

RQG – 11 – The Rackets

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello again and welcome to episode 11 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast.
We're here in London as always and with me again as always I have

JAMES

James Ross

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

BEN

Ben Meredith

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

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ALEX

And you guys are playing?

JAMES

Sir Bertrand 'Bertie' MacGuffingham, unconscious sleeping man.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Hamid the Halfling, terrified, sorcerer.

ALEX

Who has been acid-ed and is steaming.

BRYN

I'm fine, he lied.

LYDIA

'I'm fine, my foot!'

BEN

Zolf the dwarven cleric who right now is super deaf.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

And Sasha who isn't really that hurt, likes stabbing things and hasn't managed to do that very often Sin Sasha.

BEN

Children's book Silly Sasha.

(Group laughter)

BEN

You've not stabbed anyone today!

ALEX

So we will be jumping in to sort of the middle of combat but just to reiterate what has happened for any listeners that had to miss and episode they have been, the party have been wandering around in Other London investigating the bombers of Edison's house, came upon the market place where all of the, where they suspect all of the weapons that were used by them have been sold and then got ambushed by one of Sasha's old friends and a bunch of his cronies. Thankfully Sasha managed to scare off a couple of the dogs with a thunderstone and Bertie managed to take one of them out before having a nap so we're pretty much going to be picking up where we left off, Sasha has just seen the head one of them jump into one of those tents and is stocking up on what looked like really flammable bottles of things.

LYDIA

Yep and I tried to throw a dagger and I missed!

ALEX

You'll get better, level one is level one. So starting with Hamid.

BRYN

Right so I'm still back to back with Zolf desperately fighting for our lives. I can see directly in front of me the prone form of Bertie, one of our...

JAMES

My best side I think!

BRYN

...one of our enemies laying damaged next to him but then just behind them I've got another enemy and his dog and I am still kind of shaky handed, just about holding myself together, loading my crossbow to fire yet another bolt at the same guy. I won't be attacking the dog unless he attacks me.

ALEX

Well the dogs are smaller so they're harder to hit.

LYDIA

That's why, not because they're adorable.

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BRYN

(dice roll) I definitely miss, rolling a three.

ALEX

Oh yeah that's a definite miss.

LYDIA

Shaky, shaky hands.

BEN

It seems our luck has not changed between episodes.

ALEX

The bolt flies past the man into one of the tents, through the material and you just hear a 'agh!'

LYDIA

Oh no.

ALEX

Ok and Zolf you're up.

BEN

Ok so I'm still facing off with another also deafened by the thunderclap guy and we have been swiping at each other trying to make something happen so

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let's continue in this regard and I'm going to take another jab at him with my trident. **(rolls dice)**

ALEX

Sure.

BEN

And I'm going to maybe on a fourteen hit.

ALEX

Is that fourteen plus?

BEN

No it's fourteen total.

ALEX

Ok let's have a check.

LYDIA

Oh come on.

BEN

Come on with the 13 AC.

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LYDIA

I'm sort of liking the missing.

ALEX

It's a no, it's a miss. It's a very close miss.

LYDIA

You guys are just performing a kind of weird ballet.

BEN

We really are.

ALEX

It's like Capoeira with swords.

BEN

And a trident.

ALEX

Oh my mistake I'm so sorry. Ok so

LYDIA

What does scary McMan do?

ALEX

The guy you has been facing off against Zolf he yeah he'll take that swing as well. **(rolls dice)**

BEN

Seventeen, eighteen.

ALEX

And... he will miss.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

They're just stabbing around, no idea what's going on.

BEN

My dice roll to hit was lower than his so statistically I will win this.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Eventually.

BEN

Eventually.

LYDIA

Of old age.

ALEX

Bertie is stable, unconscious and snoring.

JAMES

Yeah I'm having this dream where I'm falling and falling into my mother's face.

Carry on.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

I'm going to keep people updated with what's going on in Bertie's rich inner life. Please continue.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Ok the boss who had jumped into that tent, let's see if he notices that you missed, you could have just thrown right through without him seeing. **(rolls dice)** No!

LYDIA

He rolls a one!

ALEX

Ok he has no idea that you're there, your dagger went sailing past him, in one end of the tent, out the other end.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

He has no idea what's going on but instead he is still stocking up.

LYDIA

The cartoon of this!

BEN

You're sort of just like 'that never happened...'

ALEX

So yeah he has got a rucksack open like I said and he is still just plucking viles and putting them in there, he then reaches up and grabs what looks like a bandelier much like again the ones that the bombers were using. He's strapping it on himself.

LYDIA

What's a bandelier?

ALEX

It's like a big belt that you can wear either on your waist or across your torso and it has lots and lots and lots of either pouches for ammunition or sort of sheaths and it's the idea of throwing...

BRYN

I think the one thing we can say has come out of this fight as positive we've found the right tent.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Now we just need to survive to tell, to figure out what to do next.

ALEX

But he's stocking up certainly and yeah that's his whole turn is just him still stocking up because he's not aware that you've.

LYDIA

(Singing) Every day I'm stocking up...

ALEX

Is that Santa's song?

LYDIA

It sounds like ‘hustling’.

BEN

That is every day Santa.

ALEX

I’m such an idiot! Ok the guy with his dog... he is I think he’s now getting his dog under control and is going to start moving back in again so.

LYDIA

Oh no!

ALEX

So five, ten, fifteen, twenty...

BEN

Can I take my attack of opportunity?

ALEX

...twenty five, yep Zolf gets an attack opportunity because has entered within the 10ft range.

BEN

Yep. **(rolls dice)** Oooh, ooh, ooh seventeen.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

That's a hit.

(Group cheering)

BEN

Four damage.

ALEX

Four damage yeah. Ok. Oh goodness me I'm dropping stuff everywhere.

BEN

So as I notice him coming in I'll fend the other guy off with my shield and kind of jab forwards and kick back and stab backwards.

ALEX

All very nice, over Hamid's shoulder?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Very good.

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JAMES

Over his head.

BEN

We are both quite short!

JAMES

Which one do you think is shorter?

BEN

Hamid, I am, I wrote it down 4ft 3.

BRYN

I'm 3ft 2.

EVERYONE

Awwww.

BRYN

He's got a whole foot on me.

JAMES

Ha ha ha.

BEN

I'm sure the exact same noises happened first time.

LYDIA

You're sizest, you've got a foot on me.

ALEX

The dog moves in on Hamid. Five, ten, fifteen, no attack opportunity for Zolf because he's used it, he is flanking now Hamid and is going to go for the attack.

(Rolls dice)

LYDIA

Ohhhhhhhh.

ALEX

And gets a natural one, again much like before the dog doesn't quite realise what's going on.

JAMES

It just sits down.

ALEX

And it's just a bit of a naff dog. I reckon it's the pup, it's the youngest one that's still learning the ropes and doesn't really know what it's doing.

LYDIA

It just sits, wags his tail and looks up 'yep'.

ALEX

You say look up, it's Hamid, it looks down!

BEN

I've found a man. There you go, good boy, well done mate.

BRYN

We stare at each other right in the eyes, level.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And Sasha you're up.

