

Smoke and Silver (S5, E35)

Tass: The Critshow contains elements of horror, fantasy violence, and adult language. Content warnings can be found in the episode description.

SFX: INTRO MSUIC

Rev: Hey, everybody. Before we get into this week's episode, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the patrons who joined us in the month of March: AJ Summers, FrAndrew Williams, Jonathan Holley, Diego K, Laila Goranson, Blaine Martin, Stephen Treto, Honey, Daf Turner, Michael Radnan, Fred, Keeper 2005, Jordan Anderson, Logan Thompson, Phoenix Hemlock, Icon Jade, and Lauren Andrews. So thank you to everybody who joined us over on Patreon in the month of March, and thank you to everyone who joins us every month at Patreon. Again, if you are interested in joining our Patreon, you can go over to Patreon.com/TheCritshow. Tiers start as low as just \$1, which gets you access to the most aggressively welcoming Discord community on the Internet. And with that, it's time to let the recap roll.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC

Tass: This entire city is turning. Looking at it from this far with the spyglass, you get the idea that if you were to look at this city from above, from the air, it would look kind of like a giant ship's wheel. But every 2 or 3 ships seem to be painted the same color. And as it shifts around, one of the smokiest, most on fire, most in duress seeming districts, the outer ships are painted red.

Landara: "He said to wait for the red ships. I was thinking, wait, like we were gonna get an escort. But wait for them to turn around this circle. The city is moving in a circle. Wait for them to come around and dock there."

Jake: "All right. Let's see if we can't sneak that direction."

Rev: That's a five.

Kim: [Gasps]

Jake: What?!

Tass: As you make your way between these large spokes to get in a little deeper to an area where you think you can get docked while the city is moving, you actually nestle in pretty handily to a spot where there's a building on fire. And as the crew runs to throw out lines and hop down and start binding the ship, holding it in place, part of the building explodes. Pieces of this wooden structure crash through the ship, splintering a piece of the hull and lighting your sails aflame.

SFX: RECAP MUSIC FADES

Tass: It is nighttime in Plankton, and your ship is on fire. You have managed to dock in the red district of this spinning wooden city made of ships and planks. You hear gunshots and explosions in the distance, distant cries of pain and battle. And the building nearest where you have docked has just exploded. Shrapnel has hit the ship and set your sails ablaze. The crew is starting to grab bucketfuls of ocean water to throw at the growing fires on the sails. What are you all doing?

Rev: What is the area that we docked next to that exploded look like?

Tass: It's actually oddly, like, normal as far as a dock would be concerned. The way it was described — that these are just a bunch of ships kind of attached together — it is true, but there's a lot more to it than that. Like they have built this into a city of walkways, you know, actual ... Like this is a dock that they've built alongside these other ships that are held together. So like being here, being on this level, it is more like a city than just a bunch of ships. So obviously, the building right next to you is aflame. There are a few more down the way. It's like interspersed. Some of them are built into little buildings, just like the one that exploded. They might be some sorts of various shops, homes, whatever it might be. But then about every other building or so is just an entire ship that seems to be a piece of just the unit of this city. You don't really see much in the way of people here. You do see probably a few figures moving around past the smoke and in the darkness. But there isn't like a crowd here or anything.

Rev: And is the dock on fire as well, or was it like the explosion that hit us and set the ship on fire?

Tass: It's really just that explosion. That what was kind of a two story little building built alongside one of the other ships is now just wide open with this explosion, smoke and fire billowing up out of it. There's probably a little bit of smoldering shit along the dock here, but mostly the dock is intact.

Rev: Okay. Yeah. Seeing that the crew is starting to move with the water, I'm gonna focus on getting the ship moored. Because we don't want to be on fire and adrift.

Tass: Absolutely. I don't think you have any trouble if you're gonna focus on that and just getting everything tied off so that it's safe. You see a little bit of damage to the hull as you're getting everything tied off, but it doesn't seem nearly as dangerous as the damage you took from that kraken in the bay.

Kim: Looking at the remains of the building that exploded, is it possible to figure out like what happened here? Was this like a purposeful attack on our ship, or is this just like a building that exploded that we happened to be near?

Tass: Sure. I think you could roll a Size Up on that.

Kim: Four.

Tass: Oof. For all you know, it is just an explosion. It could have been anything. Could have been that there just happened to be gunpowder in that building, and some of the other fires and things around sparked it. There's just no real indicator of why it blew up.

Jake: I know you said that there are shouts and cries in the distance. Are there people near us?

Tass: I think that's a whole other Size Up.

Jake: Okay. Seven.

Tass: You get a hold 1, or you can stick your nose where you shouldn't to get an extra.

Jake: Where's the true danger lurking?

Tass: Because of the fire, this recent explosion, it is just kind of loud over here. When you really kind of focus and take stock of what's going on here, trying to watch any of the movement if there are other people, you are hearing kind of subdued sounds of battle much closer — like just past the burning building. I think the best way to put it is it sounds almost more like an ambush is happening? Like someone's trying to keep the fighting as quiet as they possibly can. So you hear the sound of metal on metal for just a moment, like maybe a few people walking, and then just a couple of heavy thudding sounds and the sound of something dragging away. Like there is ... Yeah, there's somebody doing some clandestine shit very close. But you know where. You know the little kind of alleyway along the side between a couple of the ships and this burning building.

Jake: "Guys, I think there's like a strike force attacking. Can you guys hear that? It's like ... It's like an assassination or something. I feel like we should — we should go check this out."

Landara: "All right. Is that who blew this up? They know we were coming?"

Jake: "I don't know if they knew we were coming, but this would be like a good distraction. I mean, all that fighting in the distance. I wonder if this is all cover. I don't know whose side we're gonna be on, but I'd sure like to know who's getting fucking murdered."

