

RQG – [18] – [Gussets and Staves]

Content warnings:

- Innuendo
- Comedic bullying
- Human remains
- Building collapse
- Explosion
- Discussions of: injury & loss of a digit, intimidation, possession, guilt
- Mentions of: physical violence, childhood trauma, blades, alcohol
- SFX: continuous background chatter, loud explosion

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello again and welcome to episode 18 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me as always, I have

JAMES

James Ross

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

BEN

Ben Meredith

LYDIA

Lydia Nicolas

ALEX

And who are you playing?

JAMES

I am playing Sir Bertrand MacGuffingham. Peasant! Ugh!

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun Al-Tahan. Nice to meet you.

BEN

Zolf Smith, Cleric of Poseidon.

LYDIA

I'm Sasha – my surname isn't really important and these daggers have like nothing to do with what I'm – sorry, am I behind you? I didn't mean that.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

If you look over there, there's something a lot more interesting than I am!

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Something over there?

BEN

Oh I've just slipped this dagger into your kidney, sorry about that.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Oh that was an accident!

ALEX

Now for the listeners, it's only been a week for us, it's been a little bit longer and in that time some pretty interesting things happened. Me and James had Edinburgh shows.

JAMES

We did.

ALEX

And would you care to take over James?

JAMES

Yes, I'd like to say a big thank you to the lovely Sam, the lovely Phil and the lovely Jo who all came to see my show and Alex's show.

ALEX

Yeah, they were all very lovely people.

JAMES

It was lovely to meet you all. You are superb and charming and very desirable to your gender/genders of preference. You seem like lovely people, thank you so much for coming.

LYDIA

And me and Ben would like to thank the people that came along to our things in Ninewells.

BEN

Yes.

LYDIA

Cos we did meet a couple of fans there – all of you were lovely, especially the person I played the Great Train Robbery with.

ALEX

Oh I've wanted to play that one.

LYDIA

Super fun.

BRYN

I have a shout-out too – I don't leave the house, so I didn't meet anyone.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

But Aaron, who you may remember sent us a whole box full of miniatures to represent our combats with sent me my own special customised Hamid Wand and its painted to look like Hamid and it's an actual halfling and it's got a ring.

LYDIA

Wait, I'm taking a photo.

BRYN

It's holding a ring.

LYDIA

I'm taking a photo and I'm gonna put it on the Twitter.

ALEX

Okay, cool and obviously for listeners, we sort of finished our prelim bit of the campaign, the Simulacrum was tracked down, it was discovered to be pretty much destroyed and dumped in the sewers. We traced it back to the Serpentine and one of them, Jeremy, managed to leg it basically with the plans leaving you guys with a scrapbook which having spoken to some high-ups with the Meritocrats have been asked to investigate. Now we're gonna have a little bit of time because obviously people have had money to spend and so on, so what we'll have said is that you guys came out of that police station, you went your separate ways, did some shopping and agreed to meet fresh and early the next morning ready to start your adventures once more and that is where we're picking up. We shall say that you are meeting once more in the square outside the now burnt out remains of Edison Towers. It was a useful place to meet and that's where you've all rocked up and Bertie, yes, you still have your dog.

JAMES

Oh, **unclear 02:51**.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Does anyone like my **unclear 03:00 serve, I mean?** you probably didn't like notice that it's a new...

JAMES

Have you had your hair done? Is that it?

LYDIA

No.

JAMES

Is that what it is?

LYDIA

No.

ALEX

She's got a new suit of armour Bertie.

JAMES

Oh.

ALEX

Look, it's quite shiny.

JAMES

It is isn't it?

LYDIA

Nice leather jacket, all studs and stuff. You know?

ALEX

I think it's very good.

LYDIA

Yeah.

JAMES

I say, Hamid, is that what the young people are wearing these days?

BRYN

No.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! I'm attacking the air with my new bastard sword.

Swoosh.

BRYN

His new bastard sword is quite shiny too!

JAMES

Take that air! Swoosh, swoosh.

ALEX

A bunch of people in the crowd sort of walk past, give Bertie a bit of a worried look and then carry on.

JAMES

Unclear 03:40 That's Hamid? as well! Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

BRYN

Okay Bertie let's heed!

JAMES

Aargh!

LYDIA

No, no.