LYDIA

Ok so I have a whole, in terms of stuff... one question if I were to try and knock down this tent given that my strength is a -1 is that something that is any way plausible like how strong is this tent?

ALEX

Totally doable it looks more like someone put it up as an arbitrary sort of marking out of the territory, you're underground, there's no rain, there's the

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occasional drip, there's no wind so it's definitely not a particularly sturdy thing. It is a very standard, almost gazebo structure you know four vertical pole tents, meeting in a cross at the top. You could certainly hack down, you could...

LYDIA

I could, could I just pull a pole?

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

I want this to collapse on his head.

ALEX

Sure I'd make it a standard action for you to effectively just yank one of the poles in the hope that the whole thing falls down on him.

LYDIA

Right cool that's what I'm going to do, what will I roll?

ALEX

Give me a...umm

LYDIA

Is this, it's acrobatics really, I've got disable device. Is a tent a device, I've got a good bonus on that.

ALEX

Let's say that you take a 5ft step beside the counter so that you can just reach across and pull a tent pole. Don't go over it, go round it because other it's extra rolls and now just give me a standard strength roll.

LYDIA

I'm on a -1 guys.

BEN

Hopefully a low AC though.

LYDIA

(rolls dice) Oh my God!

ALEX

Not that low.

LYDIA

Oh! I got a one.

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BEN

What are the odds of three ones in a row? It's, we're looking at astronomical.

LYDIA

This is not, this is not right, you have dodged up these dice.

BEN

My dice. You dodged up my dice.

LYDIA

I got a one with a -1 does it collapse on me?

JAMES

The answer to your question Ben is 1 in 8,000 so.

BEN

Not likely.

JAMES

No.

LYDIA

Do I accidentally set up an entire new tent?!

ALEX

So you reach out to pull the thing, you give a yank, don't notice one of the guide ropes and manage to accidentally tie one of your hands up into it.

LYDIA

Oh gosh.

ALEX

You're going to need to take a move action to remove your hand from basically having been tied up in the guide ropes.

LYDIA

Do I have that move action left? I've taken a 5ft step.

ALEX

You've had to take the 5ft step so you'll have to do it next round.

LYDIA

Oh my gosh.

ALEX

But you wouldn't have been able to reach the tent anyway without the step.

JAMES

You've endured an attack of opportunity from the dread gazebo.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

All shall fear the gazebo it followed you from Edison's garden.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

We are bad rollers guys.

BEN

We are.

ALEX

Hamid you're up and you're flanked.

BRYN

Hamid is genuinely starting to hyperventilate.

ALEX

Oh yeah this is, this is serious.

BRYN

He is panicking, he has more or less lost his mind, he is going to turn to this guy, forgetting he doesn't have a weapon, he's going to start just trying to shove him away.

ALEX

Sure.

BRYN

Except his hands have turned into claws.

ALEX

Nice.

BRYN

He still hasn't noticed.

ALEX

He's still just batting someone away just with razor sharp claws.

BRYN

I get two attacks because they are natural weapons. **(rolls dice)** I miss with both of them.

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BEN

Woah, is that another natural one?!

BRYN

Another natural one!

LYDIA

Another! That is, that's insane.

ALEX

Ok so what I'll say is with a natural one in a.

BEN

(laughing) that is ridiculous! 'Oh, broke nail!'

JAMES

Now 1 in 160,000.

BEN

Come on we can make it now.

ALEX

So yeah, with a natural one Bertie, sorry, Hamid panicking sorts of backs out, sees that his claws are razor sharp and goes 'aaaggghhhh' and basically

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complete flubs the second attack because he's still too concerned about the fact that his hands have gone all dragony and clawy.

BRYN

I wouldn't even recognise them as dragony at this point.

ALEX

Sure.

BRYN

They're just claws and I'm slightly weirded out.

LYDIA

Slightly?

BRYN

Well I think I'm more afraid for my life, it's hard to focus on the fact that my hands have spontaneously into claws when I'm pretty certain I'm about to die,

BEN

'My hands are weird but I'm going to deal with that later!'

ALEX

Zolf you're up.

BEN

I'm going to continue this incredible ballet.

ALEX

This dance of death.

BEN

Yes I'm not going to move because I could try a flank using Hamid but that would open him up to a third person having access so I probably would ruin everything so I'm going to make a stab. **(rolls dice)** That's a fifteen.

ALEX

A fifteen, is that in total? You're going to hate me.

BEN

Oh no. They've got blimmin 16AC don't they?

ALEX

Yes they do.

BEN

Ah this is the worst.

ALEX

These are formidable people.

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BEN

You're formidable. No, that's not an insult.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Thank you, thank you Ben, yes I am formidable.

BEN

You're a formidably bad person.

ALEX

Ok the guys are squaring off again...

JAMES

Good save, good save Ben.

BEN

Yeeeah!

LYDIA

High five -1 charisma people!

(Lydia and Ben high five)

ALEX

So the guy that you're squaring off against is nothing if persistent and let's see how many misses we can go for so he gives another attack. Ooh what's your AC?

BEN

17.

ALEX

No it's a miss.

LYDIA

Aaaggghhhh.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Listeners we are sorry. We are so sorry.

ALEX

Bertie continues to...

JAMES

Bertie is having a dream where he's in the middle of an exam but he's naked for some reason but he's kind of fine with that.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

But Hamid's screaming two chairs across, he's really distracting.

JAMES

Hamid is really, really really loud and Hamid's desk has turned into claws...

(Group laughter)

BRYN

(Screaming)

JAMES

Really weird.

ALEX

Ok right so the boss.

LYDIA

Oh no.

ALEX

The boss finally finishes.

LYDIA

Does he notice my screw up? My the one which actually a zero because I rolled a natural one where I have a -1.

ALEX

Well let's see. **(rolls dice)** No.

LYDIA

Oh good ok he, that was, he didn't roll a one he rolled a five.

BRYN

He has Bertie levels of perceptiveness.

ALEX

He is not a perceptive guy.

BEN

He has got his head stuck in the bag.

ALEX

So yeah he finally finishes loading up on stuff.

LYDIA

Oh no.

ALEX

He closes the bag, puts it on his back, volts over the counter at the far side to what Sasha is moving so that's one more square than that, making an acrobatics check... **(rolls dice)**

BEN

Fail it, fail it, fail it...

ALEX

...which with his modifier...

BEN

Fall over and explode, fall over and explode!

LYDIA

Yeah, come on! Come on!

ALEX

No he is a very acrobatic guy!

BEN

Boo!

ALEX

He continues his move action, so that will be yep, and then reaches into the bag and draws out a flask in each hand.

BEN

For anyone who can't see I'm now glaring at Alex.

ALEX

He draws a flask from each hand. Ok.

LYDIA

In each hand?

ALEX

Sorry not from.

JAMES

From, ta, da!

LYDIA

My hands have become flasks!

BEN

He's a sorcerer but his lineage is grenades.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Ok so Hamid oh no what I am saying sorry it's not Hamid it is one of the men that is flanking Hamid I believe.

BEN

Everyone is so flanked right now.

LYDIA

I'm flanked by a tent!