Megan: "I feel like we can't go anywhere until we put this fire out, or we're gonna lose our ship." Can I try to Twist Fate?

Tass: Absolutely.

Megan: And I'm gonna spend an additional luck, here.

Tass: Okay.

Megan: Four.

Kim: [Gasps]

Jake: Ooh ...

Megan: I rolled snake eyes.

Tass: What were you hoping to accomplish here?

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: I was hoping to find something in the area. Like the way this place is all connected, I imagine that they had a way to put out fires so they don't spread. So that's ... That's what I was looking for, a way to put out the fire. So, yeah.

Rev: So instead you find the thing that they use to spread the fire.

Megan: Yeah.

Kim: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tass: Here, this looks like dirt. If you throw dirt on a fire, that works.

Rev: [Chuckles] Just gunpowder.

Tass: Buckets of gunpowder. All right, as you start looking around, Edwin comes running up with a bucket. He says ...

Tass: EDWIN: No, no, no. We've got this. We've got this. You all just go. Get in there, see what's going on. If we're being sneaked up on, the ship won't matter either way. We'll get the fires out.

Megan: "Okay, okay."

Jake: All right. I will take off, leading everybody in the direction of this attack.

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: Follow.

Tass: All right. Are you all just running in? Being sneaky-sneak?

Jake: I'm being a little sneaky-sneak. I'm moving ahead, trying to be a little sneaky-sneak, get eyes on what's going on so I can give everybody, like, you know, tac team hand signals about whether to stop or shut up or move in or what.

Tass: Okay. Roll a Break In or Out for me, Jake.

Jake: Six.

Megan: Can I help with this?

Tass: Sure. What are you thinking?

Megan: I'm using some of my, like, parchment papers and stuff to help, like, clear the smoke away from Jake as he's moving through, so he can breathe easier and see what's happening around him.

All: [Laugh]

Tass: Amazing.

Kim: So we're ... We're moving stealthy, but we're hearing that fwip, fwip, fwip of the paper.

Megan: I'm taller than Jake, so I just have it over his head and I'm just doing it in a downward motion. So it's clearing straight down over the front of his face so he doesn't get smoke in his eyes.

Jake: And I'm — again, I'm getting that like Pantene hair blowing in the wind.

Megan: [Laughs]

Kim: But it's monkey hair.

Megan: It's beautiful monkey fur.

Jake: It's very coarse.

Tass: Yeah. Spend that bond, and that bumps you up to a seven. So you get to pick one from the list, and so do I.

Jake: I will run into an obstacle that I didn't expect.

Rev: It's kind of a given.

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: Yeah.

Rev: We're new to this world.

Kim: We don't know what's going on.

Rev: [Chuckles]

Tass: All right. So as you make your way into this alley, it's very smoky, hard to see, but you can kind of see the end of the alley where it's well lit, and a road ahead. But there's lots of debris and stuff back here that you have to get past. And as you get about halfway down, something lunges at you from the darkness. As small as you are, it still manages to like dive and spear tackle you into the ground. It is a skeleton, completely covered in silver. You can feel the smooth metal as you're scrambling to get out from under this thing. And it rears back and elbows you in the chin, and you take one point of harm. But then it is quickly lifted off of you, and you see it cartwheel through the air and smash into the side of the ship that makes up the other side of this alley and slides to the ground. And there's this massive woman standing over you now. She's maybe 6.5ft tall, just muscle. She's wearing just a little vest and some tattered pants and these thick boots. And she gives you a big smile and looks back into the smoke towards the direction of where your friends might still be. And she looks over at the skeleton.

Tass: TALL WOMAN: Cotton send you?

Jake: "Maybe?"

Tass: She shrugs and turns towards the skeleton that is getting up and starts making her way towards it.

Jake: "Are you a ... Are you Cotton's friend?"

Tass: TALL WOMAN: Close enough.

Jake: "Oh, okay. Then yes. Um ... What is going on? And how can we help?"

Tass: TALL WOMAN: Help me kill this thing.

Jake: Okay, I'll start running at it with a devil stick in each hand and a gun wrapped in my tail.

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: Oh, my God.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: I think the rest of you, if you were following, are making it through the smoke enough to see Jake sprinting towards this gleaming silver skeleton with a massive woman next to him with her fists up.

Landara: "The hell's going on?"

Jake: "I don't know, but she's Cotton's friend."

Landara: "All right."

Kim: "That's good enough, I guess."

Rev: Yeah. Draw my gun and start moving that way.

Jake: I think I hold a hand out like, "Wait, are we still trying to be sneaky and quiet? That's what you were doing, right? Person whose name I don't know yet. What's your name?"

Tass: JARA: Jara.

Jake: "Are we trying to be covert?"

Tass: JARA: Nope. I think this was the leader of that strike team. Took out the rest.

Jake: "Oh." All right, then. I will give the thumbs up to Landara. "Light this motherfucker up."

Rev: Yeah, I'll pull the trigger.

Tass: Roll Get into a Scrap.

Rev: Six.

Kim: Oh, my ... What is happening to us today? Can I help out Landara by spending a point of bond?

Tass: Absolutely. How are you helping?

Kim: I think just by advancing on this skeleton from the opposite side so that Landara can flank it.

Tass: Nice. Yeah. Drawing its attention both ways. I dig it.

Kim: Yep.

Tass: All right. Spend that bond. And that brings you up to a seven. How much harm do you do here? Did you spend any of your thingies?

Rev: I didn't.

Tass: Okay.

Rev: So two harm, piercing.

Tass: Okay. Nice.

Rev: I don't know if there's anything to pierce, but ...

Tass: Oh, absolutely.

Kim: Just shatter some bone.

Tass: You take a shot and one of its arms bursts off and falls to the ground. And you see the glint of that, like silver coating shatter around both ends — the arm on the ground and where it's shoulder is.

