

Urban Shadows Q&A Part One

SFX:

INTRO MUSIC

Rev: I have been kind of making real small steps to transition us into the new space. And the other day I was there taping out, like, around the doors and the windows and stuff, so we can paint.

Jake: Mmhmm.

Rev: And I was waiting for the carpet cleaners to show up. And they showed up, and then the carpet cleaning took probably like a half hour longer than it should have. Because one of the guys asked me like, "Oh, what do you do here?" And I was like, "Oh, we do, you know, voiceover recording, we do podcasts, and then I do some voiceover stuff for a TV show ... And, you know. This, that, and the other." And I didn't understand what was going on at first. And maybe it's just because I didn't process it was happening. But the next time he talked to me, after I told him what we do, he was like, [Cockney accent] "Yeah, all right. So we're gonna go in there, we're going to clean the carpet, and it's gonna, you know, take a little time."

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Oh my god.

Rev: And I was like, did I miss-hear him before? Maybe. Oh, well. And then the next time it was like, [Jamaican accent] "OK, man. It's gonna take us like 20 minutes to do this."

Megan: It was an audition.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: He didn't have his reel on him, so he had to just do it live.

Rev: I would like to say that after like the third or fourth one, I was clear on what he was doing. But to really nail it home, there was this point where they had to go up and fill a

bunch of water jugs because they were using a portable carpet cleaner, because our office space is like kind of deep inside of the building, so they can't run stuff all the way through. He's walking back and forth and he stops and he goes, "You know what's funny?" I was like, "Uh, what?" He's like, "Sometimes you go to like certain places like Indianapolis or Atlanta or New York, and they have different words that mean the same thing. But if you don't know that, like, you don't understand what they're saying. So like in New York, they might say ..." And I realize this guy is giving me his tight five.

Kim: Yes.

Rev: Like he just goes into this routine that he clearly has thought about before.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: First of all, good for this guy for shooting his shot.

Megan: Yeah.

Jake: Second of all, it's so sad to know that Billy West is now cleaning carpets in Indianapolis.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I told that story to Joe. I've been streaming with Joe a couple of days a week — our buddy Jgame_z. And that was his exact response, too. He was like, "You know what? Good on that guy for shooting a shot. You could be the man that changed his dreams."

Megan: I guess it's a good time to tell everyone that I am leaving, and we have a new cast member.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Here's carpet guy!

Rev: We just hear [motor sounds] in the background as he makes his entrance. He makes like a wrestler's entrance for some reason, with the carpet cleaner.

Jake: [Sings entrance music]

Megan: That is awesome.

Rev: Oh, man. So, yeah, we've got a lot going on this week, in the sense of that kind of stuff. It's actually really fortunate that the Q&A ... Spoiler alert: the Q&A is gonna be two episodes, because there were a lot of really good questions that got some in-depth answers. And it's nice also because it gives us a little more buffer time to get ourselves moved into the new space with a little more of a buffer. Really, the last thing to remind you all about before this month is over is that if you are interested in getting in on the T-shirt tier or the swag cycle, this is the month to do it. And this first cycle of the swag is going to be our first go at the all-digital swag cycle. So if that's something you're interested in, sign up before the end of January to get in on that. And I think with that, it's time to get to the episode.

SFX: CRITSHOW STINGER

Rev: Well holy shit, you guys made it back.

Jake: Don't swear at me.

Rev: You son of a bitch.

Tass: [Laughs]

Megan: I love the incredulousness in your voice. Of like, "I thought you were gonna die there for sure."

Rev: I was really just feeding off of the energy you guys played with, for the last three months.

Kim: Rev was planning to end the show last week.

Jake: There were half of those items that he was like, I fucking — I didn't expect you to get this thing this way. So it's entirely possible that he is like, "I expected you to die. I can't believe this."

Megan: "I did my best to kill you. I cannot believe you're here."

Rev: So we have got questions about Urban Shadows. I mean, we don't have questions. Well, I'm sure you guys might have questions, but the audience also has questions. Hopefully, we've got answers.

Jake: I am all-knowing and all-seeing.

Rev: Excellent.

Jake: I have no questions, only answers.

Megan: Now it's The Jake Show.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: All right, so let's ... Let's get started here. "So when you created the future world, what was your process? Did you follow threads you'd already established off screen in the regular time frame? Or did you start from scratch, based on Urban Shadows setting provided in the game? How much of it is yours? How much of it comes as part of the setting?"

So that's a great question because if anyone out there has played Urban Shadows before, we are not playing it exactly as it is written, in the sense of the environment. The environment is very much that it is a human world and monsters live among it, and that some humans know, some don't. And for the purposes of our story, I took away all of humanity except for the ones who know about it and are fighting against it. So the factions and the way they're broken up is all part of Urban Shadows. And then it just turned into me figuring out, from our story, what fit best into those existing factions. And so I think we got some questions later about those. But yeah, it is all part of Urban Shadows, with the twist that there is no real human presence except for the resistance

group. As opposed to humans still being the norm, and these factions of kind of mobster like monsters in various groups, vying for power and area.

Tass: Which I feel like worked really well with the idea of it not just being those four kind of explicitly stated factions. Having them all broken up into these various kind of subcategories and stuff filled in that richness that could have otherwise maybe have been missed. To give lots of different interaction, lots of different world building. That did a lot for it. That was really cool.

Megan: I think it's really neat too, with like the power structure? Like oftentimes you hear like, "Oh, the world is overrun with monsters," and it kind of has this chaotic feel to it. But I love the breaking that down into like a social hierarchy and like politics.

Rev: Like, "No, we still want to like rule the world normally. We just also want to be able to devour our victims."

Megan: "Yeah, we still like money."

Rev: [Laughs] Yeah.