ALEX

You know what? The one who is flanking Hamid sees the claws and I'm going to give him, **(rolls dice)** he is visibly disturbed by.

BRYN

Him and me both my friends, him and me both.

ALEX

He makes an attack but it is very much a go away, go away, go away, go away, go away, go away, he has kind of lost that viscous bent. **(rolls dice)**

BRYN

A bit more panicky.

ALEX

Oh but he does hit.

LYDIA

Critical.

ALEX

He threatens a critical in fact.

BEN

This is not good.

ALEX

(rolls dice) He does not confirm the critical but he does hit dealing, let's have a look.

BEN

One damage?

ALEX

(rolls dice) Ooh wait for it.

BEN

You have betrayed me dice.

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ALEX

Six in total.

BEN

Oh no, Hamid's down!

LYDIA

Oh he is, he is down.

BRYN

Hamid falls over, his hands turn back into hand.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Poor Hamid.

BEN

So there is an upside. Silver lining.

LYDIA

The dog is not eating him, is it?

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ALEX

The dog, it's not the dog's go yet.

BEN

Why would you say that?

ALEX

Now it's the dog's go. The dog holds its action awaiting a command from its master as to what to do given that someone has just joined it and he has just kind of cosied up and fallen asleep in front of him.

BRYN

Chew toy!

LYDIA

Tail wagging!

BRYN

Squeak, squeak.

ALEX

Ok Sasha, you're up and you're currently tied to a...

LYDIA

Untangle my arm.

ALEX

Ok you use one move action to remove your arm.

LYDIA

Ok I, I shout 'don't throw it we give up' at the boss who I know.

BEN

That's was very impressive, I was actually phrasing the way to surrender. 'I really hope Sasha doesn't do anything to further antagonise no it was good, good.'

LYDIA

'Don't, don't hurt them, I give up, I mean we give up'.

BEN

'I surrender as well'.

LYDIA

'Yeah we're very surrendering, very'.

BEN

'Look I'm putting it down', I kind of start lowering my shield just in case they try to stab me some more.

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ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Lower your trident not your shield!

BEN

Shield and trident.

ALEX

So yeah the guy who is dual wielding just says 'drop the weapon Sasha and pals'.

BEN

'I do what you say' drop the weapon and the shield.

LYDIA

I drop the dagger that I am holding.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Hmm, down to four.

BEN

I will also just, umm, as I drop the weapons just kind of sort of grab hold of my pendant sort of in a like a comfort way and start muttering and when my turn comes around if we're still in combat technically, cure light wounds on myself.

ALEX

Ok so the guy sees that you've dropped them, he'll then go 'kick their weapons away'. The one who was just flanking Hamid very cautiously around Zolf joins his friend and they just pull your sword and trident away.

BEN

While they do that I will want to use that to surreptitiously...

ALEX

Yeah that's fine you can do it then so give yourself your cure.

BEN

Yes how do we do spell failure do I just roll a D10 and then?

ALEX

Yep it's just a flat percentage chance and it's a 20% chance of failure because of the deafness.

BEN

Oh actually I need to roll a percentile I guess?

ALEX

Also I'm going to go ahead and say that you didn't hear him say put your weapons down you're doing this off your own because you're deaf my friend. Completely...

BEN

Oh I forgot.

ALEX

...completely deaf.

BEN

Yes ok.

BRYN

These guys are also deaf so won't have heard the instruction to kick.

BEN

Oooh very good point.

LYDIA

Oh no.

ALEX

True, thankfully what he's doing is he has seen that the fight has stopped, the one who has freaked out by you is still going to carry on doing because he sees someone putting their weapons down but that's a very good point. This isn't me backtracking and you're really carefully covering my tracks.

BEN

We've all inferred from the situation. **(rolls spell failure check)**

LYDIA

I would say they will always be.

BRYN

You failed.

LYDIA

And those two henchman will always be very aware of what their boss is doing.

ALEX

Oh of course.

LYDIA

He's so if he's...

ALEX

Yeah, yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

I mean the one that knocked Hamid down is quite frankly openly scared. One of them, let's see there was Bertie who just took out one of his friends instantly, another one of you launched something which terrified the dogs and made the other one not particularly effective as far as he can tell and one of you has turned into a dragon handed monstrosity briefly. He yeah he's visibly scared and has been checking to see if his boss is watching.

BEN

Luckily they hopefully don't know that I'm a cleric because I haven't done anything clerical.

ALEX

Yeah so they come over and they just pull your stuff away and they don't try and wield it or anything. 'Sasha do come out where I can see you'.

LYDIA

So I step away from the tent but the mass of bodies are still between me and.

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ALEX

Sure.

LYDIA

And Mr Boss Man.

BRYN

(rolls dice) Hamid stops bleeding.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Yay!

BEN

A little bit of self-maintenance.

LYDIA

‘Just let me look after these guys right just let me check on them’.

ALEX

Ok as you’re saying that all of the stall holders by the way and the people who are around proceed to sort of start putting their swords back underneath the counter, this is not the first fight they’ve seen here.

LYDIA

Not today!

ALEX

The eel seller pokes his head out from his large cauldron, it's not a fired cauldron, it's just a wet cauldron pokes himself out from that, sees that his thing is on fire, climbs out and starts you know pouring brine over the fire.

LYDIA

Just slapping it with eels!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

'Special bbq eels everyone!'

BEN

So I'm thinking my next character is definitely going to be an eel ranger.

ALEX

I believe the term is eel wrangler.

BEN

An eel wrangler.

LYDIA

Can you got not get summon eel at some point from your Poseidon?

BEN

Actually I think I can already summon an eel.

ALEX

So yeah the boss 'Oh Sasha, well what a shame, you do keep tending to muck things up don't you Sasha?'

LYDIA

'I managed to get out of... no, yeah I didn't manage much'.

ALEX

'You and your club footed friend there can grab your mates and you're going to be coming with us'.

BEN

'What's he saying?'

LYDIA

I walk over.

BEN

‘Muh, muh... I can’t hear anything’.

LYDIA

I come over, hold your shoulder, sort of tap at your cleric thing and gesture at the others the people on the floor.

BEN

‘What oh yeah no get on that am I ok to do that, is that ok?’

LYDIA

‘Yeah he said yeah’.

BEN

‘Good’.

LYDIA

‘And look after them’.

ALEX

Meanwhile the two people that were basically taking out some of the party come back over to the boss, they are all keeping an eye on you guys but you definitely overhear the conversation of ‘no grab the ones that are down, grab the ones’ starts gesturing because obviously they’ve got deafened and all that kind of thing but it looks like he is telling them to pick up his guys as well.

BEN

Yeah I'll walk over to both Hamid and Bertie and make sure that they are stabilised which they've done so themselves...

ALEX

They are.

BEN

...my heal can't do anything else or could it?

ALEX

Your normal heal check can't.

BEN

Yeah I can't.

ALEX

If you were to do a cure light wound you could get them up and.

BEN

After that last spell failed I was like oh something has gone wrong because I couldn't hear myself talking.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

I'm going to wait and instead of wasting all my spells it's only an hour so.