Landara: "Listen, if you're gonna make some armor, you should probably pick a less malleable metal."

Tass: Jara turns back and gives you a nod.

Tass: JARA: I've been saying that. I got some theories ...

Tass: And then the skeleton is lunging towards her.

Kim: "I don't know. I, for one, happen to like silver." I say as I swing my rapier at the skeleton.

Tass: Roll Get Into a Scrap.

Kim: Oh, my god. Five.

Tass: Oh ...

Kim: Well, I level up.

Tass: Oh, do you? What are you gonna take?

Kim: I'm going to take Curtain Call, which adds the following options for Theatrics to my list.

Tass: Oh, let's hear it.

Kim: Swoop in and save your soulmate from a danger.

Tass: Aww.

Kim: Compel everyone to pay attention to you.

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: Impress or fluster someone, and take the ante with them.

Tass: Okay. Very cool. So you lash out, and are not expecting this skeleton to be as agile as it is. It rolls and picks up its fallen arm, lifting it. And as you lash out, your tentacle-like rapier wraps around the arm. And it tugs you forward and clotheslines you, driving you into the planks. You take one point of harm.

Kim: Does this clear my Feisty vice, which was a -1 Spitfire until I'm fighting? I don't know if I'm fighting so much as getting beat up right now, but I was trying.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: I mean, there's always two halves of a fight.

Megan: It says fighting, not winning a fight.

Tass: Exactly.

Kim: Yeah, that's true. [Laughs]

Tass: Yep. That'll do it.

Jake: I want to try to squeeze into somewhere that others can't.

Tass: Why do I have this horrible feeling in my gut right now?

Jake: I want to ... I want to try and weasel my way into the rib cage.

Megan: Yes!

Kim: Yes!

Tass: Yes!

Rev: Are you gonna pilot the skeleton like a mech?

Tass: [Laughs]

Jake: No, I'm gonna string it up like a piñata, if everything goes according to plan.

Rev: [Laughs]

Tass: Oh, my god. Yes.

Jake: That is a nine. So I succeed in getting where I'm trying to go.

Tass: You sure do.

Jake: And once inside, I want to take my long rope and just try and tie it off to, like, part of the spine or something. So that I can get back out of here and toss it around something high and try and get this thing off the ground for everyone.

Tass: Yeah. For the moment, just tying this off, no problem. You get to work on that. Megan, you see Jake leap in and under this thing and then up into the rib cage. What are you doing?

Megan: I want to use my move Lorekeeper. So when you encounter a new land, creature, or phenomenon, roll +Vinegar. On a hit, the Fates will tell you a story about it. On a 10+, choose whether the story reveals something you can spin to your advantage — its hidden weakness, the thing controlling or driving it. On a miss, the Fates tell you a fanciful tale, and the tale has a grain of truth to it. Take Book Fever to know what it is.

Tass: All right.

Megan: Seven.

Tass: All right. So you get a tale about this being.

Megan: Yeah. Tell me a story about it.

Tass: All right. So what is something ... Something adjacent to this that you would have this knowledge of? I think you have the knowledge of a pirate that worked a lot with metal and alchemy. And in a fight once, he had all of his flesh and muscle from the elbow down burned off, leaving just a skeletal husk left. But he kept it on. He, like, didn't take off the bone. He didn't cut it all off. He left it there, because he wanted to experiment on it with his knowledge. And so he tried working with different metals to cover his arm, so that he could maybe use it as like a sword or a club or a weapon in battle. But he found that using much stronger types of metal wouldn't work. He couldn't form it over the bone without the bone becoming too brittle and breaking and then just wasting that liquid metal that he was trying to form over it. So only softer metals like silvers and golds and things like that could he use at all. So they weren't as helpful as what he hoped, but it at least gave him something interesting to work with. Something that might hurt more than just the sheer bone, but not as good as what he was hoping for as making it into a really strong weapon.

Rev: You've made Jake terribly unhappy.

Jake: I'm ... I just can't. I'm trying to picture it, and I just can't. Like, I'm picturing this guy. It's hard enough for me to just picture that there's just a bone from, like, the elbow down.

Rev: Yeah.

Jake: And it's still there. And then he's like, puts a little bit of metal on part of it and it gets too brittle and it breaks. And he's like, that simply won't do. [Laughs] And he tries a new one.

Tass: Yep. He's down to just a thumb, and then the rest of the arm ...

Jake: Yeah. He's like — at some point he's like, I am running out of runway here. I better find the right metal soon.

Rev: Can you imagine how jarring that would be? Like when you hit something with a weapon, it is jarring as it is. But if it was literally attached to your skeleton.

Jake: Yeah, nothing to absorb any of the shock.

Rev: Yeah.

Kim: But if it was only just like a bone, you couldn't move it. You don't have any muscles or tendons. It would just be hanging limp there, made out of metal.

Megan: But if it's a strong enough metal, you can swing it.

Kim: With your — yeah, guess with your shoulder and just sort of use it like that.

Rev: Yeah. He still had his bicep and stuff. It was just his forearm.

Tass: Yeah, it was just to the elbow down.

Rev: Yeah.

Megan: Also it's a skeleton that's walking around and jumping and stuff.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: So I feel like there's a little more going on here.

Kim: Explain the tendons! Explain the muscles!

Megan: Science can't explain it.

Megan: [Laughs]

Tass: Look, if we're going to get real scientific about this show now, I quit.

Rev: I've seen Shang-Chi. I know how a blade halfway up your forearm works.

Jake: That film is science incarnate.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: So there's a ... So there's a story for you.

Megan: Yeah. I just am now imagining going, Hey, guys, you know ... [Laughs] You want to hear something cool?

Tass: [Laughs]

Kim: You want to hear something terrible?

Megan: Yeah. You know how this probably happened? It gives him some armor. Isn't that neat?