BRYN

I like my beard so let's leave it where it is okay?

LYDIA

No tables around here mate.

BEN

Anyway, so what next?

ALEX

Well I mean I've been looking through the note book, I've read as much of it as I can and well really I think there's probably six things that we need to look into, so there's this weird seed, there's the piece of strange metal.

BEN

Piece of metal.

ALEX

There's a key to a safe deposit box.

BEN

Key to a deposit box.

ALEX

And there's an origami swan.

BEN

Origami swan.

ALEX

Now the other thing is there's a person in Paris so we're gonna have to go to Paris at some point but that's really useful cos Paris is where most of the major banks – I mean all of the big cities have one or two but Paris has like loads of big banks, all right, so that might be where the safe deposit key is from.

LYDIA

Unclear 04:31 In point seven? we probably need to like look at all those, anyway, is that tracking thing stuck on your hand?

BRYN

You mean the ring that Barret gave me?

BEN

Oh yeah, he's got a present.

BRYN

Yeah.

BEN

Hamid, have you ever considered whether you needed all of your fingers?

BRYN

Yes, yes, I definitely need all of my fingers!

JAMES

Are you absolutely sure? Swoosh!

BRYN

I don't like the way you're all looking at me!

JAMES

Swoosh! Swoosh!

LYDIA

Mate, it's not that hard to get by without one, all right? Like even if your work in role play...

BRYN

Hang on a minute – is that why you ...

LYDIA

I don't think we need to get into the detail of my hands.

BEN

So that'll be a yes then.

BRYN

I never noticed before!

LYDIA

Well, like...

JAMES

I didn't either but that is less of a surprise!

LYDIA

I remove a glove – yeah, the ring finger on my left hand, there is an obvious and quite ugly scar – someone has hacked through and sewn it up quite badly but there's a little prosthetic-y thing at the end of the glove so that even though the rest of it is floppy, that finger looks solid.

BEN

So is that what all the kids are wearing these days?

LYDIA

Yeah, like all the kids that were forced to steal and get imprisoned by their uncle! Yeah, so well it's a fashion amongst us.

BRYN

He was your uncle?

LYDIA

Maybe the details aren't particularly important, right.

BRYN

Oh I assumed Racket was a gang name.

LYDIA

No, well it's both really. Who can you trust apart from your family, I mean like apart from... you can't trust.

BEN

Yeah no you!

LYDIA

Family.

BRYN

What, each other?

BEN

Anyway...

BRYN

I mean look at what we came through.

BEN

Yes, our mercenary band, we can trust them. Anyway. Let's be careful about the ring.

BRYN

Nothing bad has happened yet. I mean if something bad happens we'll deal with it.

LYDIA

It's been a day!

BRYN

Well exactly.

LYDIA

Yeah, you say nothing bad has happened yet but we got sent down to some like – there was a spell guy that'll turn out to be a woman that turned out to be like much richer and more ... we just managed to get away with it cos I managed to stab her in the back which you know, I'm pretty good at but still I got exploded.

BRYN

Also Bertie, chopped that guy in half.

BEN

Okay.

LYDIA

Barret said ...

JAMES

Thank you, you're welcome!

BEN

Let's draw a line under this, that's in the past. What are we doing for the future? Where are we going first?

ALEX

So I didn't finish my list – the sixth thing on the list was an office at the university of Prague, right, so at some point we need to go to Paris and at some point we're going to need to go to Prague and the other four things we can probably, we should probably find out where the best place to go to study them is, cos it might not be London but we can probably decide where to go in London.

BEN

So what's the places then?

ALEX

A bank and ask about the safe deposit key but we could go to queue to ask about the seed. I don't know anyone who knows anything about metallurgy.

LYDIA

So, look, there's someone that like I might know but I'll only take you to him if you agree to also let me look at that ring.

BRYN

Yeah. Good no problem.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I mean it's just ... it's kind of stuck.

LYDIA

I mean I've got a knife right here.

BRYN

No, I don't think that will be necessary.

BEN

Not in a public square, regardless, it's not ...

LYDIA

A lot of us didn't have that option!

BEN

People might notice!

ALEX

I'm wondering if maybe the British Museum or one of the universities we could ask about the origami swan, cos there's like a quote on it as well and I wondered if we can work out if it's from may be a cultural text and that might lead us to where the swan is from.

