

# The 123<sup>rd</sup> Floor (S3, E9)

**SFX:**

INTRO MUSIC

**Rev:** All right, so we have got a new contest for all of you. Tass had mentioned before that we might have some ideas on what to do for the giveaway for the copy of Monster of the Week signed by Michael Sands, and we've got it right here. We are going to, at some point in the story, get back to the Monster Mash. So what we're gonna do is we're gonna have a bracket tournament. For any of you who have gotten into college basketball and done a bracket, we're doing a bracket for the Monster Mash. So what we're going to do right now is we're gonna draw the fights and we're gonna draw the location those fights will take place. You can go to [thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash](http://thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash), and you will find a bracket on there that we have made for you. You can Photoshop it, you can print it and take a picture of it, but you're gonna fill out this bracket with who you think wins this round, and then you're gonna do a prediction and fill the bracket all the way out and indicate who you think your winner is. And everybody who gets the bracket correct and the winner correct we'll put into a drawing. If for some odd reason, nobody gets it correct, whoever's closest will get entered into the drawing. So you guys ready to see what the layout here is?

**Tass:** Yes, let's do this.

**Rev:** All right. So the first match is going to be Grimjoy, the naga, vs. Spark, the mechanical armor operated by a pack of electric gremlins.

**Tass:** Awesome.

**Rev:** And they will be fighting in the rain forest.

**Jake:** Ooh.

**Rev:** Next match will be Iron Wolf, the werewolf biker, vs. T.E.C., the ant swarm.

**Tass:** Oh ...

**Rev:** And they will be fighting at a cluster of subway tunnels.

**Tass:** Ooh!

**Jake:** Can I draw the next one?

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** All right. We've got Jeremy, the half man - half Kraken, vs. LJ, the hill giant. And they will be fighting on the plane of fire.

**Rev:** Ooh.

**Tass:** Whoa.

**Rev:** The last one?

**Tass:** That would be Cycrawler, the psychic maelstrom, vs. Cheshire, the invisible cat person. They will fight on the beach.

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** Excellent. So, just a quick recap. You're gonna find this bracket laid out for you at [thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash](http://thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash). Fill out that bracket, indicate who you think your winners are. And do know that at the end, that last match, the winner of the bracket goes up against Roaster the fire demon. So I believe we will have eight matches in total. And so again, those matches are Grimjoy, the naga, vs. Spark, the mechanical armor operated by a pack of electric gremlins, fighting in the rainforest. Iron Wolf, the biker werewolf, vs. T.E.C., the ant swarm, fighting in a cluster of subway tunnels.

**Jake:** LJ, the hill giant, vs. Jeremy, the half man - half kraken, on the plane of fire.

**Tass:** And Cycrawler, the psychic maelstrom, vs. Cheshire, the invisible cat person, on the beach.

**Rev:** And again, everybody who fills out the bracket and is correct, we will enter into a drawing for the first edition of Monster of the Week signed by Michael Sands, as well as some additional swag. Now you might be wondering, how are we going to decide who wins these matches? Don't worry. We've got a little mini game that we're going to play together. So find the bracket again at [thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash](http://thecritshowpodcast.com/monstermash), and you can make submissions for your bracket until September 27th.

**SFX:** RECAP MUSIC

**Rev:** So the thing that you find, as you go through these old files about Peregrine K, is a constant money transfer between them and someone with the name 00Serum.

So in the course of the 15 minutes that you watch 00Serum, easily three dozen people come up and have a word with them. And it's not until maybe the twenty, twenty first time that you see this, you notice that as the person walks away, they still have that fist made, and they pop something into their mouth.

**Tass:** I kind of nod in Serum's direction. "Hey, are they selling like an array of things? Or just something specific?"

**Rev:** CLUB GIRL: It's the same thing he sells every night. Makes this place look like whatever you want it to.

**Tass:** "Like how much was your dozen?"

**Rev:** The amount that it costs for this drug, quickness with which she tells you that it burns through your system ... What Peregrine K is sending to 00Serum seems like it would cover about a week's worth of this drug.

**Tass:** I'm going to send a message to Jake, saying, "Two of the four guards just split off and went out the main entrance, and the other two followed them out, like, a glass door. They might be going out a back way?"

**Jake:** Gun it backwards at a sharp of an angle as I can to get it turned around, turn the wheel as far as I can to get it facing the door, and just floor it.

**Rev:** And you hear three distinct thumps as you plow into and through the hallway of the back entrance.

**SFX:** RECAP MUSIC FADES

**Rev:** Tass, through the metal grating of the stairs, you saw the guard push a button in his jacket, additional guards coming in downstairs, 00Serum starting to be ushered towards the door, and then a car crashes through the door, and the two guards below and 00Serum vanish underneath it. The guard on the stairs turns around, bewildered, and looks down at the carnage below. What are you doing?