Jake: It's just ... It's like run one of us through and is, like, strangling the other one, and you're just, like, looking at a book like, this is tight as hell.

Megan: That's really cool. Well, good luck fighting him.

Kim: We always need one person who's reading the guidebook.

Megan: I'm definitely the person When you play board games that I read through the instructions for everyone. So this is real appropriate.

Tass: So what's Jake doing?

Kim: Oh, right. Inside the rib cage.

Jake: Yeah. I'm trying to weasel my way back out and up something tall so I can loop a rope around and jump down the other side and try and lift this thing off the ground.

Rev: Man. There's precedent for making you roll a break in or out, but ... [Laughs] I think that'll all just get tied up in Use a Dirty Trick.

Jake: Okay. Seven.

Tass: All right. I think you can do this, but while you're scurrying out and away to tie off this rope, this thing's gonna get in a couple more hits on somebody. The catch here for you, if you want to follow through, is you have to decide who's taking the hit, and that cannot be you.

Jake: Does it have to be one of my crewmates?

Tass: Anyone in the fight.

Jake: Jara looks sturdy.

Tass: Indeed. All right. So you scurry down and the skeleton lunges at Jara, using its own arm like a sword, and claws across the side of her neck. And she grabs on and rolls to the ground, holding on tight. What does this look like as you finish this maneuver?

Kim: I scramble up the side of a building and along like a signpost that would hang out over a door, and just leap down the other side. And I go down as the skeleton comes up, and it is hanging like four feet off the ground as I touch down.

Tass: All right. And so it dangles there, swinging its own arm wildly, reaching down to like claw at the ground with its own double outstretched arm and can't seem to do much.

Megan: I vote luck for Jake for the skeleton piñata.

Kim: I love piñatas!

Tass: I dig it. Yep. Please do.

Kim: Yeah. I want to hit the skeleton piñata.

Tass: All right. I don't think you have to roll it. If you want a coup de gras this thing. What does it look like? How do you take it apart?

Kim: This is the first time that I have tried fighting with my sword in its new form. And so I'm getting used to it being a little more whip-like than I'm used to. And so I'm just — I'm just taking just like pot shots and practice strikes on this skeleton piñata, just figuring out how to use my weapon again.

Tass: I love it. So yeah, I think you watch as you lash out that the silver covering will dent and break after a few hits and then just shatter the bone beneath until it is just a pile of bones underneath a rib cage on a rope.

Jake: [Chuckles]

Kim: Oof.

Jake: I'm gonna run over and check on Jara. "Oh my god. I'm so sorry. Are you okay?"

Tass: JARA: Not really, but that's part of getting into a fight.

Tass: And she's just holding tight, putting pressure. There's a little bit of blood leaking down her neck and shoulder.

Landara: "Is the only thing keeping blood from leaking out even more the pressure of your hand?"

Tass: JARA: Yep.

Landara: "This is gonna sting. Move your hand."

Tass: JARA: Oh, shit.

Tass: She does.

Rev: I sprinkle a little gunpowder on it and light a match.

Kim: Oh ...

Tass: She cries out, like biting down on her other hand, and gives you a nod.

Landara: "Sorry. Seems like we got a ways to go before there's any rest."

Kim: I'm looking in a panic at Landara. "I'm injured, but I'm not that bad, so ... You're fine."

Jake: "Yeah, I'm good. Just like a Band-Aid'll do me. I'll be all right."

Kim: "Yeah."

Tass: [Chuckles]

Megan: "Are there more of these?"

Tass: JARA: Oh, yeah. Not many of the Silver Guard, but plenty of skeletons. And dead, not just skellies.

Megan: "Who's in charge of these skeletons? Is somebody controlling them?"

Kim: "Is this White?"

Tass: She's, like, looking back and forth at the questions.

Tass: JARA: Yeah. Yeah, it's the doctor. I don't know if he directly controls him or just gives them commands, but ...

Megan: "Does he have like a ... Like a silver arm?"

Tass: JARA: Not as far as I know.

Megan: "I was just looking at the skeleton, and the way it's coated in silver. I think there was a ... There was a pirate who learned how to do this as like a layer of protection. He was trying to make his arm into like a ... Like a weapon or something, as just more defense. So that's kind of where this came from, I think. But I didn't know if he was also the one who created them, or that idea was just passed down."

Tass: JARA: Oh. Yeah, we've got some theories about that, too. The only coatings like this we've seen are silver and gold. I think stronger metals are just, I don't know, too heavy for them or something.

Megan: "Yeah, everything will just kind of break underneath them. This is the only thing that kind of works."

Kim: "Gold seems like it would be extremely impractical."

Tass: JARA: We don't have time. We've got to get to the others.

Landara: "Lead the way."

Tass: And she leads you into this bizarre city of docks, walkways, and ships. There is battle almost everywhere, all the time. There are stretches of this walk that are quiet, but it seems like that's only because she knows where to go, where the battle isn't happening, and tries to lead you down smokier areas — like places that were already embattled and destroyed. And I think she says as much, like ...

Tass: JARA: This is the only way we can get around at this point. Find neighborhoods that have already been sacked and see if we can salvage anything, and use what's left of the docks as walkways. Even some of the ships are sinking in the middle of the city.

Megan: "White's trying to take over Plankton, right?"

Tass: JARA: Not trying.

Megan: "Well, what's the use of burning things down? It seems like this place would just fall apart. There would be nothing left to be in charge of."

Tass: JARA: The Eye at the center is intact enough. He's got it locked down. If he can keep everything floating at the middle, safe and upright, that's all he needs.

Jake: "What is the Eye?"

Tass: JARA: The Eye of Anubis. It's the main ship at the center. Surrounds the whirlpool.

Jake: "The whirlpool? How big is the whirlpool?"