Tass: OK, next question. "When creating the different factions, how did you determine what type of monsters should ally? Was folklore taken into consideration? Or was it a matter of like calling to like?"

Rev: Yeah, so it really was, again, from Urban Shadows. That they give that breakdown of vampire, werewolf, and ghost in one faction. And so then it just became a matter of figuring out like, OK, so things in our world that don't quite fit, where do they go? But I mean, luckily, they have that Outsiders category, which I love the idea of the Outsiders group. That it's like, "Hey, we don't really fit in anywhere else, someone's gonna take you in here." And so that really determined who was in what subgroup. And then becoming actual allies really depended on what the head of each group wanted. Because, you know, part of this game is that these groups are working with and against each other. And so determining who wanted what and knowing how they were trying to go about getting it let me know like, "Oh yeah, the werewolves might be hiring out some of their people. The demons might be working with these people, et cetera."

Tass: On that note, did like kind of coming up with those connections and who wanted what and so on, have any pull on who you pulled for some of the cameos from our other projects?

Rev: So the cameos in the sense of the ... Mostly it was lieutenants.

Tass: Yeah.

Rev: That was just — that was for us. That was just for fun.

Tass: Nice.

Rev: And then, you know, it was a very long process of figuring out like, OK, who carries over into the future? Who is here that you know? And we'll kind of get into this a little later. Some people have some questions about the items, and acquiring them. But it was one of those things where two or three people were last, because the other ones just kind of fell into place. Like Mother, I knew right away. And, you know, I knew ... I mean obviously — it was named after — but I knew who the head of the oracles was. And I wanted to make sure there were enough callbacks, enough people who knew you in the past or that you knew of, for it to be kind of dangerous. But not enough that it was just a world that hadn't really changed, except now all the people you know are in charge.

Tass: Fair. Yeah. OK.

Jake: "Why the pivot to politics and intrigue for this arc? Is it like another game on top of the game, tracking reputation and turf, et cetera?"

Rev: No. I mean, that's all part of Urban Shadows. As we saw in the last episode of this story arc that fighting is part of it. But boy, it's a rough part.

Tass: Yeah, it is.

Rev: You know, favors and the power struggle and the power structure is a big part of the way this game works.

Tass: Yeah, it's tough to look at a game like that based on what we're coming from, and go, "You have five health total, and the currency is favors."

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Like, that's it. Like, that's ... Woof. I'm too dense for this game. [Laughs]

Megan: Yeah. And that was, I think, really tricky for me, playing a playbook that was designed to fight.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And so it was either like, I can't really play the game in the sense of like politics, the way other faction heads could.

Rev: Mmhmm.

Megan: But I had to be like very choice in like taking on personas, and so I can still utilize that idea of debts with other factions who don't know who I am.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Even being in this game, like hearing that question was almost jarring. Because of course it was, it was mostly sort of intrigue and making those connections and stuff. And looking back, it's like, "Well, here's the people that we're going in, with these files that we got from, you know, Kim and grandpa about like, this is who we need to be worried about, and this is what we need to avoid," and so on. And by the end of it, we're like friends with half of them and then made other enemies that we didn't have at the start. And yeah, it really is so much different than anything we've done before. And it was cool.

Kim: Yeah, I really liked things like the faction turn, and finding out rumors of what the other factions were doing. And it lended a lot of stress to things, actually.

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: Because constantly we were aware of all of these things going on, and we couldn't follow up on all of them. And so there were ... There were plot threads that we just had to leave, that then ended up burning us in kind of a big way. Like Damien and the Wraith.

Tass: Mmhmm.

Rev: Yeah. Yeah because, you know, in our normal story, in *Monster of the Week*, I always talk about having ticking clocks. But it's really Nash, and a couple other people. Whereas in this instance, you had nine factions that were all doing their own thing. And I kind of had to know who they are, what they wanted, and what speed they were working at. And those faction turns, some of those moves came with, "Oh yeah, hide what it was you just did."

Tass: Yup. I feel like we had talked about this before, but off-mic or something, or maybe just during a lunch break or something. But just that idea that you have those — you know, you're so used to having those clocks going. And then playing this game, it's like, oh, well, you've been training for this.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: Like, it's built into this game, but you've sort of got it. You were already — that's the part that doesn't really need to be learned, per se.

Rev: Yeah. Because I imagine that would be a hard thing to track all those factions and keep track of, like, time passages. And yeah, they were doing this. But you know what, while they were off camera, this was accomplished.

Tass: Yeah.

Megan: I think specifically with this question too, talking about it being, you know, this arc, this last kind of bit that we went through. A lot of these items that we went after, some of it just kind of pieced together for us, and we just thought of a way to get through it. And when we started making a plan for how to go into this last encounter, we realized that it was like, oh no. We have to, like ... We have to figure out something more than just, hey maybe we can sneak in there. Or, you know, cause a distraction. That that wasn't going to work, that this was going to be like, politically, what can we use to get close?

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: Yeah. There were a few where we knew we were gonna have to walk on eggshells for a long time, and then got very — I'm just gonna say it: got very lucky in a few of those instances, where we could just run through the eggshells now. Just go, go, go.

Jake: Yeah. I feel like early on we mapped out like a ... Like a gradual ramp up. Like, we're like, all right, we're gonna start with this one because it's easy, and then this one will be the next easiest, and then this will be the next easiest, and then this will be a little tough. And then instead, it was just kind of a roller coaster up and down of like this was accidentally very easy, and this one's a little tough, and this one is accidentally even easier. So we were like the absolute trough, bottom. Before it was like and now the hardest possible one, that we knew was going to be the hardest one, and we thought we'd work up to it.

Rev: Yeah. I remember you all talking about — when we first started this, you had kind of made this general sketch for yourselves of, this is the order we think we'll do them in. And you know, here's the one that we can do while the world is on fire and we're trying to run for the portal. All of a sudden you had this very smooth lead up to it. It's like, hey, nothing's going on. What do you want to do?