**Tass:** Oh, I know that I'm just torn in that moment. Because you have to just yell, "Ohh!" when you watch that.

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** But if he's turned around? I mean, I think I need to take him down. I think I would want to essentially ... Yeah, jump down and try to sleeper hold this guy.

**Rev:** They are so stunned by what has just happened, I don't think there's a roll for this. I think they are reeling at this vehicle having rolled in through the building. And so you able to hop down to their level and get an arm around their neck and start to choke them out.

Jake, it is dusty, but you have heard three distinct thumps before the car came to a stop after you plowed it into the building. What are you doing?

**Jake:** That is more thumps than I wanted to hear.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** And I think that replaying it in your head as this happened, you can —

**Jake:** I can literally replay it in my eye.

**Rev:** Yeah, exactly. And what you see is that when that person turns and draws the gun and fires and realizes the bullets aren't penetrating, they back up. And so as you continue to hit the gas to hit them, there is a cluster of people. There is an additional guard, and there is who you know from the photos is 00Serum. And they have all vanished from your sight.

**Jake:** How do I ask this? Is it going to cause less damage to back up, or to just go the rest of the way forward off of them? I think I've got to back up.

**Rev:** Yeah, there is no rest of the way forward.

**Jake:** [Laughs] Oh, no!

**Rev:** I think that you were stopped by the railing and the base of the stairs.

**Jake:** I want to look around for the hover functionality in this car.

**Rev:** Yeah. I mean, it is a pretty common feature in more expensive cars. It's essentially like turning on the windshield wipers. There is just a dial that you turn to change the elevation.

**Jake:** OK, I want to turn that dial and take it up high enough that it would be off of the people underneath it, and then back it up.

**Rev:** OK, so you switch this over and you start to back it up. And Tass, you see from above, as you are choking out this final guard, that the car slowly lifts off of the ground and starts to back out. And you can see the very broken body of one guard, and then the unconscious forms of another guard and 00Serum. They look pretty scratched up, but they do not look to be laying at unnatural angles, as the first guard is.

**Tass:** Oh, damn. I am sprinting down, absolutely as fast as I can get down there. And yeah, I'm just gonna try to scoop up 00Serum. Can I see through the windshield that this is definitely Jake?

**Rev:** Yes.

**Tass:** OK. So then yeah, I'm gonna just sprint over, open the back door, and slide them in.

**Rev:** All right. Yeah. You get 00Serum into the back seat.

**Tass:** "Well, that was a hell of a strat."

**Jake:** "I did not expect it to go ... I didn't mean to hit three people with a car. I was, at best, trying to bump one of them. I did not think it was just going to blast through the doorway like that. Are they alive?"

**Tass:** "One of them for sure. I don't know about the other one."

**Jake:** I'm gonna get out and go check on the other one. Like I'll bring it down to ground level where I can get out of this car safely, and go check on that real broken one.

**Rev:** All right. And I think at this point, your legwork clock advances again, as you are both moving in and out of this camera's view that is watching the back door of The Green Door.

**Tass:** Can you do anything about the camera? Or is it too late?

**Rev:** Mechanically, the damage has been done.

**Tass:** Yeah ...

**Rev:** Just both of you having come in and out of the camera's view more than once.

**Tass:** I don't think it matters now, but I'll take out my SMG and shoot the camera. At least maybe it won't know which way we go.

**Jake:** What is up with the really damaged guard? Are they alive?

**Rev:** You do feel a pulse when you go over and check on the guard, and you can tell pretty clearly that there is at least a broken leg, if not two, and a broken arm.

**Tass:** Ooh ...

**Jake:** Does he have a phone or anything on him?

**Rev:** He does.

**Jake:** I'm gonna call emergency services on that phone, and just like lay it on his chest. "We need to get the fuck out of here."

**Tass:** "Yeah, go. Let's drive."

**Jake:** Do cars have like license plates still? How are cars identified? What could we do to conceal that we're driving a stolen car?

**Rev:** Yeah, you do know that vehicles are still registered, and that they are scanned as they pass under certain lights, just to keep track of their location. And that, of course, the owner would have a way to track the vehicle. You've seen that with your own car.

**Jake:** "Where are we going? We need to figure out like where we're going and what we're — like, I know we're gonna talk to them, but from where? Because we have to avoid the checkpoints and stuff that are going to scan this car. We need to keep this thing under the radar."