Tass: JARA: As far as things go? Not that big. A few boat-spans across.

Jake: As we're moving in, I want to climb up as high as I can. Get like as much of a bird's eye view as I can and start trying to keep an eye out for like, what part of the whole circle of this city is the magic circle? Like, you know, okay, am I seeing anything in the structure of buildings resembling runes? Okay, if not, then it's probably smaller than that. So as we're moving in, like just trying to see like what is the diameter of this? Is it the city? Is it the whirlpool? Is it on the ship as we move in?

Tass: Oh, interesting. I definitely think you can get a lay of the land. You can get the idea of the shape of this city. You know, where things are strong, where things aren't embattled, like the middle area ... I mean, this is — like this is huge. This is a city,

Jake: Mmhmm.

Tass: Thousands and thousands of ships, and then thousands and thousands of buildings built up between them, walkways, like full on streets. But the center area, the center that is its own small city in its own right, is not embattled. You can certainly see — even in the darkness, you can see that there are some shells of buildings and some broken masts from some of the stationary ships and so on. But there's no new explosions, flashes of light, cries of danger from further into the center of the city. As far as getting a gauge of where the magic circle might be, there is just — really, you're too far out. You're still near the edges, the outskirts here. Nothing reads to you as obvious about what that might be.

Jake: Okay.

Rev: If you were to walk from one side of Plankton to the other, like casual walk through the streets uninterrupted, how long would it take to walk from one end to the other?

Tass: Several hours.

Kim: Wow.

Tass: Several, yeah.

Rev: Cool.

Tass: Some of that is just because of the bizarre layout, but like, it just — it is that big.

Kim: "Is Cotton here?"

Tass: JARA: He was.

Kim: "Was. Is he dead?"

Tass: JARA: We don't know. He was taken. Most, if they're taken, they turn into the Silver Guard.

Megan: "Where are we going?"

Tass: JARA: Purple District.

Jake: "What are the different districts? Like, why are they coded? What do they do?"

Tass: JARA: Well, it used to be a little rhyme and reason to that. Each one had kind of a specialty market, housing, so on. Now the whole city is just a battle ground. Nothing really means much when a merchant can't go out and sell their wares. Skeletons don't eat.

Jake: "What was Purple?"

Tass: JARA: That was the fancy housing, where the richer folk actually stayed here, lived here. Few do actually live here, besides those working, catering to the ships that come in. So you can see it's more of a dock town.

Megan: "So if that's what the Purple District was, what is it now?"

Tass: JARA: The last bastion of us holding out.

Megan: "How many of you are there?"

Tass: JARA: A few hundred.

Kim: "How quickly did this all happen?"

Tass: JARA: [Exhales] The main assault? A couple of days. It's a pirate town, but it's a peaceful pirate town. There's an understanding here that everyone gets along. When the battle came from the center of the city out, nobody was expecting it. Actually, from the center and from the outskirts. Most of the ships that were docked, you know, the actual free sailing ships, they were destroyed, bombed, sunk so that no one could escape.

Megan: "The center? I thought you said there was a whirlpool in the center."

Tass: JARA: Well, the central district. It's known as the White district. Kind of a little joke around the doctor that was Cotton's second.

Kim: "Ah. The one who was left in charge while Cotton left."

Tass: JARA: Yeah. Yeah. Seems like he had other ideas of how to run the place.

Kim: "What do you know about him?"

Tass: JARA: Not much. He's some sort of scientist. Some say he's a wizard. I've never seen him myself.

Landara: "So is it just the people who live here, against these skeletons?"

Tass: JARA: Pretty much. For a while, we were trying to take the city back. And now? Now I don't think that it's much worth it. But there's not a boat left in this place that still floats, aside from yours that just came in. And that's not gonna get hundreds of people out.

Tass: As are all talking, you make your way through some of these districts, and you can see that the — like the paint schemes of everything change as well. It's just little subtle things, like what might be set up as street signs painted the color of the district, or some of the roofing painted that color. And you get into another area that was clearly sacked, many broken down ships, burnt out buildings, and you're seeing flecks of purple paint here and there. And Jara leads you towards a very large ship that is, again, part of the foundation of the city here.

Tass: JARA: This is where the old lady holes up. She's kind of the only one left to be our leader at this point, as of a week ago. She'll have more answers than I do.

Tass: And she leads you on board and below decks. Once you're in this district, you do see more people. There are people poking their heads out of some of the other buildings and ships and from hiding to watch you go. But as you do, Jara has like given them a little high sign to be calm, before she leads you below decks. And once you're below in the galley, there's a large chair set up with an old woman sitting on it. She's got what used to be probably very fine clothing — a long purple coat, a fine white shirt underneath — but they're ragged, torn, in some places burned. She's got a sword and a pistol on her hip. And several of you would recognize her probably just from the picture as Siobhan. She gives you all a nod as you enter. There's about a dozen other people down here. They were all discussing something heatedly, but she gestures quickly and looks up at you with a hopeful smile, and then her eyes settle on Megan, and she sits back a little bit in her chair.

Tass: SIOBHAN: Oh, you all made it.

Tass: She seems to like double take at Megan a couple of times, but then just keeps turning her attention to the group.

Megan: "Is everything okay?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Clearly not. As you can see, if you've made your way through the city.

Megan: "Oh, yeah, I know, I know a things are bad. Hi, I'm Megan?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye, I thought you might be.

Megan: "You know me?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: No. Well yes, but no.

Kim: "Do you know a Megan."

Tass: SIOBHAN: I did, yes.

Megan: "Oh. Is she still ... She's still around?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: I truly hope not. I haven't seen her for years. She left us on to the continent heading north many years ago. I hope she's safe.

Megan: "Uh, I'm sorry. I hope so, too."

Tass: SIOBHAN: I apologize for my demeanor. It's just jarring. Cotton's made us aware of your situation, that you're from elsewhere.