Jake: Oh, no.

Megan: "Did Megan, Jake and Tass have input in designing their false identities? Did you come up with these identities first, or the faction groups first?"

Jake: I mean, we largely got to come up with who we were.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I mean, I feel like this comes up in a lot of arcs, where it's like, yeah, we got to come up with it. And then with input from Rev, we honed it in on how it would fit properly in here, not knowing what we didn't know going into it. But I got to make up Brizack.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I got to make that dumb name up, just ...

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: That whole thing.

Kim: Yeah. I think structurally, I got to pick my playbook first. Or like, mine got decided initially, because I was ... I had to be introduced in this world. And then for everyone else, it was like, "Here are all these playbooks. Which one do you think fits you?"

Rev: Yeah. Because it was — the first conversation was a conversation with Kim, about how I thought she would be brought into the story. And then it turned into a conversation of like, OK, so what of these playbooks do you think fits most with your current standing in Monster of the Week, before you jump through this portal?

Tass: Yeah. Like, there's always that level too of like, we didn't know what the factions were gonna be called or who is in charge, and that kind of thing. But even in the middle of gameplay, you know, we were coming up with some stuff on the fly because the game lends itself to that. And of course, you know, Rev's input helps us inform that. But even with mine too, I think I was maybe one of the — I don't know as far as your process and when you started, exactly, but it was very last minute of me even knowing exactly what playbook I was leaving behind in the past, to come into. So that was kind of exciting, to make a change that my first experience with that change was gonna be a whole new game system. So we got to talk a lot about that and what that's going to look like and what that's going to mean and how that's going to translate when I go back, and what I'm actually going to be playing in the quote unquote "present" again.

Rev: Yeah. Because with Tass's and Jake's, it was pretty obvious, once we knew where they were. But for Megan's, we went around for quite a while, trying to figure out what playbook you would fit. And then I ended up coming to you like, "Hey, what about this?" And this is how we kind of got into Megan being a human, and kind of leaning down that path of her training from Anastacia and stuff.

Megan: Yeah. Because we were looking at some different options with the Urban Shadows playbooks, but a lot of the moves for the playbooks that kind of fit with me

being The Spooky were very parallel to Kim's abilities. And we didn't really want to do that, and nothing just really fit with what I could do before.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And so we were kind of at a loss. Yeah. And then then Rev was like, "What if you don't have powers?"

Rev: Yeah. And a lot of them match up with Jake's, too. Like a lot of them matched up with The Wizard.

Kim: Yeah, there were like ... All of Megan's abilities, you could kind of piecemeal it together from The Oracle, The Wizard, and The Spectre. But there was no playbook that really kind of covered everything that Megan could do in Monster of the Week.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Yeah, we talked about trying to figure out how to do a Spectre.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And then it just didn't feel right, so ... Yeah.

Jake: [Laughs] You died on the way through.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: No, I made it through, and then I died immediately when I got to the future.

Jake: The portal came out in an intersection.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: We didn't expect that.

Megan: So, yeah. Rev had the idea like, well, what if your powers are gone for some reason, and you don't know why? I was like, I like that. So we were looking at The Veteran and The Hunter. And then it just kind of made sense for The Hunter, with what we put together. And yeah, like, I worked with Anastacia, so it made sense that I would have some of this. But as far as, you know, knowing the factions first, I didn't know that I was going to be head of The Red Line until ...

Rev: [Chuckles]

Megan: Well, I found out that I was head of The Red Line.

Rev: Yeah, and that was a big part of it for me, was ... So I had a — and we talked about this in the episode — that I had a spreadsheet that I gave everybody, and it had the information for the factions, the faction heads, and the faction lieutenants for what they knew, and then a bunch of blanks. And, you know, no matter the fact that this is, you know, that we're doing this on some level for listeners, I'm still doing this for you, the players. So I want there to be reveals and surprises that get you, because that's what's interesting to me, as someone running this game for almost four years now. And so placing those things in there of, you know, Tass coming across Borbauk or, you know, Selina having made it to the future, picking those things and putting them in there and hoping that people weren't gonna find out about them until they did. You know, a great example was Kim walking into the room with Ozymandias and being like, "Yeah, I Inspect a Place of Power." And I was like, fuck, this is the truest answer. I can't dance around this. She has to know that it's Strohm. It's like, that was a great thing that I thought was gonna be teased out a little longer.

Kim: [Laughs] Instead, it was like two episodes after Strohm died. Yeah, no. She's fine.

Rev: No, she's good.

Tass: Like, yeah, it's fun when those hit, too. Because especially when it's like, well, this isn't how I intended, but look ... Look at them light up, you know? And it's ... That's good.

Kim: "How did the team decide what the players' standings would be in this world? I'm especially interested in Kim as the confidant of a longtime frenemy of the group, and Megan as a faction head."

Rev: So the playbooks tell you, I believe, what you start with when it comes to the faction, and then you get to spread points around? Is that right? It's been a while since we've made these characters.

Jake: You get like a default Status-1 with your thing.

Kim: And then everyone else, you start at zero.

Jake: Yeah. And then the scores you get to pick. You got to just assign those, because they fluctuate every — or they have the capacity to fluctuate in the faction turns.

Rev: Yeah. So their placement, their level of importance ... You know, they did know that — OK, so you've gotta ... Especially for Tass and Jake, it was a matter of, "OK, so what is your — this character's back story that justifies them coming in from out of town?" Because, you know, we did go through this process of making it so that everyone — the three of them were playing — was someone who had died or vanished or whatever. And it was kind of unknown in the moment that it had happened, so that they could step in kind of seamlessly into that life and move through the world and try to accomplish these tasks.