BEN

So how easy is it to get to your metallurgy friend?

LYDIA

Well I mean friends is like...

BEN

Associate, acquaintance?

LYDIA

Yeah, well I know where he works. He might be a bit surprised to see me but...

BEN

Is it going to be a stabbing surprise?

LYDIA

No, no.

BEN

Then no problem.

LYDIA

Quite the opposite.

BEN

Good.

LYDIA

Which... I often find him a bit more awkward you know?

JAMES

A sheen surprise!

LYDIA

No, like you know when...

ALEX

Cos obviously you walk into his workshop and he instantly shoots you!

(Group laughter)

Crosstalk 08:28.

BRYN

Surely a hug is the opposite of a stabbing?

LYDIA

Yeah.

BRYN

Oh dear.

LYDIA

Never really got how to navigate... look, let's just go.

BRYN

All right.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

Is that where we want to go first?

BEN

Well why not? We might be able to, I don't know, disenchant it or something.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

Or cut your finger off.

BRYN

I made a deal with Barret, I mean.

LYDIA

He's the kind of guy that keeps a deal.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And so, we will yeah, we will cut to you guys.

BRYN

Hamid's slightly scared, worried face.

BEN

That was good, his normal face!

JAMES

De-de-de-dah!

ALEX

So, we follow you guys through the streets of London and you start heading towards a, sort of a lesser upmarket but still ...

LYDIA

Sort of slightly dodgy but still a jeweller's kind of **unclear 09:15**.

BEN

Yeah, yeah, good way of putting it.

LYDIA

It's a reasonably posh-ish area but it's really only still for that kind of trade.

ALEX

And heading into there, you keep walking along until eventually, Sasha stops outside a large building with the words "Gussets Antiques" and it's got a big archway across the door and it's all like filigree lettering. The window, large glass, has been broken – broken in. There are still antiques in the window but a few of them appear to have been strewn about. The front door is open. It appears also to have been broken. There were some bars which appear to have been cut and you see a figure moving around inside – it's too shadowy to see who they are but ...

LYDIA

How big is it?

ALEX

From this distance, you'd have to give me a perception roll to see.

BEN

Serious question – have you been cursed?

LYDIA

Well if someone steals my unclear 10:04...

BEN

Apart from that dice roll.

LYDIA

Yes, I just rolled a 20.

ALEX

It's clearly unclear 10:10.

LYDIA

Yay!

ALEX

For everyone else I'm not even going to bother to get you to roll cos frankly why bother? Sasha you can see clearly it's your old acquaintance and he appears to be sort of hunched over some stuff. It would have been easy to mistake him for a thief but you recognise that ear hair anywhere!

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, Mr Gusset, it's... I'm so sorry, Mr Gusset. I open the door and I run in.

ALEX

No, no, no more, no more, no more, no more – oh – Sasha?

LYDIA

Mr Gusset!

ALEX

My! Sash – come here, oh my goodness! Look at you! You're very sharp!

LYDIA

This is the most awkward hug that anyone has ever seen! I don't want to speak for you – maybe you've seen more awkward hugs! Isn't this awkward on the eye!

BRYN

I shall make cringe roll!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

So, did you cringe well or cringe badly?

BEN

That's for me to know and you to wonder!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So, Sasha is talking to an incredibly short even for a gnome.

BEN

Gnome – I suppose that's why it's awkward.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

I'm kneeling on the floor, I'm hugging him round his shoulders and you know, my head is sort of nuzzled into ... it's a cuddly hug.

BRYN

If he's short for a gnome and I'm tall for a halfling, we might be nearly the same size!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Super-super short wearing basically an apron, a leather apron and what looks like sort of fairly decent sort of shirt/trousers combo underneath but moving inside you can see that the shop's been trashed. Something's been smashed on the floor, there's mirrors been torn down, things like that. There's a couple of holes in the wall – it looks like someone's been punching holes in the floorboards and stuff as well and yeah, Gusset's there holding a broom but obviously has dropped that to give Sasha a big hug.

SASHA

He is also... he's half Chinese and has a massive moustache that he's very proud of.