ALEX

Ok one of the guys picks up his friend and takes position by the boss. The boss dual wielding these oil flasks sort of comes around, gestures to you 'right you and your friends you're going to go where I tell you' and he gestures towards the alleyway that he had been looking out from that you initially saw him from.

LYDIA

'Well I came, I came because they so there were some guys came up to, to, to, you know Upper London and they said to come down that you know that Barret wanted to say hi, about Brock'.

ALEX

'Sasha, Sasha you seem to be under the idea that I care'.

LYDIA

'I mean I'm doing what he wanted right so'.

ALEX

'You walk. Your stumpy little friend, walk'.

BEN

Who is still working on... and not hearing this.

LYDIA

I grab you by the shoulder.

BEN

‘What, what, what?’

LYDIA

Finger to the lips and slump like a broken thing and slump towards the alleyway that we were going down.

ALEX

‘You have an appointment Sasha alright?’

BEN

I will get up and fall back over, ‘I need something to walk with’. I try and get back up again, fake fall over again.

ALEX

I’m going to get the boss to do a sensomotive on your enormous bluff there you may want to do a bluff roll. **(rolls dice)**

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BEN

I probably should do a bluff check yeah. **(rolls dice)**

ALEX

Ooh he's not very good.

BEN

Four!

ALEX

Four total?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

He beats you with a five!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So there's you going 'oh no I'm falling over' and he's just going.

BEN

It's a good deception... but I think...

ALEX

What a clever rouse, I am such an intelligent and charismatic man.

BEN

“Oh no I have fallen and I cannot get up.”

ALEX

He just raises and eyebrow at you and goes ‘If you’d like I could cut off his other leg so he’s nice and balanced?’

LYDIA

‘Don’t, don’t mess with them’.

BEN

‘What?’

LYDIA

I try and communicate with my eyes but I don’t really have a very expressive face so.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

‘Right. Move.’

BEN

Alright fair enough.

LYDIA

Agh expressions everywhere, expressions of panic, fear, terror, dread.

ALEX

So presumably you all start moving off?

LYDIA

Bit of confusion.

BEN & LYDIA

Yes.

ALEX

Ok you start heading off down that alleyway and it becomes quickly apparent that you're moving from the market places to frankly a more run down area, it starts to slope downhill and as it does it starts to feel a bit damper.

LYDIA

And sadder.

ALEX

It does. Sadder is a good word to describe it. You start seeing some people who are kind of making do with the buildings that have been more destroyed you know, it starts feeling a bit more like a slum and a bit less like a reclaimed city, you keep heading down. As you do the guys who are walking behind you stay very, very quiet keeping an eye on the boss, the boss has got the most insufferable sneer on. The most insufferable sneer, Christmas came early and it was his birthday!

JAMES

He's Jesus?!

LYDIA

No. No Bertie he is not.

JAMES

I'm still unconscious, so...

LYDIA

It's hard to tell the difference.

ALEX

So, walking along yeah it starts deteriorating, you go down a couple of left turns, a couple of right turns and you come to another sort of staircase this one leading down into what looks like a lower level again.

LYDIA

‘I told you, I told you we shouldn’t come here, I’ve told you, like why are we here?’

BEN

‘What?’

LYDIA

Yeah. I’m mostly talking because I know you can’t hear so the idea that you’ve actually responded is even more terrifying than... ‘oh nothing, nothing.’

BEN

I can see your mouth working ‘I can’t hear you, I can’t’.

ALEX

At this point Hamid and Bertie start to come to on the backs of these guys...

LYDIA

Wait which one of us is carrying Bertie?

(In unison)

BEN

I’m not

JAMES

Zolf, presumably.

BEN

No, goodness no!

LYDIA

Neither of us.

ALEX

What we'll say is that one of the guys who was free is dragging him and you are helping.

BEN

Oh, ok yeah sure.

LYDIA

I think two of them, like he is a big.

BEN

I'm not weak.

LYDIA

I can carry Hamid.

ALEX

It's a dragging weight, it's not over the shoulders, it is literally a *kchhhh* (makes scraping noise) you know his head donk, donk, donk, donk.

LYDIA

Oh his poor armour.

BEN

Armour yeah.

ALEX

Donk, donk.

JAMES

Agh!

ALEX

Ok you both come to at one hit point each and feel terrible. Bertie you come to because your head bounces off a particularly large flagstone, dink, dink, dink, dink.

JAMES

Are you absolutely sure that I notice my head impacted?

ALEX

I didn't say you noticed it, I just said you woke up.

JAMES

Yeah. Right fair enough.

ALEX

Hamid yeah you come to sort of across Sasha's shoulders and yeah you have one of the men is basically tugging Bertie, the other one is back with his boss with one of his mates over his shoulder still holding a sword and the boss is dual wielding still those oil flasks threateningly.

LYDIA

'Yeah sorry Hamid this isn't the sort of place for the likes of you'.

BRYN

'Owww'.

ALEX

Down the stairs.

BRYN

'Where are they taking us?'

LYDIA

Further down is more of this. This gets worse and worse. I mean it's not, it's not a nice place. 'I tried to warn you all, I tried and no one ever listens do they no so'.

JAMES

Ugh. Ugh. Can we order room service?

LYDIA

'You guys are not going to like it down here. Did you like the eel? No, see.'

BEN

'What?'

ALEX

Ok so we'll skip ahead and because it's lots more of whats and muttering and room service and sadness, just sadness from Hamid. You guys carry on heading down and you start entering areas which are still run down but there don't seem to be many people any more and given how crowded the sort of damper area that you were going through before was you'd have expected there to be more people. Sasha of course knowing this area knows very well that she is entering effectively the sort of contested territories of the underground gangs so it is no surprise to you that there's no one here.

LYDIA

Well no one visible.

ALEX

Yeah that's a good way of putting it. No man's land is no man's land even if it is underground.

LYDIA

You know, someone like me knows the cracks in the building so you can see the eyes of the scavenging kids dashing about but there's, no one's so like which automatically I check my pockets.

ALEX

So as you continue down Sasha you start approaching a large building that you recognise very much so as being a rather large, rather important building that you'd rather stay away from and with that we're going to take a break and we'll come back in a couple of minutes.

[BREAK]

ALEX

And welcome back, yeah so you're approaching a large building. To everyone who is conscious and isn't Sasha it looks like you're approaching what once was some kind of town hall, probably not like the central town hall of London or anything but certainly large, again columns, it actually seems in good repair. Everything around it is almost crumbled, it's very clear that people have been

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brought down here to fix it up like and I don't mean sort of corrugated iron I mean there have been masons here, the stone walls are back up. There is a fence, so they have columns out front like you'd expect like an overhang from the upper floor and they have fencing rigged up between those columns, there is a metallic gate in the middle so that you'd have to pass through the fence and the gate before you can even get to the front doors which are large and oak, they seem to be the original doors. There are a couple of guys, both with dogs, on either side and they see you coming and the boss of the people that was fighting you just calls ahead. 'Strip them down, send them in, you know what to do'.

LYDIA

I stop in front of the front gates.

ALEX

The guards each of whom has a bull mastiff that makes the ones that you were dealing with clearly lower down the pecking order.