Tass: So my question about that is, is the dark secret that we never got told that James just went out and murdered these people

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Who are some fools that I think they would enjoy being? I'm gonna go kill them.

Rev: Yeah. And then with Megan being the faction head, it just made sense. Like as soon as we decided that she was gonna be a human and I looked at the state the humans were in, I was like, you know, there's ... You know, I know James is there. He's running one group, and someone's gathering humans from around the world. No one knows who that is. But there is a group of like active hunters. I think that'll be a fun ... I don't know, "conflict" is not the right word, but I thought it would be a fun kind of obstacle if you all had the ability to kind of move freely, and Megan had this group that was looking to her. I think she dealt with it really well in a way that didn't make it so that she couldn't be with

you whenever she wanted, but kind of putting that obstacle in there of like, "Oh hey, by the way, you're in charge here."

Tass: Well, I think that was clever, too, whether it was intentional or not. That, you know, we've built this world that is slightly different than how Urban Shadows usually goes again, like you mentioned. Where humans aren't really a thing, or if they are seen, they're just taken out, etc. So if we're gonna bring Megan into the world without powers, having her in that position of power affords her so many opportunities that I don't think any of us realized until we're in it and she's like, "Well, I have to make a decision, here. What's available to me?" So yeah, that was cool. That was a good move. Smooth move. [Laughs]

Megan: I think it gave a lot of gravity to our situation as a whole, because I think there was a couple of times where we would come up against situations that were like, this is not great, but you know, we're going back to the past, so ...

Rev: Mmhmm.

Megan: We'll fix it then. It won't be an issue anymore. But it was really difficult to balance not running this faction — not taking care of these people who Fiona was supposed to take care of.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And making sure that they were addressed, at the same time.

Rev: Yeah. Like having that hook in of, you know that you're gonna go back and set things right, hopefully. But it still is hard to make a choice that you know might impact them negatively while you're here, still. Because, you know, you'll see it and they'll still go through it, as far as you're concerned.

Megan: Exactly, yeah.

Rev: And then for Kim, with her being connected to Strohm. I knew I wanted Kim to be The Oracle because it was the cleanest, most interesting way I could justify her knowing about their arrival.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: And it was a way to get James there as well. And I had already known that Strohm was the faction head of that group. And so I was like, "Hey Kim, how do you feel about having like a good, strong relationship with someone?"

Kim: A lot of the playbook for The Oracle kind of lent itself to that. Because The Oracle, one of the moves of The Oracle, is that The Oracle has a Benefactor — someone who they are indebted to, and who they live with and give their visions to. And when I was talking to Rev about that, when we were figuring out who my benefactor was, he was like, "Oh, I immediately know who it is. It's Strohm." And we did a lot of talking about what that relationship was like. And initially, the one that we sort of talked about was a little bit more of a tense relationship between Kim and Strohm. And that was the reason why I was helping the IPT, was that like I was kind of working for Strohm a bit under duress. But we didn't ... We never really loved that idea.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: And it was Rev that pitched, "Hey, what if Strohm and Kim have a more like mother-daughter relationship? What if there's more of a, like, emotional closeness there?" And I really liked that. That ended up being one of my favorite things about this setting, was that relationship between Kim and Strohm.

Rev: Yeah. And along those similar lines, "How far in advance did you know Kim's playbook and her character's role in the setting? What was the planning process like? Who knew about her role?" So nobody else knew about her role until it came up in play — and especially who she worked for. I believe that was a couple episodes in before she made that reveal.

Jake: Yeah. I feel like at least for me, I think the immediate assumption was like the under duress thing. Like, it's like, "Oh yeah, she works for Strohm." And I was just immediately like, "OK. Well, that must ... But she's helping us, so that must be, like, not ideal for her."

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And then I was like, oh no, it's more than ideal for — it's ... Well, OK. We're gonna have to negotiate this. [Laughs]

Rev: We gotta figure this out.

Jake: I don't know if we're cool with Strohm anymore. Oh shit.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: Which I think was also really neat. You know, bringing a new person into kind of the group, and having it be somebody who is from this world and has such a close relationship with somebody who is in power, and we don't really know where we stand. Well not me, because she didn't know who I was, but ... [Laughs] Just as the, you know, the IPT, even.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: And it made it almost a little, like, how wary do we have to be of Kim? And, you know, like getting to learn to trust her and realize, like, her intentions and create that closeness with her, as a group.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Mmhmm. Yeah, I thought it was interesting because, since this is a ttrpg and I was coming into this show, there was an understanding that I would come in and help the group with what they were trying to do. Especially because I had hopes that somehow we would figure out a way to put me into Monster of the Week.

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: But it was fun balancing that plus my closeness with Strohm. And it was ... It was interesting how that shift happened for me, in terms of, "I'm helping all of these people because my vision said that I should, and it seems like they're doing the right thing." And then there was really a pivot to, "All right, now I need to help you, because something disastrous has happened to Strohm and to everyone that I care about. And I need to assist you with this, in order to prevent this from happening to people that I love."

Rev: We haven't talked about this yet, but this was not originally Kim's role in the world. Something that I had had the idea for, and we kind of played it out and then talked about it after the fact, and it didn't really sit well with everybody because, you know, they all play as themselves. But originally, at the very end of Season Three, Kim was going to be Lana. I had pitched to Kim playing Lana, and letting her connection be to Anastacia, and the desire to help be based around that, with Anastacia being pulled away to lead the IPT. And the playbook was kind of like *The Monstrous*, and it was much more of like a ghost. And we did do that kind of — that final step. And then once we were done recording it, we all kind of talked about it and everyone agreed. That it was like, "Yeah, this is ... This doesn't feel right. Let's — OK, you know what? We'll go back, and I will just voice these lines instead of having Kim do it, and we'll figure something else out."