**Tass:** "Ok. How about we get within, I don't know, several blocks of NOEL's place. You get out and take them. I'll just keep driving randomly for a little while, and then just park it, and I'll sneak back. That way, they aren't sure where we might have gone by the time they track a path. And, you know, wherever I leave it, I'll leave it far away."

**Jake:** "Do we want to take them back to NOEL's place?"

**Tass:** "Yeah, no, I guess not."

**Jake:** "I feel like we should just park this thing in, I don't — like a garage somewhere, and have a conversation with them, and then bounce."

**Tass:** "OK. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Better call. Good call. Let's do that."

**Jake:** I'm gonna pull up, like, the navigation that I've seen, like when I track my car, and try and find a parking garage or a construction site. Like, something around here that would be empty, and a route to it that would avoid any of those checkpoints that scan the car.

**Rev:** All right, roll Assess.

**Jake:** Thirteen.

**Rev:** You get a hold 3.

**Jake:** What is my best way past?

**Rev:** So you know that there are far fewer scan points for cars on the ground.

**Jake:** OK. And so you think that there are a number of blocks you could drive to, as long as you stayed earthbound and did not go up into the air.

**Jake:** How can I avoid trouble or hide here?

**Rev:** So this whole block is much nicer buildings built into the upper floors of a lot of rundown buildings. And you do see about three blocks to the west and four blocks north is a building that is labeled as under construction.

**Jake:** All right. I don't think I'm going to spend that third hold yet. I'm gonna draw up a route and head that direction.

**Rev:** OK. Tass, where are you during this?

**Tass:** I think I'm just in the back seat with Serum while they're still passed out, just going through their pockets to take any random items off of their person. If they have weapons or just any of the drugs, whatever. Just anything loose.

**Rev:** Yeah. As you go through 00Serum's pockets, you find a number of things. You find a pistol, you find a taser, you find a metal case that has maybe seven or eight sheets left

of that drug. You also find a wallet filled with various ID badges and cards that seem to be used to scan into buildings.

**Tass:** Oh! I'm gonna pocket everything there for the moment. And look them over — like obviously, they got hit by a car. Overall, how they doing?

**Rev:** As you inspect them, there is some bruising on the hip and on the opposite side on the head, but they don't look in too bad of shape. But it seems like they hit just right.

**Tass:** OK.

**Jake:** Just right.

**Rev:** Just right for that unconscious feeling.

**Tass:** "Good strike, my dude. Well hit, well driven. They seem to be OK. Still out, though." I'm gonna go through the cards and such, and see if I find something for The Nest.

**Rev:** You absolutely do.

**Tass:** Awesome.

**Rev:** It is black, and embossed on it is just a gold, very finely drawn nest. Like, there's no indication other than that that that is what it is, but you have seen that logo.

**Tass:** "Yes. Yes!" And I'm just gonna hold it up in front of Jake's face.

**Jake:** "Do you have the duplicator?"

**Tass:** "I do!"

**Jake:** "What if we just set this up to look like a drug robbery? We take the drugs, we leave fucking everything else. We don't even take them. We copy that card, and we can get in later."

**Tass:** "Yeah, OK."

**Jake:** "It doesn't solve our problem of knocking Peregrine out, though."

**Tass:** "Yeah. I don't know. Do we just make a copy, or do we like wake Serum up and see if they'll help us? Like, you know, put something in the drug so that it'll like actually knock Peregrine out or keep them subdued. I'm just afraid if we go up there, I mean his job is to defend the place. I don't want to kill the guy just because he's doing his job."

**Jake:** "Yeah, but it seems like we can expect him to be super high. Like it seems like he's not maybe doing a great job up there, if he is taking a week's worth of drugs every week."

**Tass:** "Yeah, he might be high on the stuff, but it's not high like that. Like it just changes what you perceive to make your surroundings what you want them to be. It's not going to really affect his ability to boot our asses."

**Jake:** "Well, if we carry on with this plan and we get 00Serum to agree to it, then no one has to be the wiser but them. In which case we get an access card into the building and we get the guard out of commission. But if we don't succeed at turning them, now they know exactly what happened and who's onto them and what we're going for. And that could be bad."

**Tass:** "Yeah. Then I think we just cut and run."

**Jake:** "All right. Copy that card. Let's take the drugs and the gun. I mean, that seems like, you know, somebody that was just robbing somebody for their stash would do. And then we'll bail on this place and leave them all here. None of their cards will be missing. It'll just seem like a straight up and down robbery for the goods."

**Tass:** OK. I'm gonna get out the cloner and make a copy of this Nest card.

**Rev:** Yeah. I think that, you know, to make these copies, you obviously have to have a clean card to put it on. So we'll say that the cloner came with five cards, and you've already used two for your previous. So you've got two left after you clone The Nest one.