LYDIA

I stop, I will not go towards them, everyone bangs into me I'm guessing. Like, I do not want to go forwards.

ALEX

Sure.

LYDIA

Into this front door. I have no strategy I just do not move forwards for at least a moment.

BEN

To clarify have I got my hearing back, or is it still within the hour?

ALEX

Your hearing is just sort of coming back, any muttered conversation anything like that you're not going to have. Bertie and Hamid you're still at the one hit point but you will have been able to sort of start staggering along if you choose.

LYDIA

I stop. I do not want to go through those doors.

ALEX

'Sasha do we have a problem?'

LYDIA

'Is there I mean Barret wanted me to come and talk so why, I mean he could come out here like and, umm'.

ALEX

'I'm sorry Barret could come out here to meet little old you?'

LYDIA

‘Well maybe I could just, maybe if it’s not that important than we could just go like these guys they’re from Upper London Ashen, they don’t they’ve got no business here’.

ALEX

‘Really I had no idea!’ sort of tapping on the golden filigree of Bertie.

JAMES

‘I say do you mind?’

ALEX

‘No, not really no’.

LYDIA

‘Shut up Bertie’.

JAMES

Ugh, brrm... (disgruntled muttering)

LYDIA

‘This is not the place. Like I told them not to come, they’re just stupid ok they’re not problems for you, they’re not involved in any of your arguem...

your territory stuff, just take the cash and we will leave and there will be no like people will look for these guys right, people care about them’.

ALEX

‘Well’.

BEN

‘It’s true we will have people come and look for us’.

LYDIA

‘Yeah like he’s mates with’.

JAMES

‘Who are you calling stupid?’

LYDIA

‘They’ve got friends right, it will be more trouble for you to keep them here, just let them go’.

ALEX

‘Right ok that’s enough, right ok? Right, right, we all good, yeah? Right you’re my catch Sasha, mine, it’s about time that I managed to bring you back right so what’s going to happen you’re going to go in, your friends are going to go in, everyone is going to have a lovely little tete-a-tete right and then I’m sure that things will work themselves out, yeah? And the difference is I’d rather send you in there without a burn on your face but I’m quite happy to do it Sasha,

quite happy'. As part of this commotion happens there's a balcony up above the main entrance and a couple of bay doors open and Sasha you recognise the comparatively well dressed man who comes out. For the rest of you he is, he's older in fact you realise that a lot of the people that you've been seeing around Other London are comparatively younger you've not seen anyone bordering on the elderly, this guy is sort of pushing, pushing 50 and he has got sort of a grey beard, he's not, he's well kept, not Hamid styles of sort of obsession about appearance but certainly he's well put together. He steps up to the balcony and just leans across, he's not austere dressed but very plainly dressed, well dressed but very plain. Maybe with a larger cloak around his shoulder just for the look of the thing but there's no gold, there's no rings, there's nothing particularly of worth on him. However he leans across, sees what is happening.

LYDIA

We should not be here.

ALEX

(as well dressed man) 'Ashen do we have a problem?'

(as Ashen) 'No sir, no, no, it's fine, it's fine'.

(as well dressed man) 'Sasha do come in, I won't have you harmed or your mmm.....friends'.

And then he literally just steps back, closes the doors and heads inside.

LYDIA

‘Right I guess’.

BEN

‘Looks about as safe as it’s going to get’.

LYDIA

‘This is not safe’.

BRYN

‘I think we should just do what they tell us’. I still look a bit terrified and I’m clearly quite demoralised.

LYDIA

‘You guys have no idea’. I step forward through the gate.

ALEX

Yeah the guards start patting you down for daggers and so on. Do you want to do any kind of slight of hand to hide stuff you’re holding?

LYDIA

Yes I would like to try and hide at least one dagger.

ALEX

It would be a separate check for each.

LYDIA

Ok well I'll try and hide as many daggers as I can.

ALEX

Do you have one in a spring sheath unused?

LYDIA

Yes.

ALEX

That you get a bonus to hide so I'd recommend trying to hide that one.

LYDIA

Right yes because I used one of the spring things to throw and then the other one, yeah cool so what do I have to do?

ALEX

Just roll a slight of hand check.

LYDIA

Ok I get seven on that, bonus on that so... **(rolls dice)** the first one eighteen plus seven.

ALEX

Plus the bonus that you get for the wrist sheath.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Yeah they start patting you down, they pluck a couple of other things from you like the thunderstone, not the thunderstone sorry the oil flask, things like that.

I should roll a check but honestly I don't...

LYDIA

I should roll for the other daggers or?

ALEX

If you want to but I'd bear in mind that if they find one that's hidden that you're trying to hide they're going to assume you're hiding others.

LYDIA

Ok I'll let them take the other ones.

ALEX

Yeah I'm going to check on the off chance that they could but I think they'd have to roll... **(rolls dice)** yeah they'd have to roll incredibly high to beat your slight of hand so they.

LYDIA

Now I get the rules! Like for goodness sake.

ALEX

So they pat you down, they take the items that were readily apparent, they put them in sort of a coat, take your jacket off you and put it in there and they just hold it, the jacket with all of the stuff. They just.

LYDIA

If they take my jacket then my wrist sheath is just sitting there on my wrist but I'm that good.

JAMES

Are you wearing a shirt or something?

LYDIA

But I am that good, oh yeah I guess.

BEN

If it's a slight of hand it has probably tucked it under the shirt, you are working to keep it hidden.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah so they dump that to the side and gesture inside, they then proceed to, they don't even ask Zolf they take the trident and shield that have already been handed over.

BEN

Yeah I wasn't holding them, I dropped them.

ALEX

Have you got any other weapons on you?

BEN

Yeah I've got a mace.

ALEX

So yeah they will obviously they'll be taking the mace.

LYDIA

You can try slight of hand the mace...

BEN

'Oh this? No, no!

LYDIA

...ram it up your sleeve.

BEN

Oh I'm pregnant! With a mace!

(group laughter)

ALEX

They dump that on the side, Hamid?

BRYN

I'm carrying a crossbow, a bunch of bolts, two daggers and about a hundred gold pieces and a healing potion.

ALEX

They'll put all of that in the pile, again you see a couple of other people draw near and Ashen's like 'oh no, oh no, none of that lads, none of that'. Bertie?

JAMES

Right so I've got sword, armour, two swords because I've got my bastard sword and my rapier.

ALEX

So you've got the rapier for the formal occasions?

JAMES

Yeah as far as I'm aware Bertie doesn't have a gag reflex but there's nothing on my character sheet to suggest that so I can't conceal either of those things about me anyway.

ALEX

Sure as Bertie steps up the two guards with their dogs literally draw weapons and ready them around you, two more guys who are on the doors gesture to people inside and two other guys come out so there's at least four people around you as you're stood there in your full plate armour obviously drawing to hand over a bastard sword or something and they are all, every single person is ready, there's two archers up on the balustrades as well both of which with crossbows aimed at you.

LYDIA

'No trouble Bertie just give it up'.

JAMES

'Well really, I've never been so outrageously treated in all of my life, look at you, bruuugh. Urgh! Urrrrgh!'