Kim: Yeah. And so I went onto that call and we did that little bit. And then we were all like, "You know what? This doesn't ... This doesn't feel great." And then Rev was like, "Well, sorry Kim, you're not recording Coin for another couple of weeks." [Laughs]

Rev: [Laughs] All right, Kim, I'll see you once I figure this out for a second time!

All: [Laugh]

Kim: But I think where we ended up was the correct place, I think.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah. It definitely all worked out.

Tass: OK. This next one is a statement followed by about 17 questions. Are you ready?

Rev: Yes.

Tass: OK. "I know that one of the common aspects of PbtA games like *Monster of the Week* is for the GM to set up situations and mostly react to actions taken by the players. That certainly seems like the case with the artifact McGuffins held by the different factions in *Urban Shadows*, which leads to the question: Did you plan from the outset for some of the artifacts to be easier to get than others, because of previous relationships

like Strohm or Mother? Were there obstacles you had in mind for any that got easily sidestepped by clever player plans? Were you collectively surprised by how easy it was getting the readings for most of the artifacts? It seemed the biggest challenges and obstacles were navigating the complications of the cover identities, rather than getting ahold of the things that the hunters were supposedly after." So like a two or three word answer ...

Rev: So, yes. I did think that some of them would be easier than others, but not the ones that ended up being easier than others.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: A great example is Mother. I thought Mother was going to have to be one of the last ones. Because I thought you all would learn who Mother was, and see that she was, like, killing fools. But Jake totally disarmed me in-character, and I thought it was another Ori moment. I was like, well, this is how this plays out, because this is what she's — how she's responding in the moment. Like, you've taken the wind out of her sails. It is a conversation.

Kim: I think another moment that took you by surprise was how easy it was getting the Silver Wing's item. Because Ozymandias set up that meeting for us. And then you were like, "All right, well now the issue is, how do we get that item back to James?" And I was like, "Oh, James said several episodes ago that he's got a cover identity in Ozymandias," and Rev was like ...

Rev: I sure did.

Kim: "Did I say that?" And then I was like poring back through old episodes and like, "Yes, you definitely said that." And Rev was like, I just said that casually. I forgot that I said this. I'm like, well, it's canon now.

Rev: No backsies.

Tass: Kim's real life power is throwing GM nonsense back at the GM and making us go, I can't believe I've done this.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: Similarly, how easy it was to get the silver cross. I remember we were, you know, back at the subterranean lair, and we're talking through like, OK, so Lana has been there and she met him. So if we go there, we can say this. And she's describing like where it was. And then I just remember being like, "Wait, you've seen it?" And I think Jake and I made eye contact for a second, and there was just this like ... Wait a minute. And I was like, "Can you just take us right to it?" And Rev's face was just like, "...Yup."

Rev: I absolutely can.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: I can't think of a single good reason why not!

Rev: [Laughs] And that was another one of those moments where, because of two very good scenes that Megan had with Lana, changed how she was interacting with all of you. Like she was so disconnected from the world, and would not have necessarily even understood that request when you first encountered her. But like asking to see her home, and going back, and like these remnants coming out and you kind of reminding her of stuff, made her much more available to help.

Megan: Aww.

Kim: Man. Shout out to Kester and Tiresias, though. Because getting visions from the two of them really helped make a lot of the last items a lot easier to get than we anticipated.

Rev: Yeah. Like the fact that you got both of them out of the Dread game was another thing that I was not expecting. I did not expect both of them to survive.

Tass: Well, when we have some of these people pulling like nine pieces in a row with no issue.

Kim: Megan, Jenga Master.

Megan: I didn't even save anyone. [Laughs]

Kim: That was just to kill vampires.

Tass: Yeah, you just killed everyone that could possibly have been in the way. We didn't have to save anybody.

Megan: Rev's like, I did not expect Kester to make it out of there. I had him already partially eaten before ... Before we started the game.

Rev: Yeah. [Laughs]

Megan: He was like missing a leg or something.

Rev: Yup.

Megan: And then it's just like, all right, well, you're coming with us.

Tass: Well, one of them was missing a whole body.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: So yeah, when they made it out and, then Kim's decision to be the faction leader. To me, that was kind of the trade off, that, OK, you can hide these two and they'll do for you what they were able to do for you in Dread. Because it only makes sense that, you know, they're oracles. They've got these moves. So once a day, they can do a special thing. And this might be a conversation we had off-mic. But when the decision came for between Kim and Kester, who wants to be the faction leader, it was, you know, if you're the leader and you put them in a hiding, they'll be able to do this thing for you. If they're the leaders, then you don't have to worry about any of the trappings of being a leader. And in hindsight, with the way that you guys used the elements of her being a leader, the other option was not a very good option at all. Like nothing was really — would have been gained that way, because the way you guys gamed it,

Jake: Yeah. Like we got substantially more pro than con out of Kim being a leader. We would have gotten very little of either, if she hadn't been. But we got a tremendous amount of pro for her being one.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I feel like after we did the werewolf, the casino, I feel like that's kind of how we all thought they were all going to go.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: Like we were all like, OK, this is — we've got an idea of how these are going to go. This is gonna take 10,000 years.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: And we're not going to survive this.

Rev: Yeah. Getting the one for the werewolves — or even kind of the roundabout way you went around getting the one for the Court of the Silver Wing. Like having to deal with their envoy and make amends, and then find a reason to set up a meeting, and then sneak someone into the meeting. Those two things were kind of more along the lines of how I thought they would all go. You guys just had some really good plans and used all of your allies really well.

Megan: That's the thing I think we really kept in mind. Where can Kim be seen, where can't she be seen? Same with Jake being with the Ley Line. And for me, what like — where can I go where I'm not gonna be recognized, but also I'm not gonna be questioned?