Megan: "Yes. I'm still not sure exactly what's going on here, but we definitely want to do what we can."

Tass: SIOBHAN: That's appreciated. Maybe you lot can do what we haven't been able to. What questions do you have for me? How can we help?

Jake: "Well, we know that we're looking for a magic circle of some kind. And we don't know exactly where or exactly what it's holding or doing, but this whole place is kind of circular, so it's hard for me to narrow down. Have you heard anything about anything like that?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye. If he's to be believed, something to do with the whirlpool at the center of the city is likely what they might have set up as a magic circle. It's dead center of Plankton. It's several ship lengths across in between all of the largest ships, including the Eye of Anubis. That's where White is directing his little attack.

Kim: "Is there some sort of creature or phenomenon at the center of the whirlpool?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: [Chuckles] At the center, no. But patrolling the city, always.

Landara: "What do you mean?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: His champion. The one that drives us back and has stopped us from getting to the metal and liberating any of those that have been taken. The Gilded Death.

Kim: "I thought he hadn't been seen for a while."

Tass: SIOBHAN: He's been seen by us. But we've been here for a while.

Jake: I think I shoot kind of a furtive glance at Landara, just to see — just to get a read on how she reacts to hearing that he's in town.

Rev: Yeah. You know, I have this compulsion built into the playbook. And so I think there's an unconscious clenching of fists, but then kind of popping the neck and relaxing.

Jake: "We've heard stories of the Gilded Death and what he's capable of. I assume you had as well before you encountered him."

Tass: SIOBHAN: [Chuckles] Aye.

Jake: "Does anything he's doing now seem new?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Well, yes. But he was taken by White. Most taken turn into Silver Guard. He was turned into something else.

Jake: "So he's a skeleton?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: There are aspects of seeing his skeleton, one might say.

Megan: "Oh, no."

Kim: "Oh, god."

Jake: I think I shoot a very different look at Landara. This sounds like it's kind of a, 'Okay, this is probably the scenario where he's not gonna survive this one way or another.'

Rev: Yeah. And I feel like both of those glances, Landara saw. And the first one, she tried to act calm. The second one, there's just eye contact and a nod.

Landara: "You don't get the impression that he's ... I don't know how to say this. Magical enough to be the reason the circle's here? Like he wasn't here. He didn't live here, did he?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Oh no. He ... He was on my crew.

Landara: "Oh. Wait, were you the captain of the Founders?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: No. I am now I suppose, being pretty much the only one left. Tannis was our captain. He and Pat died two weeks ago, now. They made sure that they weren't gonna be in a state to be taken. Most of the rest have been.

Landara: "The whirlpool itself magic? Like, why did you build a whole town around it?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: The theory is, yes, that it is magical in some way. Cotton didn't have time to give us much information, just that you lot would be coming and that he had to see to Doctor White. But then we watched him get taken. As far as I know, yes, that whirlpool has something special about it. I think that's possibly what White is using to do the things he's doing to us.

Megan: "What kind of abilities does the Gilded Death have?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Abilities. Hmm. I don't really know how to answer that. He's just unstoppable. He used to be good. I know he was good, because I taught him how to

swordfight. But now he's something possessed. I think unlike the Silver Guard and the ones that patrol, I think he still got his mind.

Jake: A new glance at Landara. [Laughs]

Rev: Man, you gotta ... You gotta make up your mind on this.

All: [Laugh]

Megan: Used to be good, huh?

Jake: I'm just — I'm just like ...

Landara: Got a real will they, won't they vibe.

Jake: All right, all right. Hold up, hold up, hold up. New intel's come in.

Kim: "Those who have been changed by Doctor White, is there a possibility they could be changed back?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Most of them are just skeletons. Nothing left. Covered in silver. The rest, the husks, the ones that are directed by the Silver Guard are ... They're just dead walking. They're not people anymore. The very townsfolk turned against us.

Jake: "Was the Tass you knew bad? I don't know how else to phrase that."

Tass: I think the whole room chuckles, here. She just shrugs.

Tass: SIOBHAN: Depends on what you mean by bad. Depends on what side of the sword you're on, and it depends on the reason that the sword's pointed at you, I suppose. We're pirates. We were the pirates.

Megan: "Was there good in his heart?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: He had love in his heart, certainly. That was taken from him. He got bitter after that. He became a better fighter because of it. We used it.

Tass: She looks you over again and settles on Megan.

Tass: SIOBHAN: I didn't believe Cotton when he said you were coming from some other world until I saw your face.

Tass: And she turns to Jake.

Tass: SIOBHAN: There's a Jacob underneath that little monkey somewhere?

Jake: "Yes. Yeah, sort of. Locked deep inside."

Tass: SIOBHAN: If that's true, you're the key. In this world, you're his brother.

Jake: "Like literally? Like a blood relation?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Half brother, aye. You were killed. A couple of the others that were new to the crew. He got his revenge, and he was never the same after that.

Jake: "But even if we fix his mind and fix his heart, he's still gonna be on Death's list."

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye. I don't mean I think you're the key to fixing his mind. I think you're the key to stopping him up enough that you can do what you need to.

Landara: "Have you encountered him since he got here? Started patrolling?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Oh, aye. We were all here when the attack happened, and he was one of the first taken. They overwhelmed him. And I've only encountered him once since he is what they turned him into.

Landara: "Did he recognize you?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: If he did, he didn't care. He took down three of us that he knew — his crew — without a thought, without a question. They're Silver Guard now.

Kim: "How long does it take for White to change people?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: A few days. I think Jim and Maggie were taken a week ago. We saw two new Silver Guard a couple of days after that.

Kim: "And you said Cotton was taken a week ago?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye.