ALEX

Enormous. Well for him – it's almost normal sized on any other person.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Sasha, oh my gosh, Sasha, what are you doing here? Where've you been? Honestly, I've been sat here on my own wondering. I figured that maybe you'd done a delivery but then you didn't come back so I didn't know what was happening so eventually ...

[sound of knocking]

ALEX

Who are those people? Hello?

BEN

Zolf Smith, pleased to meet you.

LYDIA

This is my new – my new boss I guess Mr Gusset – Mr Gusset, this is Zolf.

ALEX

Charmed I'm sure – what was the name?

BEN

Zolf Smith.

ALEX

That's an interesting surname Mr Smith. Pleasure to meet you and ...

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Who are the others?

LYDIA

Well this is ...

JAMES

I am Sir Bertrand MacGuffingham, unclear 12:36 a delight to meet you tiny man!

ALEX

Oh yes, well that's a grip! That's a grip.

JAMES

Isn't it just!

ALEX

Yeah.

JAMES

Well you can always take the measure of man by his handshake, I always say and you are a tiny man.

ALEX

Yes, yes, Sasha's clearly going up.

LYDIA

He's a gnome Bertie.

ALEX

I want to say up in the world. Who's your final friend?

LYDIA

This is Hamid.

BRYN

Hi, hi, Hamid – nice to meet you.

ALEX

Pleasure. Goodness, I wasn't expecting people. I've been so worried Sasha, honestly, I didn't expect you to be making friends! That's a new one. Hello, goodness me, so I mean how long have you guys known Sasha? I apologise for the mess.

BEN

It feels like weeks. Weeks and weeks.

LYDIA

Three days.

ALEX

Three days, goodness me, look at you coming out your shell finally. I'm very happy for you Sasha, honestly. Take a seat, I'm sure I've got some teacups somewhere.

BEN

At least seventeen different interesting things have happened in that whole time.

ALEX

Oh do tell me. You have to tell me about them in chronological order because that's the best order that there is – and he starts going round pouring tea.

JAMES

Well the scene opened over...

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, forget about me for a second – what's happened to your shop?

ALEX

Oh well you know, I think you can guess.

LYDIA

He came didn't he?

ALEX

Well it was weird – he wasn't after you. He was after some, some paperwork.

LYDIA

He asked me for some as well. I didn't know what it was.

ALEX

Yeah you wouldn't but I mean they didn't find anything useful but ...

LYDIA

Wait, you know what this thing is, you know what it is all along?

ALEX

I might.

LYDIA

He called it a Will, right? You've heard a rumour? Like I don't... he said there was a Will.

ALEX

Oh Sasha, I didn't want you to hear about it. I was deliberately making sure that it couldn't get traced to you love, I'm really sorry.

LYDIA

Look okay, we've got... we're on a mission, a quest I guess.

ALEX

Oh!

LYDIA

There's stuff that we've got to do, there's...

ALEX

Wait – is this one of those good quests or one of those bad quests? Because I've been trying long enough to get you out of those bad quests and the last thing that I want

BRYN

It's a good quest, it's definitely a good quest!

JAMES

It's unclear 14:40 more than a? quest.

BEN

It's a job.

ALEX

Oh a job! Wait – is this a good job or a bad job? Because I know the kind of jobs that Sasha's been involved in in the past and quite frankly, if you Sir are trying to lead her down...

BEN

Probably better than the job she's been doing.

LYDIA

Right, I mean before we get into anything, Hamid's got – Hamid, show him your hand.

BEN

He met Barret.

ALEX

Oh!

BEN

We all met Barret. Who's the weird ghoulish guy he's with? You don't know about him do you?

ALEX

Sasha, have you been telling them that I move in your circles cos quite frankly Sir, I do not move in Sasha's circles – I am merely here to help and expediate those who try to get themselves out of such circumstances and I don't know why you would make such an accusation.

BEN

Yeah, yeah sure, anyway, ring.

LYDIA

Mr Gusset was my employer, he doesn't know ... he doesn't know Other London, right? Well, he trades with people but he's not a Racket.

ALEX

I know enough. Right, come over here.
He pulls Hamid over.

BRYN

Hamid now has a ring on each hand – they look more or less the same.

ALEX

Okay, right, so which one is it? Left or right?

BEN

Halflings and their rings, honestly!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I present him my left hand.