Kim: Yeah. Circling back to me being the leader of the House of Strohm. The only reason why I wanted to do that was because I always had in the back of my head, I'm going to become the leader of this. But then my immediate next priority is to somehow resurrect Strohm. And so I was always assuming that I was taking that mantle just very temporarily, and that I was going to immediately give it back. Of course, then I found out, like, very shortly after, that Strohm was Ozymandias. And the plot was progressing so quickly that

we never really got the chance to reinstate Strohm. But that was the only reason why I became the leader, and then ... I had no idea that it would end up being so beneficial.

Rev: Yeah. And someone in the Discord pointed out. Like, I did lay a breadcrumb for Ozymandias being Strohm in disguise. It was something that Jake had discovered.

Jake: Yeah. The that I, like, as a piss-take said. I was like, "Oh, it's all Strohm, all the way down." Because the basilisk was controlled by Egyptian command words.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: [Chuckles] We did an intrigue.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: We did an accidental intrigue. There's gotta be a word for that. "Obviously, I was super interested in the Court of the Silver Wing." I love that delivery. Obviously. As you all know, I was super interested in the Court of the Silver Wing.

Megan: This question is from me. [Laughs]

Jake: This question is from —

All: [Laugh]

Jake: "And the appearance of what seemed to be a Seelie and Unseelie queen literally combined rather than cyclical was really cool." Parentheses from Jake, (I don't know what that means). Back to the question. "Was this just a quirk of how you envisioned fey in your world, or was this a result of Nash's success? And if the former, can you talk more about that? Or if the latter, were there other monstrous quirks that were the effects of his success in other groups, and how did those work?"

Rev: As Jacob mentioned in the middle of that sentence, what does that mean? So in most cases, when it comes to the fey, it comes down to like a Summer and a Winter Court. That there are two groups of fey that don't necessarily get along. And they rule kind of cyclically, one during the winter months or at night, and the other during like the

summer months and or during the day. And so that was an element of Nash's success. Not because he brought them together, but because in all of the experiences in various books that I have had, and like even games that I've played with the fey, they are very cautious about giving up power. And so my impression of it was that they came together so that the other person wouldn't be brought into the fold without them. So that, yes, they were working together now. That they were a collected court. But that it was so they could keep an eye on each other, and so that they together could keep an eye on Nash and these other factions. Because, you know, this was the one faction that's kind of from another world.

Tass: I like that. I like ... I always like seeing that dynamic in a contemporary setting, too. Because, you know, we didn't really get to delve with them in this. And of course, I eat this shit up, too. I love all of that lore and all of that mythology. But at its base, it's very much fighting with your siblings. You can war with your siblings all day. But if somebody else does it? You don't mess with my sibling. You know? So that dynamic with those two is always cool to see. Like, "Oh, they're just hanging out next to each other. How about that? I wonder what's going on when nobody else is looking?" I want to see that.

Megan: Yeah. I like the idea that this political intrigue has essentially kind of poisoned every aspect of this world. That power is the most important thing to everyone, even factions that already sought in such a serious manner. That idea of like, we're gonna be stronger together, because if I'm not in the loop, then I might not be as strong as you, even though we're on the same team.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: I'm so jealous it didn't make sense for me to go to that world.

All: [Laugh]

Kim: I am devastated that I could not take you there.

Megan: But it's probably a good idea. [Laughs] I probably wouldn't have gone back.

Kim: Megan would have never left. She would have just ... Where's Megan? Oh, she just decided to stay.

Megan: You took her to see the fey! I don't know what you expected.

Rev: And then, you know, other factions that had kind of a similar thing. Really, the only one was The Outsiders, was the others. And as soon as, you know, we made this jump and I knew that it was going to be Selina, that she was the new Mother now, and I knew how she had gotten out of that little pocket dimension, what was left of that rubble. The Outsiders became a catchall for me. I was like, OK, anybody that I don't know where to put? They get to go to The Outsiders. Because she is kind of doing almost a Professor X thing where she's detecting people, hopping around the world, grabbing them, being like, "OK, you're with me now, it's fine. You don't have a real place to go? You're with me." The only other faction that was different before we started, was that originally I had as either the faction head or the envoy for the House of Strohm — it wouldn't have been the House of Strohm if it was a different faction head — was Harrison.

Megan: Nice.

Rev: But there was such a weight, that I could not justify me making that decision. Because Harrison's reappearance in this world gives Nash a piece of information. He didn't die in that. So what the hell happened there? And then that kind of taints the whole story that you had all created. And so I was like, I can't do that.

Tass: Sure.

Megan: Nice.

Tass: Now that you say that too, I can't remember the moment ... It was when something was going wrong in a various thing. And I forget what it was, and we didn't have any other ideas. And I — at the back of my head, I was like, I want to write a note. And like, you know, do the thing. And just be like, "Hey, you want to help us out with the thing? You still — you up?" But then I don't know. I either got sidetracked or just thought, no, that's too dangerous because we don't know his status. But still, good call.

Megan: That's true. We don't really know if he was around still at this time, or what his alliances would have been after all ... After all that time.

Kim: I wonder if Harrison and I would have also had that kind of parent-child relationship? Probably. I don't know. [Laughs]

Jake: Harrison and Strohm are daddy and mommy.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I'm gonna kind of throw in my own, here. You know, we've been talking about the characters that popped up or popped in. Who was your favorite person to see again? Or who's someone maybe that you wonder if they were around, or that you wish you had seen?

Tass: This would have been a whole other unnecessary thing. But I just kept thinking, what's it like in Elnore right now? I would love to have figured out how to just check in and be like, what has happened in all of this time, now that you've synched up timelines and everything?

Kim: Yeah, that was ... Initially when Dani got introduced, and you were describing like a little girl and wings and things like that? I thought, for the briefest of moments, that this was Queen Leah, or someone from Elnore.