LYDIA

'Look he's just stupid, he's not trying to'.

JAMES

'Who are you calling stupid?'

LYDIA

'You Bertie to save your life'.

JAMES

'Urgh. Really'

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Presumably this is happening as you're taking stuff off and handing it over...?

JAMES

Yeah. Complaining.

BRYN

'Come on Bertie it will be ok'.

JAMES

'Nooooo'.

BRYN

I put a reassuring hand on your umm...

BEN

Thigh...

BRYN

...knee, I guess.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

I have my potion for cure light wounds I haven't done anything with.

LYDIA

I'm guessing they, do they take everything of value or only dangerous...?

ALEX

They'll be taking that off you as well.

BEN

Actually that's a point...

JAMES

And my gold.

BEN

While they're taking stuff off, as they take the potion I'm like 'do you mind? I'm sure your boss wouldn't want us to be looking all scruffy when we meet him'.

ALEX

'I'm also sure he wouldn't want you to sprout wings and spit fire from your'.

BEN

'Do I really look like the kind of person who's going to have a potion that would do that?'

ALEX

'I'm sorry your dragony friend over here or... what, what are you?'

BRYN

'What me?'

BEN

'He's a halfling'.

BRYN

'Me? I'm just an ordinary halfling'.

LYDIA

'He's just a...'

BRYN

I give a very worried smile. I can bluff really well, I'm kind of too freaked out to do so right now.

ALEX

Sure the guys just snatch that cure light wounds from you and from Bertie as well.

BEN

Suit yourself.

ALEX

Dump it all themselves and then gesture for you to head inside, presumably you do so again?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You head inside and suddenly it's almost like you were in Upper London in somewhere that Bertie would feel almost accustomed to.

JAMES

‘Oh this is much better. Where’s your room?’

LYDIA

Down in the basement again probably.

ALEX

Yeah there’s tapestries, carpeting, some stairs, you head up to the stairs and it’s very clear that you’re being lead straight to the whatever room the guy who looked out over the balcony was and they gesture To some very, very worn looking sort of walnut panelled doors. It’s not gold on the door handles but it’s certainly like faux.

BEN

‘I’ve got to say I think it could be, it could have turned out a lot worse than it did so’.

LYDIA

‘You think it could turn out worse than this?’

BEN

‘Yes’.

LYDIA

‘Do you know who these guys are?’

BEN

‘They’re probably criminals of some form, you realise that I’ve been a little bit round the world and seen some of the worst pirates around so let’s stop this whole oh you don’t know what you’re getting into’.

LYDIA

‘Ah right, ok’.

BEN

‘Mercenaries for a reason ok?’

JAMES

‘I thought we’d been taken prisoner by poor people so this is much better’.

ALEX

At which point you know the door opens from the inside, there is what looks to be a butler who is opening the door, he just, he gestures into the room, it’s a large office, again very, very opulently, not golden but it’s like again it has that sort of austere quality though that the man who was looking out on the balcony had.

JAMES

Good quality, well maintained.

ALEX

Good quality, well maintained, no frippery, there's no gilding anywhere, there's a bookcase on one side, very well maintained, some of the books are a little bit tatty but they look tatty with use not miscare. There's a very large desk at the opposite end.

BRYN

What are the books on?

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

BRYN

(rolls dice) Nineteen, twenty six.

ALEX

Pretty much everything like it's a really, really eclectic collection, there's definitely a couple of magical books in there. Also there's something on engineering the mechanics of lightning railway.

BRYN

I got twenty five sorry.

ALEX

Oh you're still more than high enough. Stuff do with, there's a couple to do with healing, mundane healing like it's a really, really eclectic collection.

BRYN

I just you know if I wanted to start a conversation later on an appropriate topic I could pluck something from one of the books to discuss.

ALEX

I'm going to be honest, pick a topic, like I said they look well read. Whoever has been reading these knows quite a lot about quite a lot of things.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

On the far side there's a very small drinks cabinet with you know even without a perception roll Bertie recognises there's a couple of decent wines and some brandy in there, a personal favourite and yeah there's the large desk behind which is sat that man let's call him up close yeah he seems about 50 years old, he seems very calm, almost, umm, gentle like he's not, he doesn't seem to be frowning or anything and he doesn't seem to be putting anything on just very calm. Very, very, very sedate and there's a door off to the opposite side of the bookcase which is slightly ajar but yeah there's two chairs opposite the desk and obviously there's space for all of you, it's quite a large office. 'Do come in Sasha and friends shall we say'.

JAMES

Bertie immediately moves and takes one of the seats.

LYDIA

I sit down.

BEN

Walk in and stay standing.

ALEX

‘Do introduce me Sasha’.

LYDIA

‘This is Bertie, Bertie is’.

JAMES

‘Sir Bertrand MacGuffingham yes hmmm’

ALEX

‘Of Old Bottom?’

JAMES

‘Of Old Bottom ah yes I thought, ooh, do I recognise you?’

ALEX

‘Hmm I doubt it’.

LYDIA

‘This is Hamid’.

BRYN

‘Hamid hi’, anyone who is looking at Hamid much will tell that he is like rigid and he’s normally very relaxed and he’s like, his hands are holding each other very tightly and you can just if you’re, if you’re, you know if you’re perceptive you’ll notice that his knuckles are almost white.

LYDIA

He hasn’t even prestidigitatised his dress to clean it up.

BRYN

No he still looks a bit rough.

ALEX

‘Hmm, Ham... Do you have a surname Hamid?’

BRYN

‘It’s Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan’.

ALEX

‘Hmmm very nice’.

BEN

‘Oh Zolf Smith, no titles associated’.

ALEX

‘And of course our dear Sasha’.

LYDIA

‘I only met them today, they’ve got like, they’ve got, or yesterday I guess, like I’ve got, just they’ve got no reason...’

ALEX

‘A formal introduction would begin with the host’.

LYDIA

‘This is Barret Racket he rules how many floors of’.

ALEX

‘It’s six now’.

LYDIA

‘Six floors of other London. You ever put something down and wonder where it went’.

JAMES

‘All the time, really all the time’.

LYDIA

‘Well most of it’ll end up here, see if there’s anything that you recognise’.

ALEX

Barret gives a really, really benign smile and sort of puts his hands up and gives a little bit of a ooh. ‘So Sasha I did send messengers but they all seemed to come back worse than they left’.

LYDIA

‘Well I sort of assumed that you didn’t have my best intentions at heart seeing as’.

ALEX

‘After everything we did for you, you were very successful Sasha’.

LYDIA

‘Yeah and then you I don’t know, sold me to’.

ALEX

‘I’d never do such a thing’.

LYDIA

‘Like you sent me up to upper London and then’.

ALEX

‘Formalised your education’.

LYDIA

‘And then killed, I, yeah right so you’re such lovely gentle people’.

ALEX

‘What a shame all of those tutors and none of them taught you how to hold a conversation. Well I sadly have to get back to business, you’ll be sad to hear we’re not wanting you back any time soon. What we do want however is we want the will’.

LYDIA

‘The what?’