**Tass:** OK.

**Jake:** What else is good in that stack? Anything else that sounds familiar? Alkali?

**Tass:** Yeah, good call. And I ... Yeah, I guess I want to look through the rest of this, to see if there's anything that seems important.

**Rev:** So everything in here is cards that don't have names but have images. So what's important to you? Like, are you looking for a specific company to see if their logo is there? Are you looking for the thing that looks the fanciest? What are you looking for?

**Tass:** Yeah, I mean, I think the first thing I would want to look for is anything Alkali-related. Since, you know, there's still something that we hopefully want to try to hit after this.

**Rev:** So as you go through these cards, you do find two that are of interest. One simply has a embossed Roman numeral three on it. And you do know that the Alkali Corporation has a couple of branches that they simply name them off of Roman numerals. And then you also find a card that is all black again with a gold tree that has a red apple that has fallen onto the ground from the tree. And this place is The Orchard, and it is actually a place that belongs to Codex Artillery.

**Tass:** "OK, I found an Alkali and a Codex."

**Jake:** Do we know, when we made the decision which thing we were going to go for first, what the other facility was? Where that actual place was?

**Rev:** No, because NOEL did not do the research on that one yet.

**Jake:** OK. "I mean, if that's the only Alkali card in there, then definitely take that. We might get lucky. That might be the place we need to go."

**Tass:** "Right. Or maybe even have something that we need."

**Rev:** Yeah, because as you go through, most of these other cards in here seem like they get you past someone's personal security at their home or in their condo on some of the buildings that are higher up. So it seems like residential.

**Tass:** "Yeah, it really just seems like these two are the best. So I'm going for it."

**Rev:** All right. Yeah, you've got the copy of those three.

**Jake:** And I'm gonna grab the drugs out of that box and the gun, and I'm gonna ... Well, I'm on camera. I was going to say I'm gonna try to like, wipe down fingerprints. But that already happened. [Laughs] It's too late for this.

**Tass:** I mean, yeah, same. Like the wallet, any of the stuff, even with the cards. Like, I'll have it just tossed to the side as if I'd gone through it, opening it up, looking for cash or anything like that.

**Jake:** And I will position the car. I will pull it up so that it seems like we ran into something else and that's where we left it. Like as if I accidentally ran into like a light post, and that's where we've left it now.

**Rev:** OK, so how close to the construction are you, do you think? Like when do you give this up and abandon the car and OOSerum?

**Jake:** I mean probably in the construction site.

**Tass:** Yeah. Works. And, uh ... "Let's bounce, dude."

**Jake:** Yeah. Just leave this scene. Do our best to avoid cameras and shit on the way out. Anything that might be around here.

**Rev:** All right. So I think we cut back, and you are back inside of NOEL's hideout. This has been a super action packed legwork phase. I think that had I known the direction this was going to go, this may have been its own mission.

**Tass:** Yeah, that's fair.

**Jake:** Had we known the direction it was going to go before it was going that direction.

**Rev:** Yeah. But technically, we are still in the legwork phase. So what do you want to do next as you plan? And just so that we are all on the same page here, you are at 18:00 on your legwork clock. So the target has heard vague rumors.

**Tass:** OK. "Hey, how ya feeling, bud?"

**Jake:** "Shot. Thank you for asking."

**Tass:** "We ought to do something about that."

**Jake:** Yeah. Can I like ... I see that first aid is a move, but it seems like it requires ... I know that I had the option when I picked my gear to take traumaderms. You need something to roll First Aid, right?

**Rev:** Yeah. I think that you could spend a point of Cred and just have that marked on your sheet, that you have traumaderms now.

**Jake:** Sure, I'll do that.

**Rev:** Yeah. So I think that 1 Cred is a good price for that, because it's not mundane enough that we could just say you buy it with your actual cash, because normal people aren't patching up bullet wounds.

**Tass:** Yeah, that's fair.

**Jake:** So I am down to 2 Cred, with 2 staked on the job.

**Tass:** OK. I assume I will have to roll some First Aid on him, opposed to him doing it for himself.

**Rev:** So apply First Aid, roll Cool. When you treat someone's wounds using appropriate medical equipment, roll Cool.

**Tass:** OK, here I go. Yeah. Ten.

**Rev:** All right. So if your harm clock is 21:00 or less, reduce your harm, Jake, by two segments.

**Jake:** All right. I am back to totally good.

**Tass:** Whew. All right. Good spend.

**Jake:** I mean knowing what we do not know about the inside of that place, and that there's ... There's no way to get it from the outside, right? Like that place is insulated?