Megan: Same.

Tass: And then you threw on that proboscis.

Rev: Yeah. Yeah, and that was — again, that was a second ... That was a second moment like that, where having someone from Elnore here be part of the representation was an idea that had crossed my mind, but then that exposes the existence of Elnore to Nash. Which means he's dealt with them, which means that he knows, like, Ori's there. Like that was, again, another decision that, like, I didn't feel I could make. Because it would be undoing big steps that you had made to protect those people.

Tass: Sure.

Kim: Yeah no, that that makes absolute sense. I think the most pleasant surprise for me was Selina. And there were people who guessed that immediately in the Discord, that Mother was Selina. But I had no idea. My mind didn't go there at all.

Tass: Same. Not at all.

Kim: And so I found out in the moment when Jake got kidnapped and we started hearing you do Selina's voice, and that was so ... That was so great. Such a good reveal.

Rev: Someone in the Discord guessed it so early that when they sent in pictures for the Halloween costume contest, they did Selina from Season Three, and then also included a shot holding up a white mask. Without comment. Just holding it up.

Tass: That's crazy.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: I need to listen to this show, because I can't keep up.

Jake: I do want to know ... Can I know ...

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: What is the fate of Mosquito Dan at this point? His offspring are thriving, or at least one of them is.

Rev: Yeah. So Dan is ... I mean, Dan is dead. We ...

Tass: We decapitated him.

Rev: You decapitated him.

Tass: But his babies got away.

Rev: Yeah, his babies got away. So ...

Jake: I was just like, is he being, like, piloted somehow? Did Nash bring him back?

Rev: No, this would have been essentially like Mosquito Dan's great great granddaughter.

Jake: Great, great, great, great, great ...

Rev: Yeah, like this is an offspring —

Jake: Mosquitoes don't live that long. Great, great, great, great ...

Rev: This is the offspring of one of the kids that, as Tass said, that got away during that story in Season One.

Jake: So was there just like a slew of them out and about in this world? I'm imagining a real ... Like the Hulks in Old Man Logan world. Like, was there just a weird, creepy ... Like, family of mosquito folk out somewhere?

Rev: Yeah. Because I mean, if you gave mosquitoes the lifespan of a human, but they kept their numbers in reproduction?

Jake: That's a nightmare.

Rev: Yeah. There's ... Oh yeah, there's a Mosquito Dan village out there somewhere.

Jake: [Shudders]

Rev: I think that — the one that I threw in at last second and then had to justify, because I ... [Laughs] It was just so much fun, was Rory. Like, just throwing him in.

Kim: Oh god.

Rev: Like, oh god, now I've gotta create a backstory — like, why is he alive still? Yeah, he's an immortal!

All: [Laugh]

Megan: That was very fun. I enjoyed that a whole lot.

Rev: That was one of the unplanned ones. But the voice came out and I was like, oh, here he is. Rory's back.

Megan: "What would have happened if they'd actually tried to fight the Wraith? Is there any chance they could have taken it?"

Rev: [Laughs]

Kim: [Snorts]

Rev: So that's a great example of like ... I was like, Oh, this is gonna be something they're gonna have to deal with. And you guys went, "We're gonna have pizza and wait till he goes to bed, and then we're going to steal the cross." I was like ...

Jake: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah, all right.

Jake: Man, the sequel to National Treasure sounds fucking rad.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: I mean, when you put in, like, instadeath?

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: I'm gonna be like, how can I not face this thing?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I'm gonna be tepid on the idea, Rev.

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah, that's fair.

Kim: Well, like especially ... Like we had — like I asked Kester about it, like, what's the best way to do this? And Kester's like, "Yeah, just wait two hours." And it's like, OK.

Rev: Just don't deal with it, I guess. Kester's gotta answer honestly, unfortunately.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: Yeah. So fighting the Wraith is not something that they would have wanted to do. I imagine this would have been a, you know, scout out the place, scout out Father O'Hanna, see the Wraith in action. And you know, they would have learned that, you know, they have to deal with him to deal with the Wraith, essentially. Kind of like from The Frighteners.

Tass: Oh yeah, OK.

Rev: You gotta deal with her, to deal with Jonny Bartlett.

Tass: Right.

Rev: But yeah. Really, that would have been ... The kind of arc of that interaction would have been finding out who he's targeting and why. And perhaps having the opportunity to save Damien.

Tass: Ope.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: How did you kind of envision us dealing with, like, sunlight weakening, like, the structure?

Rev: There were a couple of different ways. I thought that maybe Tass would knock down some trees with his brute force. That Jake would, you know, do some kind of

research, some magic spell to, you know, do sunlight. I thought that that would be your way in.

Kim: Speaking of how well we did it and how sneaky we were about it. When we were ... When we had gotten like the ghosts' item, and the Silver Wing, and Ozymandias, we then all — and we had one left. We just had Nash. We all kind of talked, like, do we do a Faction Turn? We almost did one. We like did half of one, and then we kind of abandoned it.

Jake: I feel like there was a question in the faction turn that we got to that like — you were like, this doesn't make sense to even ask, because nobody ... Should we just not?

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: I guess we just shouldn't be doing the faction —

Rev: Because ultimately, I made it your choice. Because there were some benefits you would get from doing a faction turn. But, and this gets into a question a little further down the list, but I knew something that was going to happen during the time passage of that faction turn that would have been a game changer.

Jake: Yeah.

Rev: And so I ultimately let it be your all's decision.

Megan: Well, the biggest thing we would have gained was information. And when we realized that between Kim and Kester and Tiresias, and what we had already learned so far, we could probably get the answers. I think going into it, we were just thinking like, we need information to make a plan. And then once we boiled it down to, OK, what do we actually need to know? We realized we had enough resources to answer those couple of questions.