ALEX

‘Oh yes very clever’. He stands up and goes over to the drinks cabinet walking actually you know very close to you if any of you wanted to try anything you could probably manage.

JAMES

‘I’ll have a brandy’.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

‘Good choice’ he starts pouring himself and Bertie a brandy.

BEN

I’ll just pop my hand on Hamid’s shoulder and seeing he’s obviously not doing very well, sort of in a, semi pat, just a ‘it’s ok, it will be fine’.

ALEX

He comes back with a brandy and puts one in front of Bertie. ‘I know that you, that we made it to the house and had a recce and I know that you know that we were looking for something’.

LYDIA

‘Well I mean I just I saw that things were messed up and I thought I’d take my chances elsewhere’.

ALEX

‘Sasha now your friends do seem lovely people but you have quite a lot of them, we can whittle that down. Where. Is. The will, Sasha?’

LYDIA

‘I don’t, what does it look like, I don’t know what it is like, I don’t know like Marteff he never told me anything he was just like you, you know, just you but in a better suit’.

ALEX

‘Well that’s debatable. Oh Sasha’. He looks around kind of looks to Bertie, to Zolf then to Hamid, lingers on Hamid, sort of leans across with his brandy, Al-Tahan, was it?’

BRYN

I lean over to Bertie, ‘do you mind?’ and I reach for his brandy and you can now finally tell that my hand is shaking and I just, I’ll try and take it from you like obviously I’m not going to like...

JAMES

‘Oh, steady! I, can we have another brandy over here!’.

ALEX

Yeah it raises an eyebrow, gestures to his butler who walks across, fills a halfling sized glass, yeah they have an actual halfling glass and passes it to.

BEN

I’m assuming that the interim is a reasonably awkward silence.

JAMES

‘Wouldn’t want mine old chap, mostly backwash at this point’.

ALEX

Yeah the only one who’s awkward at this point is every apart from...

BEN

Bertie.

ALEX

...Barret and Bertie.

BRYN

I look like I’m about to burst into tears but I’ll take the glass and my hand is shaking quite a lot now and I just drain it and then look at the floor.

ALEX

‘You may not be aware but certain of your party are significantly more well known than others and it would be a shame if they were to disappear. People might come looking but they only look so far, and I’m not accustomed to repeating myself so this is the last...’

LYDIA

‘I don’t know, like look ok I’ll, I’ll, don’t hurt him he’s just he’s not used to this kind of stuff like so we can, I’ll help you, I’ll help you look for it, I don’t, yeah I’ll

go back to the house, I'll look and I'll check I'll unlock all of, all of the safes, I think I know where he was keeping stuff, I just never managed to get in'.

ALEX

He raises an eyebrow, 'Do come in', the door that's opposite to the bookcase opens revealing a figure. They are shrouded in a cloak, completely shrouded in a cloak, in fact it's more like a, like an abbot's gown or something like it has sleeves as well, it's covering the hands, really pulled very far over their head like the person can probably barely see the floor.

JAMES

Height?

ALEX

Height is about 7ft tall and they are gently bending their head to get in the room, they move very smoothly, very smoothly and stand bedside Barret and then he just leans, Barret leans across to the person who leans their head in very gracefully 'Would you be so kind'. The person comes round the table and towers above Sasha and looks down.

LYDIA

I'm sitting down and I assume shaking. Well no actually no even when I'm terrified I don't shake. My body is an unlucky weapon.

ALEX

The figure bends down slightly and then you hear (in a raspy voice) ‘Where is the will?’

LYDIA

‘I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know, I’m not lying to you Barret, do you think, do you think that I could lie to you?’

ALEX

Barret holds his hand up to you.

JAMES

This chap has got an awfully sore throat maybe he could do with a brandy as well?

ALEX

The figure from leaning over again straightens, leans in, whispers something very quietly, Barret nods ‘Hmm, fair enough and the rest? (pause) Hmm interesting I did not expect that’.

LYDIA

‘You know me Barret, I’m useless, I’m not’.

BEN

‘So now that we’re entirely useless I might interrupt but also we’ll be missed and might be quite a lot of trouble to get rid of, why don’t you just let us go on our way and we forget about this?’

ALEX

(as Barret) ‘Well there’s still business to be done I do believe you’re looking for some shall we call them thieves, destructors, I’m not sure what the best term is surely information about them is worth something to you?’

BEN

‘Depends what it costs?’

ALEX

‘It depends what it costs, it depends what you’re offering I mean to have friends in such’ he looks to Bertie and then particularly at Hamid ‘high places I like to think that we could come to some kind of arrangement?’

BRYN

‘Well, er, um, Mr, Mr Barret my resources aren’t what they once were but I’m sure we could arrange something that would satisfy you maybe’.

ALEX

‘Mmm. Mmm. And yourself Master MacGuffingham?’

JAMES

‘Well of course obviously the estate of the MacGuffingham, I’ve fallen on well well loads of money, loads of, hmm, hmm, of course the MacGuffingham name is often enough to extend the longest lines of credits and all of the most well known establishments I have, I would assume that it would be very similar in Other London of course’.

ALEX

‘Well the idea of having such... estimable friends...

JAMES

‘Oh, you!’

(Ben laughs)

ALEX

...and the rest may actually be enough, I would like to think that if I was to extend the communication to yourselves you would be quick to reply, pertinently’.

BEN

‘Again that would have to depend on the nature of correspondence’.

ALEX

He nods. Reaches in and plucks out a wooden box, lifts the lid and you can't see what's inside, he reaches and he plucks out a single just copper band ring 'I would very much appreciate it if you two would be willing to wear this'.

BEN

'That's not what I was asking'.

ALEX

'I didn't realise I was beholden to you Mr Smith'.

BEN

'I thought we were trying to do a deal here?'

ALEX

'We are that's why I am talking to the people who are able to offer me something I want'.

BEN

'Alright so I'll advise them then. If you don't know what it might cost, not a very good deal'.

ALEX

'These are merely a means of communication'.

JAMES

‘Well it doesn’t really go with the rest of the outfit of course’.

(group laughter)

LYDIA

The laugh was not in character.

ALEX

He closes the box, puts it to one side.

BRYN

Hamid just starts very slightly crying, there’s actual tears rolling down his face now.

BEN

Taking a look at Hamid ‘Also Mr Barret as their employer you are dealing with me’.

ALEX

‘A statement Mr Smith, well then it would seem I have a single condition to give you the information you require. However it is a condition, not a negotiable one. A single ring. I believe your friend is perfectly capable of discerning any harmful properties. All I would request is the ability to contact all of you should I require it’.

LYDIA

‘Don’t, don’t do it Hamid he’s got, he’s got collars on people, things that give him lightning shocks like he’s not a nice man’.

JAMES

‘He does seem like a bit of an oily tick to me’.

ALEX

‘My dear Hamid why don’t you just take a look? You don’t even need to touch it’.

BEN

‘Hang on a minute, you just want to make contact, that’s the only condition?’

ALEX

‘And to be, have my messages received in a favourable light. I don’t even require you to listen, I just require you to take the time to receive the message’.