**Rev:** Yeah. Like you wouldn't be able to hack your way in to find the information.

**Jake:** I think I'm gonna Declare a Contact. Someone who would be able to tell us all this stuff.

**Rev:** Ok, so who is this? Like, describe to me why they would have this information.

**Jake:** It is a security auditor. Like someone who companies hire to break into their facility to find the weak points in their security, so that they can then upgrade it. And once upon a time, he was hired to break into The Nest to get through their security. Like the most recent security protocol — he's the one that put it to the test. And they hired him because he did such a good job stealing the Declaration of Independence. It's Nicolas Cage.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** And his handle is Cagey Boy.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** So Cagey Boy was able to ... Were they trying to break into The Nest, or were they trying to break into the lock box system?

**Jake:** His job — like his task was to retrieve something from a box.

**Rev:** The Declaration of Independence.

**Jake:** Retrieve the Declaration of Independence from a box. So like basically his job was to get through all of it.

**Rev:** I can't believe you've done this.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** So he had to get into the facility, and then he had to get to the spot, and then he had to get into the box, and then he had to get something out.

**Rev:** OK. Is this the moment where we have jumped the shark?

**Jake:** Could this be the first moment? Are we still on the correct side of the shark?

**Rev:** I think Nicolas Cage appearing in canon as a character from his movie ...

**Jake:** Oh! I see. Not that Nicolas Cage.

**Rev:** Oh!

**Jake:** God. Oh, no, no, no. I see where the confusion was. No, no, no, no.

**Rev:** Just happens to share a name.

**Jake:** Not like the actor. Oh, my god. Because I said the thing about the Declaration? No, no. Totally different Nicolas Cage.

**Rev:** I see. I see. OK, well I think we're safely on this side of the shark then, still.

**Jake:** Yeah. He goes by Nicky.

**Rev:** Oh. Like little Nicky Cage.

**Jake:** Nicky Cage. Cagey boy.

**Rev:** All right. So roll Hit the Streets.

**Jake:** And I failed. Three.

**Rev:** All right. So Jake, you reach out to Nicky Cage, and it actually goes straight to voicemail.

**Jake:** Um, can you break me off a piece of what his voicemail message sounds like?

**Jake:** Says, "Hi, you've reached Nicky Cage. No, not that one."

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** And that's it. It just beeps then.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Um, I guess I'll leave him a message and say, "Hey Cagey Boy, this is Machinez. Listen, I'm working on operation and I need a little bit of information. So if you could get back to me, I want to ask you specifically about the vault at The Nest. I know you did some of the security auditing for that place. And we want to get your insight and pick your brain. So if you can get back to me, that would be terrific. Thanks, buddy." And I'll hang up.

**Rev:** All right.

**Tass:** I guess it's time for me to declare a contact, right?

**Jake:** It seems that way.

**Tass:** OK.

**Rev:** All right. Who is your contact?

**Tass:** My contact is a driver that goes by Grasshopper. She's a young woman that is just this amazing, like, speed driver. And she got her name because unlike most of the hover

cars that kind of hover up and then take off, hers kind of launches in this leaping kind of motion as she takes to the air.

**Rev:** Oh, so it has like a ... Almost a hydraulic system or something that launches it into the air, so it doesn't have to do the slow lift?

**Tass:** Exactly.

**Rev:** Inconspicuous.

**Tass:** Yes, absolutely.

**Rev:** All right. So roll hit the streets to try and contact them.

**Tass:** OK. Oof, that's a nine.

**Rev:** All right, so choose two.

**Jake:** Can I help out?

**Rev:** Sure. How?

**Jake:** I think that I join the call. I am also on the call. Grasshopper. You said that's her name? Grasshopper?

**Tass:** Yes, mmhmm.

**Jake:** She is an ex of Machinez.

**Tass:** [Laughs] Oh my god ...

**Jake:** But it varies wildly whether we're on great terms or terrible terms. So there's a chance that me being on the call is quite a benefit. There is a chance that me being on the call is quite a hindrance.

**Rev:** So the relationship, like the car, very quick ups and downs.

**Jake:** Yes.

**Tass:** [Chuckles]

**Rev:** All right, roll it.

**Jake:** Seven, so you get your +1.

**Tass:** OK, then that bumps me up to a ten.

**Jake:** I am implicated.

**Rev:** All right. So that bumps you up to a ten. Do you want [intel] or [gear]?

**Tass:** I think [gear] is the more important. That is what we are lacking the most.

**Rev:** Yeah. So you get a hold of Grasshopper.

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Hello?

**Tass:** "Hey, it's Concord. How's it going?"

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Oh, hey. How are you?

**Tass:** "Oh, good. We're just looking to hire for a job, kind of a drop off - pickup situation."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: We? Who's we?