ALEX

Left hand, right. He plonks it on the table and again, things have been messed around and he picks up what looks like a jeweller's eyeglass from the floor, points it out and he goes: mmm, yeah, I've seen this one before. (Sighs) Well I've got good news and I've got bad news – which would you like?

BRYN

Both.

JAMES

The glorious news!

ALEX

I'm sorry but on the bright side, this, I don't know how to do both at once but basically the thing is, is that I mean on the downside, I'm afraid, yes, you're going to have a lot of trouble taking it off. We ran into something similar with Sasha although I'd say that this one's certainly less severe than Sasha's.

LYDIA

I got it off.

ALEX

Yeah, we, yeah.

LYDIA

I take the glove off.

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

I got it off.

ALEX

I would say however that certainly yours seems significantly less permanent so let me just... yeah, okay, so what it looks like...

BRYN

I mean I examined it for magic and it's quite sort of a powerful divination but there doesn't seem to be anything else underneath.

ALEX

Oh forgive me my young lad, I don't think you're quite understanding the situation. The magic's only one way that you can punish people and there's nothing easier than to trap someone who believes magic is the solution to all their problems and use something mundane, no.

LYDIA

All my ring could do was listen and trap me and he's got enough people to make that punishment.

ALEX

He's a big fan of one-way rings and let's just say that those razors can cut can't they? But apparently nothing like that but I would say I assume you can't take it off?

BRYN

No, no.

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

It doesn't come off.

ALEX

He starts applying it – yes, if you're having trouble, it'll be a universal glue I'm afraid. I'd say that it's permanent, it's certainly not like our Sasha had to deal with but I also would say it's going to be quite difficult to remove without a significant chemical lab.

LYDIA

Do you know what it's doing Mr Gusset? Do you know if Barret can hear everything we're saying?

JAMES

Hello Mr Barret, hello! Hello! Wavey-wavey-wave.

LYDIA

If Barret's using us basically as a way of tracking down this stuff, we're looking for something extremely powerful and if there's anyone in the world that shouldn't have it.

ALEX

I'm going to be honest Sasha – I mean I'm not an expert – give me a device, heck give me a magical device and I can probably hug you up, but I mean ... mmm...

BEN

I've got to say, I think you're giving Barret too much credit. We're gonna to go to lots of places round the world and there's gonna be far more dangerous people than Barret there.

LYDIA

He said he already...

ALEX

Oh, there we go! Right, he's taking a couple of notes. Again, it's a good news/bad news. I would say it looks like this is not designed for listening in.

LYDIA

Well that's fine then.

ALEX

Yeah. Bad news is there's no way to stop messages coming from the other end.

LYDIA

That's fine. He can talk to us, we can ignore him, I just...

ALEX

I don't think you understand – Hamid won't be able to – this is kind of quite direct.

BEN

Are we talking a possession-y kind of unclear 18:29.

ALEX

No, no, no, it's certainly – yeah, definitely messages but I wouldn't want that person have a direct line to me – I don't know about you guys, ha-ha.

BEN

Okay, now are we gonna keep talking in sort of vagaries or are you just going to tell us what's going on?

LYDIA

Don't threaten Mr Gusset.

BEN

I didn't threaten, I just asked directly.

ALEX

Oh it's all right – I've dealt with significantly scarier friends than Mr Smith! Ha! No, I would have to say that I expect if Hamid were to speak to Barret, Barret would receive it – if Barret were to speak to Hamid, he'd receive it but I certainly don't expect that Barret could take control or could listen in on other conversations. I think it's very much a one-way communication between Hamid and Barret. Of course if you wanted to then pursue that further I suspect you could probably force some kind of message back the other way but I wouldn't know how to go about that – you'd need quite a lot of willpower.

BRYN

If it's just a communication device it can't be that dangerous.

BEN

Well yeah, yes.

LYDIA

That's fine, so long as in the middle of a fight Barret can't take over you and like you know, get you to put a dagger to our throats.

ALEX

Well I'd say this – he couldn't use magic to compel him to do anything, it'd burn out, it hasn't got that kind of capacity.

BRYN

Also if he wanted us dead, he could have easily killed us so it's probably not going to be his ...

ALEX

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah, he might want us to

BRYN

Can we stop worrying about the ring now and get back to the investigation.