Megan: "I know that they're coated in silver to kind of give them another layer of protection, but have you found any, like, advantageous weakness that's better to use against them?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye. But obvious things that are a little more dangerous to attempt in the middle of a city. Things that take too long. It's hard to line up a cannon against something running at you on the street, you know. Explosions do a pretty good job, though. The Silver Guard, they're ... They're faster than the others. More agile.

Kim: "If you said that most of these creatures are husks or mindless skeletons, that implies that White is controlling them somehow. If White was taken out, do you think that most of the guards would stop?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: That is exactly what we think, and what we have not been able to accomplish. The closer you get to the middle, the more of them there are. More Silver Guard, and of course, the Gilded Death.

Kim: "Hmm."

Megan: "So it sounds like we need a distraction."

Jake: "If we could get him his mind back and unleash the Gilded Death on the Silver Guard, it'd be a good distraction. Probably be able to punch us a hole through."

Landara: "Just be careful when we see him. You're all already making the assumption that he's not doing these things because he wants to be. That he's being mind controlled. Yeah, what we're hoping for. But you've already assumed that. We got to be careful."

Megan: "Well, if we can get close enough, I might be able to determine exactly what's going on in his head."

Landara: "Yeah, there's a lot of different reasons to be sad in this moment that Jake doesn't look like Jake normally looks, but I think this is probably now the top of the list. Because he sure as shit ain't gonna recognize a monkey as his brother."

Megan: "He's got his voice, though. Might be enough to snap him out of it."

Rev: When she's describing this to us, she talked about the people turning on them and that they're just kind of like mindless dead. Are they ... Are they physically different? Or are they ... Like, have they all died, and it seems like they have risen up? Or did like alive people just start acting like zombies?

Tass: It does seem like, as she recounts some examples, that anything that they've seen is people get killed and then they get taken and then they show up again later.

Rev: So that includes like just the townspeople that turned on them.

Tass: Correct. Though the initial onslaught for those on the outskirts was just there are dead people walking out of the center and attacking.

Landara: "This is one of those unwinnable wars. Because every person on your side that drops becomes a person on their side."

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye. That's why we burn them.

Jake: "I think we should just start pushing for the center. We can try and cleave our way through some of the Silver Guard, and eventually we're going to get his attention. And then we'll learn what we need to know. And if we need to fall back, we can fall back. And if we're able to push through, we can push through. But we've only got one place to go. We just gotta start getting there."

Landara: "Yeah. I don't think there's gonna be a distraction large enough out here that's gonna get him to clear out that inner circle, if that's what he's determined to protect."

Jake: "I think you're correct. We gotta get eyes on him. We gotta figure out what's up with him."

Landara: "All right. Point us towards the middle, madam."

All: [Laugh]

Jake: Oh, my god. What happened to your voice?

Landara: "This is my Rev impression."

Tass: It's really good!

Landara: "I like Destiny and cheeseburgers."

Tass: [Laughs] Oh, my god. It's like he's in the room.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: SIOBHAN: All right. If you want to move in, we know some of the best paths. Though they shift, as the dead broaden their searches for us. I'm happy to go along. We have a few left that are good fighters, but I'll need to leave most of them here to fend for the rest that can't.

Megan: "Uh, is there somewhere I could maybe pick up a weapon on the way? I, uh ... I'm hoping to be a little more useful in a fight going forward. Just, you know, something ... Something easy. Like a — like a dagger or a crossbow."

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye, we've got plenty of that. Whatever you like.

Megan: "Oh, a crossbow would be great."

Tass: SIOBHAN: Aye. We'll fetch you one.

Tass: She stands.

Tass: SIOBHAN: Do you all need rest, or are we leaving now?

Jake: "I mean, if I take another hit, I don't know if I get back up. Do you have a healer? Do you have medicine?"

Tass: SIOBHAN: We have a doctor. He could see to some of your superficial wounds. He's not a surgeon by any means.

Jake: "Anything's better than nothing."

Kim: "Yeah."

Tass: SIOBHAN: All right. We'll leave at first light. I'll have the doctor come see to you. We have a room with four or five bunks. I'll send him that way.

Jake: "Thank you."

Tass: So over the night, the doctor does come and see to you all, so you can heal one harm each of you if you have any.

Kim: Woo.

Tass: If there's any conditions you might have that are physical, there's an option for that too instead of healing a harm, if it sort of makes sense for a doctor to see to it. Is there anything else you want to be doing here in this purple district, or are you all just hunkering down?

Rev: I mean, since Siobhan trained Tass as a fighter, I'm gonna pick her brain about how. And, you know, what feints there might be. And just information about how he is as a fighter, since she's the one who trained him.

Tass: Absolutely. I think she'll sit with you and just talk over her whole training process, and all of the things that he excelled at, the things that he did not excel at, to try to give you any sort of edge.

Megan: I think I'm gonna join in on that conversation.

Tass: Sure.

Megan: Just in case I need to have knowledge of this world's Tass to try and use in a fight.

Kim: Yeah, that seems like a good thing to listen to, in case I have to sword fight this guy.

Tass: So the things I think you would learn from this conversation is that he had a bad knee.

All: [Laugh]

Rev: I don't feel like I learned that from this conversation.

Tass: I know, right? But that was one of the things that's like ultra armored now. She describes him that he's just — he's kind of a monstrosity now. She keeps it simple. That you can see the muscle underneath, like there's no skin. He's got his clothes for the most part. His just sort of piratey signature gear that he wore. But they have like formed pieces of gold as if they are bone over his musculature. So it isn't like his bones are covered in that. They've like added these stylized ribs, and his face is this molten mask of gold that's been shaped into a skeleton. And you can still see his blue eyes underneath. So any of his sort of weak points that he had, they've just put more gold over, this molten gold to harden and become this armor for him.

Megan: You can just see his blue eyes underneath, just piercing and gorgeous. Just can't look away.