**Tass:** "Me and Machinez."

**Jake:** "Hey, Hoppy!"

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Fuck ...

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** "That's right. I'm here too!"

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: All right. What do you need?

**Tass:** "You ever heard of The Nest, by chance?"

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Yeah. On like the 123rd floor, something like that?

**Tass:** "Yep. That's the one. Looking for a drop off there. We get in, do a little work, and then pick up on the way out."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: You know they scan cars there, right? When you pull in, you get scanned.

**Tass:** "Yeah. Yeah. We are aware."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: I don't think I can take my car to do that. You guys got another ride? I could drive it. But I mean, there's a lot of stuff I'd have to take out of my car. And boy, that's gonna take some time. I mean, I guess I could always provide one, but it's gonna cost you a little extra. I mean where's your car at, Sheeny?

**Jake:** "It's ... It's having a rough time. It's not exactly what I would call operational right now."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Oh. So just like most times.

**Jake:** "Yeah, just like most times. Thank you."

**Rev:** Yeah. So the deal that she gives you is that she could do the job. It'll cost three Cred. And she can get you a suitable car. It'll be four.

**Jake:** We have enough.

**Tass:** Yeah, OK. I think we have to take that deal.

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: All right. When?

**Tass:** "I think we're planning on doing this one pretty quick. Just whenever you're available soonest."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Yeah. Give me two, three hours, I guess. Gotta find something that's fancy enough to get that high.

**Tass:** "Yeah. All right."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: So you told me the place. Where is the pick up and the drop off?

**Tass:** "How about Brick Alley Market?"

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: Oh, sure. You gonna get some street meat while you're over there?

**Tass:** "Oh, you know it."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: All right. Bring me a couple.

**Tass:** "No problem."

**Rev:** GRASSHOPPER: I'll give you a call in a few hours.

**Tass:** "Talk to you then."

**Jake:** "Bye Hoppy!"

**Rev:** GRASSHOOPPER: See ya, Sheeney. See ya, my little Charlie Sheen.

**All:** [Laugh].

**Rev:** And she hangs up. And Jake, you notice actually that while you were on that call, a little blip appears in the corner of your vision, and has been blinking. You know that you have a message waiting.

**Jake:** Oh, I would like to check it.

**Rev:** Yeah. You look over at the dot, and a screen drops down and starts to play little Nicky Cage. And it seems like they're in the back of a car. And you very clearly see the strobe of red and blue lights through the window behind them.

**Rev:** CAGEY BOY: Hey Machinez. Yeah, I got your call. Um ...

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** CAGEY BOY: I did break into that place. They had me kind of test things. I got pretty far in. The thing you need to know is that the boxes rotate, and so they're not in the same place. They're in the same place every day, but not throughout the course of that day. So depending on the time of day you're in, if you find one, you can then triangulate where the rest will all be located. It rotates, but it's not random. So every day at six o'clock, that one's in the same place, so that they can find them. So, yeah, let me know if you need anything else. I'll probably be tied up for a little bit, still.

**Rev:** And you actually hear gunshots out the outside of the car, and the screen goes black. But you do notice that as you are watching this, the little counter at the bottom of the video message indicates that it has been viewed twice.

**Jake:** Oh, no. "I've got bad news. I believe that the real Machinez knows exactly where we're going."

**Tass:** "OK ... Why?"

**Jake:** "Well first of all, that's probably good. If he can view a voicemail, it probably means they got him out of trouble. So that's nice. We did our saving, there. But yes, the voicemail that I just got back from Cagey Boy has been viewed previously."

**Tass:** "Ah, yeah. OK. So I'm glad we decided to go sooner than later?"

**Jake:** "Yeah. And he didn't say anything in the voicemail about like ... You know, I didn't tell him when we were going or anything, so he just kind of gave me a breakdown of how the boxes work. They are on a rotation, but it is a set rotation. And that's really — that's

kind of all he fed me. So it shouldn't give away anything about, like, you know, other than the fact that we need to know something about the boxes. It stands to reason we're going in there, but was not explicitly stated what we're doing."

**Tass:** "All right. I mean, it is what it is. We can't change the plan now."

**Rev:** And I think with that, your clock, with The Collectors advances by one, and you are now at 22:00. And I believe we are at the end of the leg work phase.

And so we jump ahead and we see the two of you, Greg, and Grasshopper, inside of a very posh car hovering about 120 stories in the air, headed towards The Nest. She lowers the car down onto the roof of The Nest, and two small drones fly out and scan over it, and then they blink green, and she moves the car forward. And as she pulls forward, a large metallic door slides open, revealing a glass door with a scan pad on it.