BEN

‘Taken in a favourable light implies an opinion. You can’t control those unless of course there’s something about that ring that you’re not telling us?’

ALEX

‘I do have to say that you can control opinions given enough leverage’.

JAMES

‘Wouldn’t one of you....’

BEN

‘The outward appearance I would say’.

JAMES

‘Wouldn’t one of you magic chaps be able to have a look at this and see if there’s anything special about it?’

LYDIA

‘Hamid, can you?’

BRYN

(shaky breath) ‘Ok, ok’. I take a moment to collect myself, you know my detect magic spell is quite meditative anyway so it’s actually it helps me to go through the pattern of that to just draw myself inwards and take a few deep breaths. I close my eyes and Hamid looks like he is starting to reassert some control and he casts detect magic.

ALEX

Ok so what you discern is the first thing you discern is a glare just a glare from Barret who is just awash with magical items you could take the time to discern but you'd have to be studying the guy and...

BRYN

Which I'm not going to.

ALEX

...I'm not sure Hamid's in that kind of a state but yeah it's very much that to discern the ring you have to deliberately take a point to ignore the quite bright glare from Barret. Looking at the ring itself you are able to effectively discern, can you give me a knowledge arcana please?

BRYN

(rolls dice) Well I rolled as three but I do have seven so that's ten total.

ALEX

Ten you're able to discern that it is not especially powerful and given the things that Sasha was talking about so items that can punish the wearer and things like that they tend to be at the high power end, you're not able to discern.

BRYN

If I study it long enough I can learn the school of magic.

ALEX

Presumably you do so?

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

Because that's going to tell me whether it's likely not certain but likely to be harmful or not.

ALEX

Sure, so studying it you see that it appears to be one for the divination school which for those of you that don't know would make sense to do with the sending of messages, divination actually for listeners to spell out there's obviously these different schools, divination is one dedicated to foresight, the sending of messages, communication.

BRYN

Knowledge.

ALEX

Knowledge, things like that, so it would, it would make sense at least.

BRYN

‘It’s probably not harmful’.

LYDIA

‘I don’t believe anything coming from Barret isn’t harmful’.

ALEX

‘I’ve never been known to lie’.

BEN

‘Tell you what then, how about I put on the ring and I can relay the messages?’

ALEX

‘Oh that’s perfectly agreed’.

BEN

‘Good’.

ALEX

‘Under the assumption of course that you and your subordinates were to stay together’.

JAMES

‘Burgh, urgh. I wouldn’t go that far’.

BEN

'Employees and yes they are bound by a contract'.

ALEX

'Very good'.

BEN

That's a bluff if...

ALEX

Oh right ok.

BEN

Cause, they ain't signed nothing.

BRYN

I'm going to interrupt and go 'no, no Zolf I'm not going to let you do that' and I grab the ring and I shove it on.

(Lydia as Sasha sighs)

ALEX

You have no tangible effects, nothing happens, nothing goes weird.

LYDIA

There's a pause, like I look at you like I expect your hand to blow up. It's almost embarrassing when it doesn't.

BRYN

I struggle to make eye contact with the two of you.

ALEX

'If it's any consultation Hamid I had the pleasure of meeting your father once he was also a very excellent communicator, just the once'.

BRYN

I look puzzled. Much like my actual face is but I have to articulate it...

LYDIA

Describe it.

BRYN

...articulate it out loud.

ALEX

'Well then it seems that it would be fair for me to give you something' he pulls out from a drawer a little bit of parchment and passes it to Zolf. Upon it is written what looks like a very bizarre map, Sasha sees it in the passing and it is very clearly an Other London map where the key covers stuff like layers so it's

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a route that sort of goes up then down, then up, down, down, up, down which to Zolf you've seen one before but...

BEN

I'm not used to it.

ALEX

No not at all it's a very weird way of doing maps, it's perfectly transparent to Sasha 'If you were to follow that you would find yourselves at a compound and in that compound you will find all of the people that you are looking for. Very little happens here that I'm not at least aware of even if I don't condone it'.

LYDIA

'You mean you didn't, you didn't take it?'

ALEX

'Me no'.

BEN

'You probably just supplied the people that did though?'

ALEX

'What would be the benefit to me of a machine that follows orders anyway there's no skill involved in that besides which I find them so lacking in initiative, innovation, improvisation, all the things that you brought Sasha'.

BEN

‘Well given that you know so much do you know they took it?’

ALEX

‘I might but that wasn’t the agreement’.

BEN

‘I was just trying to appeal to your ego but’.

ALEX

(Laughing) ‘Oh that’s a very excellent idea’.

BEN

‘Abyway, our business is concluded, yes?’

ALEX

‘Hmm mm’.

BEN

‘Good’.

ALEX

‘I do hope you have a good time, I will make sure that nothing of yours has been tampered with, you may leave with all of your things of course I am not a monster’.

BRYN

‘Thank you’.

ALEX

‘Oh you’re very welcome and I’ll tell you what a little something for the road Master MacGuffingham’, he gestures to the butler who comes over with the remainder of a bottle of brandy. ‘I hope that you enjoy’.

JAMES

‘Oh cheers’ I’m being handed the whole Tantalus or is that?

ALEX

You’re being handed what’s left of the bottle yeah but the whole thing.

JAMES

Oh lovely alright ‘thank you, kind of you’.

LYDIA

‘You sent a note about, err, Barrett, about, about Brock?’

ALEX

‘Oh goodness yes I almost forgot, I must admit it was a little sweetener to get you here however’ he leans across to the 7ft tall person who has just been stood there cowed he reaches across put its hand on your shoulder and goes (as cowed figure) ‘Brock is in Paris, he is happy, in love’.

LYDIA

‘What does that mean though what does that mean I mean someone doesn’t vanish to become happy what, what does that?’

ALEX

(as Barrett) ‘I’m sorry I fear that you may be mistaking me for someone who’d be quite happy to tell you, frankly I think you should take what you can get. If you’d like you can stay and we can discuss the matter further. You can stay as long as you want Sasha’.

LYDIA

‘I think that I’ll be, I’ll be heading out with these guys’.

BEN

‘Yeah I think’.

LYDIA

‘We’ve got a quest now’.

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BEN

‘Let’s wrap up and go shall we?’

ALEX

‘I presumed as much’ and he gestures for you to leave the office. The butler opens the door.

JAMES

Can we tell anything about the creepy 7ft person?

ALEX

You can give me a perception check.

(dice rolls)

JAMES

Seven minus one is six.

LYDIA

I got sixteen.

ALEX

Nothing at all. It’s a tall person presumably covered in a thing.

BEN

A cowled weirdo.

ALEX

Cowled weirdo. That's an episode title right there!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So yeah you know what I think it's worth calling it there.

BEN

I assume we scurry out, grab our things.

LYDIA

I think we stumble.

ALEX

But yeah so we should wrap up so that was a good one, nice bit of intrigue again so.

LYDIA

A back story feast. Nom, nom, nom terror.

BRYN

I add a magic ring to my inventory.

BEN

A magic ring of unknown purpose.

JAMES

I have some brandy.

ALEX

And while we work out the paperwork I think we'll say goodbye so from everyone here.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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