LYDIA

Right, oh but also we've got some metal. Mr Gusset is the best at devices.

BRYN

We should help Mr Gusset. I mean shouldn't we? Is there anything we can do for you?

ALEX

Not really, I mean we knew they were going to be coming. It's not like they broke anything valuable.

To spell out by the way, everything around you looks super-valuable by the way, like proper antiques and not you know Faberge eggs and stuff like that but certainly like delicate glasswork, filigree and very expensive antiques and he's just kind of waving it all off and there's shattered remnants of a 200 year old thing on the floor, and he's like yes, there's nothing really important here honestly, but I was expecting – I'm so sorry to have dragged you into...Yes, I didn't really drag you, you dragged me but we sort of mutually dragged each other didn't we Sasha, I'm so sorry about that.

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, you've always been good to me and I don't have enough to make up for what this and we know who we did it, we're tracking them down.

ALEX

No, don't bother, why bother? Honestly, we know what they were looking for.

BRYN

Can't the constables do anything?

ALEX

Ha, the constables can do anything up to about five feet underground in my experience and five feet in front of their faces – bless them, they do try but that's about all they do if you know what I mean.

BEN

Well in which case, you want to do an appraisal for us and we will give you fair payment, whatever that may be.

ALEX

For Sasha's friends, no, of course, don't be ridiculous. Do show me what it is, come on.

BRYN

I get the piece of metal out and hand it to him.

ALEX

He holds it up, holds it up to the light, spins it, licks a little bit, taps it, puts it down, jeweller's glass. Goodness me, it's been a long time since I've seen any of this.

LYDIA

I told you Mr Gusset was the best.

ALEX

Oh goodness me, now, I haven't seen any of this since the Sarcose Brothers I believe it was – they were the ones who were selling it last time but that was a long time ago – goodness me. What you have here my friends is some true Adamantine – it's been a long time since I've seen that, goodness me.

JAMES

Wow! Adamantine.

LYDIA

Blank looks.

ALEX

Yeah, Sasha, you'll have only really worked up to about Mithra really, and I mean it takes – frankly, I couldn't get the materials for you to learn honestly. Adamantine, no it's an incredibly hard, incredibly sharp metal.

BRYN

And it makes absolutely amazing like armour or weapons.

JAMES

Often used by Dandy Highwaymen who we're too scared to mention!

(Group laughter)

BEN

Ashamed and delighted that that happened!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Oh that took me a while to get!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Brilliant!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Right, let's keep this going shall we.

BEN

Stand and deliver some more information!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Yes, goodness me!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Goodness me, yes, I have to say I mean but this is true Adamantine – I mean the dwarfs, they, let's be honest, they managed to industrialise every other process – they've industrialised Adamantine production but no, I'm talking true, true Adamantine – this is basically first generation construction techniques. I haven't seen this in anything post-Rome. I mean, honestly... let me think ... I mean this is probably gonna be Damaskan. I haven't encountered this as anything post-Rome really, I mean the idea that someone still knows how to make this stuff is absolutely amazing! I mean where did you come by it? Honestly, if I could get hold of some of this stuff, the things that we could make. Oh Sasha, we could make some really glorious things with this. Never wears, never tears. Honestly, I mean it's not particularly flexible but it's quite hard – I mean if we could carry – sorry I'm talking a lot.

BRYN

Well, that's all we have but I mean what we want to know is where it came from and you think it's probably from Damascus?

ALEX

Oh guaranteed. I mean honestly, I mean no-one... you see those walls you see with the drawing process, you get a very clean sheen, but it tends to be slightly weaker for it I find but no, those, with those, with that patterning, it's certainly a Damaskan technique but I mean someone could have gone there, learned how to do it and take the process elsewhere, but as far as I understand it, it requires quite a lot of natural resources to locate it in Damascus so I don't...

BEN

Can you tell how old that is?

ALEX

This? Oh! Mmm... it is interesting.

LYDIA

It was being made into something that was kind of new.

BRYN

Well Adamantine does take magic very easily, I mean it's very easy to enchant it with other magical effects.

ALEX

Oh very much so, in fact it's almost necessary in its working. I mean honestly when you're trying to work it with mundane tools it takes forever. Mmm.

LYDIA

It was definitely... I mean I think it was something that newly designed, right? It wasn't they dug that thing up.