**Tass:** Yeah, I think we'll hop out, and I'll have the card ready to scan.

**Jake:** Can I roll my beginning of mission move now?

**Rev:** Yes.

**Jake:** That is a seven.

**Rev:** All right, and what does that get you again?

**Jake:** I get 1 hold, and at any time during the mission, I can spend that hold to ask a question from the Research list.

**Rev:** All right. So describe to me how you are going in. You have got the key card, you have got Greg, and the pair of you. Lay it out for me.

**Tass:** I think I'm up front, scanning this card. Probably have Greg between us.

**Jake:** Sure.

**Rev:** Yeah. You scan the card, and this very thick piece of bulletproof glass slides open, and there is maybe four or five feet again so that you can step inside. It will slide closed, and then a second door will open, letting you into the inside of The Nest.

**Tass:** All right. I'll usher them in with me as quickly as possible.

**Rev:** And as you are standing in this middle section, Greg is looking around.

**Rev:** GREGORY: So what exactly is it that you would like me to put my focus on? I can try to get to the security room and override the synths. Is that, you think, the best use of me?

**Tass:** "Yeah, I think that's important. I don't know how long it's gonna take us to search the boxes, if there's any way to possibly look at that, too? To like locate numbers and locations at this time?"

**Rev:** GREGORY: Yes, I imagine that would be at a separate location. I mean, I won't know until I can get inside and get connected. But for the most part, I would assume the device that operates the boxes might be separate from the security room. Though we could be fortunate, and it could be in the same place.

**Tass:** "Sure. Well, OK. I would probably say synths is priority one. We can do that first, so that we're not in danger while we look for the rest."

**Rev:** GREGORY: Very well.

**Tass:** "All right. Here we go."

**Rev:** And that second glass door slides open. The three of you step out into The Nest, and it is amazingly like its namesake. You see that there are rows and rows of gold plated lock boxes in the shape of nests — that there are fewer on the bottom, more on the top, so it starts to curve out. And you see platforms rising and lowering and moving over between them. There are two or three people in here going through their things and they turn and look, but they see that you have gotten in, and they don't pay much attention to you. Around the exterior of each nest, you see two synths that seem to be powered down, just waiting there in case they need to be activated. Gregory's eyes

glaze over a little bit and flash that blue again as he starts to try to connect to the internal network, so that he even has a sense of where to go to find these other elements.

**Jake:** I want to start like looking around the place. Like, you know, people are just going about their business. I want to start kind of scouting the boxes. And I think I want to immediately use my research hold to ask where would I find box SS-166?

**Rev:** Absolutely. You start to take a quick walk around this room. And with your cyber eyes, you start documenting the location of boxes. And you know that the numbers and the letters wouldn't be arbitrary. And it takes maybe two or three minutes, but you do start to see a pattern. Replaying what you have seen in your vision, laying it over the same field, playing it again, and you start to see the pattern. And it takes you another thirty seconds to spot where, inside of one of these large nests of lockboxes, SS-166 is located. It is about thirty feet up, but there is a empty platform below it.

**Jake:** "There's the one we need. And now that I know where that is, I think I get the pattern. I think I'll be able to suss out where the one NOEL needs is also."

**Tass:** "OK. So this is pretty chill so far. Do we think we want to redirect Gregory to hacking in to pop the two that we need? Or should we still focus on synths first, just in case?"

**Jake:** "I mean, do we want to have you get a look at it first, to see if it's the kind of thing you think you could deal with?"

**Tass:** "Yeah, might as well."

**Jake:** "And then if you're pretty confident you can deal with it, we can still send him off to deal with the synths while you deal with the box."

**Tass:** "OK."

**Jake:** And I'm gonna fucking chill in this swanky ass bank. I grab a cucumber water and a nice couch and I'm relaxing.

**Tass:** I will go over to the platform.

**Rev:** You go over to the platform and about a foot in front of you, a holographic keyboard appears.

**Tass:** I will press SS-166.

**Rev:** You type in SS-166 into the keyboard, and the platform starts to rise into the air and move slightly to the left, to get you over to that lock box.

**Tass:** OK. Looking at this lock box, can I, like, check this thing out a little closer, to kind of see if this is something that's in my wheelhouse?

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you roll Assess.

**Tass:** OK. Eleven.

**Rev:** All right. You get a hold 3.

**Tass:** I guess I'd love to know what's the best way in?

**Rev:** The best way for you to get in. Looking at it, you barely even see any seams. It is just a gold square with the number embossed on it. You think that you might be able to try to crack into this. Maybe some kind of high powered laser or saw that could get through the gold? Because you do notice that it actually is not gold plated. There is a good deal of gold. So you think that the metal is probably pretty soft.

