerable to me? [Blank] being the storage shed.

Rev: OK. So there is this almost imperceptible grid of lasers going across the entrance, but it is also a storage shed. And so you know the walls are not that thick, and they are sheet metal. The roof seems to be more strongly enforced, but it doesn't seem like the walls, if you could get into one of the neighboring storage lockers, would be that strong.

Jake: Did she come back out?

Rev: She did not.

Jake: "Man, there's a bunch of lasers blocking the entrance. And I don't know if they're like, cut you into pieces lasers, or just like set off an alarm lasers. But I'm guessing that we could cut through the wall of an adjacent storage unit and just bypass them altogether. But she's still in there."

Tass: "Oh. Do you think it's like housing plus storage?"

Jake: "Or it could be a secret entrance of some kind."

Tass: "Good point."

Jake: "It seems weird to me that there would be a laser defense grid on the door of a storage unit that just held a meat cart."

Tass: "Also fair point."

Rev: How much did you love that meat?

Jake: I mean ... Hold on, let me roll for it. Only five. Five love.

Rev: Is that like times you would visit per day? Or ...

All: [Laugh]

Tass: "I mean, I can try to shut it down. But if you think going through the side is the better call, that works."

Jake: "I mean, the two ways past the lasers are, I think, to like hack the system or trick it with mirrors. And I don't have a bunch of mirrors. And I also don't know how to hack the system. If you can bypass the lasers, we will leave less of a trail than just shearing sheet metal."

Tass: "Oh boy, I can sure try."

Jake: "I'll watch."

Tass: "All right."

Rev: All right. So Tass, you head over to the storage locker. And I think you do notice that as you have to pass in front of it to get to the side where the keypad is, you don't see her inside anywhere. You do see the cart, but you don't see her.

Tass: Yeah, I'm gonna ... Not make any noise, but just turn back and, like, kind of pantomime to Jake. Like, you know, inside and like a no, and just turn back and try to turn off these lasers.

Rev: All right. Roll Covert Entry.

Tass: OK.

Jake: For some reason I feel like, narratively, I'm somehow just getting worse and worse at interpreting what Tass tries to pantomime.

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: Because that -- what he just did with his hands -- was like just a point and then a no. And it's like, OK, we're not going inside the storage unit anymore. Then he went for the lasers.

Rev: I mean, I'm ... Fairly soon, I'm gonna have to implement a house rule that when you guys say I pantomime, you just do it.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: Because you explain stuff that you're not at all capable of pantomiming.

Jake: Yep.

Rev: "I pantomime that, so they know it now."

Tass: I was clearly millions of ants, OK?

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: There's no way to misconstrue that. OK, here we go. Six.

Jake: Can I help?

Rev: How?

Jake: I had pointed out that my eyes are recording now. So I imagine that like I've got kind of the ... Like I don't see the keypad, but I can kind of see how her hand moves, so I can maybe help him, like, extrapolate where to start with that code.

Rev: OK, so you're gonna like ... You see him struggling, and you run over to try to help him out.

Jake: Yeah. Like, I'm just like ... I'm kind of mirroring, like, what I could see from my camera angle, to figure out roughly like where my hand would be, so that he has an idea where to start.

Rev: All right. Roll Help or Interfere. And this is with your Links. When you help or hinder another character, roll Link with them. On a hit, they take a +1 or a -2 forward, depending on your choice.

Tass: Oh my god. I love this, too. Because the idea of helping me fix my sophisticated hacking job is, "Oh, I think she like sort of does a pattern ..."

Rev: "I think it was a diamond."

Tass: [Laughs] Yeah.

Rev: "Or maybe it was a lightning bolt."

Jake: Do you -- do you want the help or not?

Tass: I do. I do want it.

Jake: That's a seven.

Rev: All right. So Tass, that bumps you up to a seven. So you are facing off against this keypad. And Jake points out that she made some kind of exotic crisscross pattern with her elbow, and it helps you out just enough.

Tass: Awesome. OK. I think the only one I can choose here that makes sense is bypass a security system.

Rev: Yeah, you get the code in and the light grid shuts down.

Tass: "All right. You ready, man?"

Jake: "Yeah."

Tass: All right. I'm gonna creep in, here.

Rev: You turn and you creep inside of the storage locker. There is the meat on a stick cart, a couple of boxes, and that's all you see.

Jake: I want to look for the, like, familiar seam. Like what was around the dumpster, to see if there's something that moves, revealing a hidden passage.

Rev: All right. Roll Assess.

Jake: Seven.

Rev: OK. You get a hold 1.

Jake: What do I notice, despite an effort to conceal it?

Rev: The cart is very, very low to the ground. And now that it's in here, it's actually touching the ground. The wheels seem to have moved up a little bit, so that the base is on the ground. And as you walk around the cart, the cabinet that's on her side, that you would open up to get to where the gas is and everything to keep the heat going, looks large enough that a person could fit through it.

Jake: [Laughs] "There's a secret passage through the meat cart."

Tass: "OK, that's pretty cool."

Jake: "That is cool. I like this place. A lot of secret passages. A lot of fun."

Tass: "Yeah."

Jake: Yeah. I'm gonna open the little compartment.

Rev: You open up the little cabinet door, and there is the lip of a ladder going down, underground.

Jake: "So are we going?"

Tass: "I mean yeah, I think so."

Jake: "The only alternative, I guess, is that we wait for someone else to come back out. But I do -- I do very much wanna know what's down this ladder."

Tass: "Yeah, I think we go."

Jake: Do you want to lead the way this time?

Tass: I can do that.

Rev: All right. So why don't you both roll Act Under Pressure to go down this ladder quietly.

Jake: I got a ten.

Tass: Well, that's good. That's good. No one will know that you're behind me as I come crashing down this ladder, screaming the whole way apparently, with my four

Rev: So Tass, you start to go down the ladder, and you lose your grip and fall to the ground and hit hard. And when you hit, you start to roll, because the ground that you have landed on is at a steep slant. You roll down and knock into a door, knocking it open. In front of you, with her back to you, is the woman that you had tailed here. She's standing in front of a monitor bank, five different monitors, and she is typing away. And as the door bangs open, she stops, and her head turns around 180 degrees and looks at you. And as it does, her shoulder blades shift to the side, and large gun barrels emerge from each one. Her eyes glow red, and a voice fills the room.

Rev: MEATBALL VENDOR: Intruder detected. Username: Concord. Affiliation: The Bank. Terminate intruder threat.

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

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