BRYN

As far as we can tell yeah.

ALEX

He reaches out and reaches for a microscope which falls apart in his hands. He goes, (sighs) and then proceeds to incredibly speedily build a new one from basically the remnants of what's on the desk. Mmm... well the funny thing is with the patterning, as often you can tell a lot about the date by the patterning, the patterns tend to change – it's one of the interesting things about Adamantine. This was probably made within the last few years.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Someone's making true Adamantine! Oh Sasha, you ought to take me – oh God that'd be amazing!

JAMES

How can you tell that it was made in the last few years if it's all these fancy patterns and it's something that's not been made for millennia?

ALEX

The process required to make this leaves some distinctive patterns. Those patterns change over time. It's like trees and rings I think.

JAMES

Ah! Now I completely understand!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Basically yes, yes so those patterns can change so you can tell how complex the pattern is determines how old it is.

LYDIA

Mr Gusset is the best teacher. He could even teach Bertie!

JAMES

Bertie has spent the last 20 minutes just flicking his helmet up and down to see how the grills look! Oh!!! That's why he's not been saying very much!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

There's a lot of mirrors here!

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Yes!

LYDIA

Lots of antique mirrors.

JAMES

Hello!

LYDIA

Essentially mind-selfies!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

As a general rule of thumb, the more elaborate the patterning on the Adamantine is, the older it is so I mean I know it looks fairly elaborate but you haven't seen old Adamantine, honestly. Yes, this is...

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, is there anyone we should chase down? It can go on the list Hamid.

ALEX

Honestly, I have no idea Sasha. I mean the best I can say is Damascus. I mean they'd have to ship resources from Damascus to make true Adamantine, you know, it works with such resources.

BRYN

We'd have to find out more.

BEN

I think so.

ALEX

You're going to Damascus?

BEN

Why not?

LYDIA

Yeah.

BRYN

Well eventually – we've got some other places to go first.

ALEX

What are you wrapped up in this time Sasha?

LYDIA

It's a good one Mr Gusset, I'm on the right side this time.

ALEX

Promise me.

LYDIA

I'm here – I'm here by choice – they're not keeping me.

ALEX

Oh fantastic, oh great – he starts pouring tea – goodness me, that is a change isn't it!

LYDIA

Yeah, they haven't enslaved me or anything!

ALEX

Oh God.

BEN

Yeah, I'm even paying her.

ALEX

Yeah I told you things would turn up – I told you things would look up didn't I? Right, okay, well – yes, everyone have some tea.

LYDIA

You're always right Mr Gusset.

ALEX

Oh I know but I don't like making a big thing about it! Now, honestly, yes, you can take that Sasha. If you could bring me back just how they do it – you would make me so happy!

LYDIA

I'll do the best I can Mr Gusset. If there's anyone that can be trusted in the world with that kind of idea Mr Gusset it's you Mr Gusset.

ALEX

Oh well, all right, well.

BRYN

Thank you so for your help, it really was a pleasure to meet you.

ALEX

Before you go though, he sort of totters over to the mantelpiece, reaches up as high he can and it's full sized like human fireplace, looks incredibly old, and then he basically taps two leaves and then a panel slides out from the top and he starts pulling out at what looks like a Burlap sack – it doesn't particularly full. Oh Sasha, could you give me hand, it's very heavy. Anyway he (*groans as he pulls – dush as the sack hits the floor*) and then a sack lands on the bottom and he goes, I wasn't fool enough to leave the important out stuff was I? I mean honestly, I wouldn't be much of a merchant with that kind of logic. Anyway, he starts reaching in, starts reaching in a bit further, starts reaching in a bit further.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Now his feet are poking out from this Burlap sack and he's still reaching in.

LYDIA

I hold the edge of his feet.

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

I've seen him go over-enthusiastic and dive into bags before.

ALEX

Where is it? Right, oh, there we go. Ah! Right, here you go Sasha. And he hands Sasha the following list – Rakefine gave me this to hold for you but I suspect ... mmm, yes given circumstances I should probably pass this on to you. I don't really know much of what it means.

LYDIA

I pass it over to Zolf. I have no idea. I think some of them are famous right? I mean, I haven't spent all that much time top-side but I even recognise some of these. These are big names right? I don't ...