**Tass:** Oh, interesting. What potential complication should I be wary of?

**Rev:** From a distance, this looks like a nest. And it couldn't really look like a nest if it was just a bunch of cubes. And as you were up here, you notice that all of the interwoven twines and curves come from the back of the boxes. And so it must be how it is hardwired into the system, and how it moves. If you were to try to break into this and set off an alarm, you have the feeling that the entirety of this nest would start to move and shift to move the box you are trying to access away from you.

**Tass:** OK. So I know what will happen if I don't do it carefully or don't do it correctly. I know a way that I can access it feasibly. So as far as its security measure and the thought of me trying to get through that so I can access it safely, what about this box and its security is vulnerable to me?

**Rev:** All of the gold threads that run through this nest and around the boxes and out the back of them lead down into the floor. And just barely, through some of the twisting coils, you see just a hint of the cable that must supply the power. And so you think that if you could cut that power wherever it is underneath this floor, it would stop this nest's ability to move and shift and change its location or orientation.

**Tass:** OK. So I would have a good idea of where that connection is?

**Rev:** It is definitely somewhere under the floor. So you at least know that it is between the 123rd floor and the 120th floor.

**Tass:** OK. And I'll come back to Jake.

**Jake:** I offer him a glass of cucumber water.

**Tass:** "Well, that's very cool."

**Jake:** "I've moved on to the hibiscus water."

**Tass:** "Oh, nice. How is it?"

**Jake:** "Fresh."

**Tass:** "Oh, that's awesome."

**Rev:** GREGORY: I have been able to connect to the local Wi-Fi, and I have a sense of where the security office and a number of different power banks, as well as information about the individual boxes and their owners, may be located.

**Tass:** "Wow. All right. So do we need to get you to that security office?"

**Rev:** GREGORY: Yes. If it is still the synths that you would prefer me to take after.

**Tass:** "I think so. Because I'm going to have to get under this floor somehow. I'm gonna need to find an access point to get down to cut the power for the security system that shifts these boxes. Once I do that, I'll be able to get up to them and cut into them."

**Rev:** And as you are having this conversation, a platform lowers about 10 feet away from you, from one of the other small nests of lockboxes. And an older gentleman in a broad Stetson hat walks by, and he notices Gregory.

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: That's a mighty fine-looking synth you got there. I keep thinking about getting one for myself for security purposes. Is that what you use yours for?

**Tass:** "Oh, yeah. Yeah. He's great for security stuff. Yeah, I don't know what we'd do without him."

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: I've heard that you get kind of emotionally attached to him. Is that correct?

**Tass:** "You know? Yeah, kinda."

**Rev:** And he gets pretty close to Gregory, and starts touching his face and feeling his jacket.

**Jake:** I think I'm gonna kind of step in there and go, "Sorry, but if you don't mind, you know, talking about how emotionally attached we get to them. Could you not just kind of get handsy with the synth?"

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: Oh, sorry about that. I just wasn't quite sure if it was turned on, or ...

**Tass:** "No, it's fine. It's fine. It's just, you know, this is a very advanced model, so. Yeah."

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: Oh. Finest money can buy?

**Tass:** "Yes. I don't know that money can buy this quality anymore."

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: [Laughs] Money can buy everything.

**Tass:** [Unenthusiastically] "Yeah, right? Oh, well ..."

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: Well that's good. You got a — you got a model number on him?

**Tass:** "Oh, no. I had a guy that ... We don't do all this specific ordering. We talk to the people that know better, and they send them to us, and ... You know how it is."

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: Oh. Hey, synth. What's your serial number?

**Rev:** And you see Gregory's eyes kind of look to you. And he looks at you, Jake.

**Rev:** GREGORY: 867-5309.

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** MAN WITH STETSON: I'll keep that in mind.

**Rev:** And he starts walking towards the exit.

**Jake:** I want to start looking over where that guy touched Gregory for like a bug or something. Like, that was so bizarre. And that guy seemed insistent on putting hands on him. I want to see if he planted something or took something,

**Rev:** Roll Assess.

**Jake:** I got a six.

**Tass:** Can I try to help out, by just being an extra set of eyes?

**Rev:** Yeah, roll Help Out.

**Tass:** OK. Eight.

**Rev:** All right. So Jake, that bumps you up to a seven. You get 1 hold.

**Jake:** I think, what do I notice despite an effort to conceal it?

**Rev:** So you do notice underneath Gregory's lapel, so small that if you didn't know what you were looking for, you would have missed it. But there is a tracker. And you recognize this tracker. You should. You have placed hundreds of them. It is the exact same type used by The Collectors.

**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](http://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](https://Patreon.com/TheCritshow).