Jake: This was definitely the story that we have played, I think, that had the most kind of off-air chatter about laying out what it was exactly you were wanting to figure out and how you were going to do it. And just, you know, clarity of episode-wise, it made the

most sense to leave a lot of that out and let people learn it as you did it, as opposed to hearing the ... Hearing the sausage get made?

Tass: Oh!

Kim: Ugh.

Tass: Oh, no.

Kim: "Was there a particular reason for choosing a pantheon of eight gods?"

Rev: So there were five by default in my head, because there were five divine weapons. And then when it got into the stuff with Baba Yaga and Death, I knew that gods had been involved with helping to do that. And as silly as it sounds, it ultimately came down to an equation that made sense in my head. I was like, what's the number of gods that did not survive this to make it seem dangerous but still doable? Like, worth the cost? And I was like, you know, I don't think like one or two gods isn't really ... And just for some reason, I was like, there were eight gods, and three of them didn't survive this process. So it really was just a spur of the moment thing, when Baba Yaga was telling that story.

Kim: When were you expecting us to find out that information? Because I kind of stumbled upon it accidentally, just through one of my moves.

Rev: Yeah. So that is something that has been in place for a very long time. You know, you all learned about The Empath and The Devourer. I'm excited to see where this goes. Because that is a bigger part of this kind of connected story. And, you know, the experience that you kept having visions of towards the end of the gods and this dark ... You know, this dark energy at the center, and the people on the outside, and it's what Baba Yaga has described to you all when they banished Death. And you know, what does that mean that you're seeing it now, with other people standing in those places? Yeah.

Megan: Yeah. That was huge for me, to like, finally find out where my powers came from.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Not having this idea, like from the playbook, like mechanically knowing that like, oh, I have Dark Side tags. That like, something gave me my powers. And that's all I knew, was like, these came from somewhere. And then just suddenly having the answer to that was like, "Oh! OK, this makes sense."

Rev: "What was the connection between Kim's vision of the group sealing something away, and Strohm changing her plans before Nash arrived? Up to this point, the vision seemed disconnected with the rest of Chicago. Does this have anything to do with Strohm selling her soul?" So ...

Megan: No. [Laughs]

Rev: No.

Kim: [Laughs]

Rev: So the answer to that first question is, I think, something that will be discovered eventually, as you all get to know more of this story. But there was a very specific reason why, when Strohm learned about that, she decided, "Oh, fuck it. I'm just gonna ... I'm gonna do something else, then." There was a very specific reason. And then the whole thing of Strohm selling her soul. Because I believe — I think, that she would make a better world, but the cost would be her soul.

Kim: Yes.

Rev: Was how it was worded. And I think we can get into this. But it seemed to me, hopefully to everyone else, become pretty clear as the story ended, that Kim was Strohm's soul. That it was her relationship with Kim that had made Strohm more loving, able to grow and reconnect with the world. And so to make a better world, it was going to cost her giving up her soul, a.k.a. sending Kim back into the past.

Kim: Aww.

Jake: I did not get that.

Kim: Yeah, I did not get that either! I thought this was ... Because we had talked about how the vampires and Primus Daemonium had a relationship. And so I thought it was Strohm was going to die, and the demons were going to take her soul. But then, like, in her stead, the oracles were going to like, rise up and be stronger.

Rev: Ah.

Kim: Yeah, I had no idea. That's ... That's very emotional. God.

Rev: Yeah, it was ... You were, you know, what opened her up back to that, and so she was going to have to sacrifice that to make that better world.

Tass: I like that.

Kim: Aww.

Tass: That's a good example of the vision isn't always as black and white as it sounds.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So that's — that was cool.

Jake: Kim's like, "I'm gonna check out for the next few questions." [Weeps]

Rev: I gotta go.

Kim: Yeah. Where are my tissues? God.

Tass: OK. Next question. Goddamn it. Of course I get this one.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: We set them out this way, as a joke.

Kim: Plotted them.

Tass: "Can you explain Lady Jensi's thought process from the moment she asked Tass for Kester, and on? Why was she looking for Kester? Why did she change her relation to Tass so drastically? Is it as simple as her valuing the ability to take a lot of punishment?" I'm gonna go ahead and say yes to that last one, on several fronts.

Jake: Wink!

Megan: [Laughs]

Rev: So she was looking for Kester because of his abilities. Anybody would want, given the opportunity, to kidnap, to have access to what it was Kester could do. Especially with what we'd learn later that Lady Jensi is trying to do. Her change of heart about Tass, and like making him one of the honor guard and stuff like that, was very largely in part to the evening that they spent out trying to hunt down Kester. Seeing Tass stand up for himself, stand up to her ... Again, the sheer amount of physical harm he had taken. But also, because she knew Damien was dead. Because of the way that the demon contracts worked, when Damien died, it passed over to her, because she's in charge. And so there was no real ramification for Tass of the patronage changing, but she knew. And so this was a ... Also kind of a butter you up, get you in a better mood, because your friend's dead.

Tass: Yeah, consider me buttered.

Kim: OK ...

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: No, thank you. Next ... Next question: Why is Tass so gross?

All: [Laugh]

Rev: Because you all constantly keep buttering him!

Megan: [Laughs]

Jake: I have done no — oh, you know what? Actually now you mention, my hands are covered in butter.

Rev: So much popcorn.

Jake: I got butter on my face. Wait!

All: [Laugh]

Tass: I was not involved! I was not involved!

Rev: I think that's a good place to end this episode.

All: [Laugh]

Jake: No!

Rev: We still got quite a few questions left, and some playbooks to go over for Monster of the Week. What are these folks going to be when they come back into Monster of the Week? So we will be here next week for Part Two of the Urban Shadows Q&A.

Tass: Brought to you by Country Crock.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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