Tass: Just blue like a storm.

Rev: He basically looks like the main bad guy from Power Rangers.

Jake: No. [Laughs]

Tass: Thank you. I am not kidding. I am so fucking happy and proud of you. Mark a luck.

Rev: Oh! Oh.

Kim: Oh my god.

Tass: If one of you called it first, you would — you were gonna get a luck. And if a listener called it first, I was gonna come up with some fun thing.

Megan: I was gonna take luck away from all of you.

Jake: [Laughs]

Tass: It is — think Lord Zedd.

Rev: Yeah.

Tass: But gold instead of silver, and wearing pirate clothes. And no weird ... No weird like spiky helmet thing.

Rev: There's no T on his helmet.

Tass: No. No, no, no. And no brain showing.

Kim: I have the same name as the Pink Ranger. Do I get luck for that?

Tass: Yeah, I guess.

Rev: No. Your mom does. Your parents do, for naming you.

Megan: Janet gets the luck.

Tass: Yeah.

Kim: [Laughs]

Megan: I always knew that my mom not allowing me to watch boy shows when I was a kid would come back to, like, haunt me as an adult. I didn't know how severe it would be, though.

Tass: So sorry, listeners. Rev beat you to it. [Laughs]

Rev: Nice. I do want to point out ... I want to make sure this doesn't, like, slide over anybody's radar. She said he has no skin.

Tass: Correct.

Rev: He's only muscle and gold.

Tass: Yes.

Jake: Just like our Tass.

Tass: Yeah.

Jake: Look at this guy.

Rev: Just muscle and gold and.

Megan: A beard, somehow.

Tass: [Laughs]

Rev: Oh.

Tass: The rest of what you find out: he doesn't just use his signature sword. He also is packing with pistols. He's got a whole bandolier of many pistols, and all of them are multiple barreled. And from what she can tell of seeing him take out several of the other founders is that he's just even faster, stronger than he had been before. He is enhanced somehow, whether by Dr. White's alchemy or his magic or something. They are all debating exactly what happens when they do this process. But whatever it was, if they could do it more, they haven't for some reason. You know, they did it to him, and he's the

only one that is as strong. So the rest of them are kind of trickling down as far as their abilities. The Silver Guard, the next up, being a little faster, a little more agile than you might expect from just a skelly. And then the undead are shambling, slow. Lastly, I think the closest thing that she has to give you as far as like a true weakness is that he trained and perfected the duel. Like he has never lost a duel. And to hear Siobhan say it, for the most part, it's not even close. So where he gets distracted is when it's not a duel, when it's just a big melee and lots of targets are spreading his attention thin. He's got tunnel vision, and it's hard for him to break that. So once he gets into a fight, he's not paying as much attention to what else is going on around him. So it is adversely very dangerous to just be one on one with nothing else to help, but very advantageous to engage him in that way if there's more people to hit him from the sides. I think from you guys just taking the time here instead of heading straight out, I'm going to say that one of you can mark an ante for Tass — for the Gilded Death.

Megan: I guess it should go to Kim. Because Rev, you and I can both do like ranged attacks. And if she's got to get up close.

Jake: While they are basically studying with Siobhan how to beat Tass, I don't think I'm participating in that. I think I have like sequestered myself and I am trying to understand the magic in this world. Like as somebody who does magic and is rather proficient in it in our world, I feel like it might be necessary. And so I'm just trying to ... I'm basically I'm trying to see the weave that like I can't see here. And like understand the other people who are doing magic. How the fuck does it work here? Because I feel like I'm gonna need it. So I'm just like spending the night trying to puzzle it out.

Tass: I love that. I think we could do a Size Up on that.

Jake: Sure. Ten.

Tass: Hell yeah. You get two questions.

Jake: What strange secrets lie just beneath the surface?

Tass: I think that you discover as you're trying to tap into this feeling ... The information that you have, all of it, just putting all of these pieces together. You get the core idea of what magic is in this world. And while it can have similar effects to what you're used to in

your normal world, there, it's always been kind of in the air. You know, there are ley lines and things. There's just magic that exists that can be tapped into and used as an energy source. Here, everything is tied much more to an idea of fate. But not in the way of thinking that like these things are predetermined. These things have to happen. It's like this world creates conduits of magic so that people have a chance to complete their fate. That they put things like magical items that can be used, anything even from science and alchemy to create effects, to demonic forms that can power you, and so on. So for you to utilize magic, it just has to be a part of your wheelhouse. If it is something that you know to your core that you can accomplish because of an item you have or an experience you've had or magical knowledge that you've learned and so on, fate will give you a chance to accomplish that. Whether you succeed or not is entirely up to your own willpower, your own drive, your own perseverance. But if you have that connection, if you have that way to justify that you can break the laws of physics, it's possible.

Jake: I guess with regards to trying to do this in a way, in a place I'm unfamiliar with, where's the true danger lurking?

Tass: I think it's just the other side of that same coin. That nobody is using magic without knowing that they're using it. Like there's just this intrinsic, I can't normally do this, but I'm going to invoke a thing, an item, a power, whatever, and do it. Everyone knows that there's a price to pay. Because the other side of breaking physics, breaking reality to do a thing is if you fail, it's not just a fizzle. Like failing magic hurts. Failing magic could be devastating. So it's really taking those moments of fate by the reins and holding on for dear life.

Jake: Okay.

Tass: All right. So the next morning, Siobhan wakes you all up at dawn. Jara is with her, with her neck a little more cleanly bandaged.

Tass: SIOBHAN: We'll lead you through. I'm the last of the founders. At least the last that's here. I'm gonna see it through with you.

Tass: They lead you out of purple district and towards the center. There's smoke on the horizon, cries of pain and battle in the distance, as you make your way towards the Gilded Death.

SFX: OUTRO MUSIC

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