BRYN

Some of them. I've not heard of half of them.

LYDIA

Like, so that...

BEN

Well we know that guy, Tesla.

LYDIA

Yeah, Rakefine was the guy that

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

That Barret sent me to live with.

ALEX

Sad affair.

LYDIA

Yeah, supposedly free but you know, the ring, for the people watching.

ALEX

So yes, there's a few famous names on here that everyone would know, however, Bertie.

JAMES

Hello.

ALEX

So the name J Austin rings a vague bell for you.

JAMES

Mmm.

ALEX

Off the top of your head, it may be someone that one of your aunts tried to set you up with previously or it may have been one of the aunts who tried to set you up with someone else previously. It's all a bit vague. You are aware of ... Nightingale is the name of a hospital in Central London and obviously Tesla – the rest are less well known apart from potentially Sasha – what knowledges do you have again Sasha?

LYDIA

I have only knowledge local.

ALEX

Knowledge local. I'll chuck this one for free just from spending time with Beaming. Basically, Babbage is someone who has been known to be trying to replicate the feats of the French Ordinateurs – he has been working in London, although apparently he's out in Europe somewhere at the moment.

LYDIA

Would I know about Loveless as well then?

ALEX

Yeah, probably – basically, a couple of them have been working to try and emulate them – that's kind of a professional interest from you.

LYDIA

Magical devices, which do you think? Unclear 29:28.

BRYN

Yeah, I recognise a couple but...

LYDIA

It's just a list of names. Did he say anything about...

ALEX

Honestly, not a lot.

BRYN

There's a lot of famous people.

ALEX

Oh my dear man. He looks at Zolf's hand as he's holding the envelope. Now that is interesting. May I? Without even sort of hesitating he reaches out for the ring.

BRYN

Snatch my hand – no you may not!

ALEX

Oh well I mean, could I have a look? I mean I won't touch, I won't touch, pleas? Maybe?

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, can you trust Zolf?

BEN

Looking at what? For the audience's benefit.

ALEX

Sure, so upon Zolf's hand is a ring. Okay? Upon that ring it appears to be some kind of signet ring, very plain, not very obtrusive, however he seems to be reacting to the emblem upon the signet.

BEN

What about it?

ALEX

I've seen that one before my lad.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

As in, well – he looks to Sasha – I mean is it okay he's wearing Rakefine's ring? I mean that's ...

BRYN

What?

LYDIA

Wait! What? That's...

ALEX

I've...

LYDIA

That's my great-uncle's ring?

ALEX

I've seen that design in two places – one of your tutors and in Rakefine and let me tell you, I mean, I know the tutor's all right.

LYDIA

You knew my family all along? And wait, this is just another of Barret's plots isn't it? All of you, all of you are just unclear 30:46.

ALEX

Sasha, get over here right now – he starts standing in front of her – how dare you Sir, you get welcomed in and the first thing that you do is you pilfer, you, you – he starts reaching in for the bag for something.

BEN

Are you quite done?

ALEX

No! Where is it for goodness sake.

JAMES

Bertie leans in and just picks him up.

LYDIA

Wait, wait, wait. Are you saying that he stole this from you? I don't think Zolf would do that but I don't... how have you ... did you know my family before Zolf?

BEN

No, this did not come from anywhere near London. This came from my home town, I don't know whoever originally owned this ring got it from but...

ALEX

Politely, may I please have a look at the ring without touching it to determine whether it is in fact the ring of my late friend and Sasha's benevolent benefactor.

BEN

Since you're making a damn fuss about it, I suppose.

JAMES

Bertie then like moves.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Here comes the airship! *(imitates sound of landing aircraft)*

LYDIA

Be respectful!

ALEX

You know what? I'm gonna have a break there as the aeroplane comes in to examine the ring and we will re-join you in a couple of minutes.

And welcome back. So, yes, beaming Gusset was just looking into that ring.

BEN

So I'm reluctantly holding my hand out to him and kind of giving him...

BRYN

Both of you really.

BEN

Both you and Sasha really.

LYDIA

And this is while the ring is suspended from Bertie's hand, swinging slight in the breeze.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Well yes, I mean could you do me a favour? Could you sway your hand with – yeah, thank you.

JAMES

Imitates swaying sound. Paused in mid-flight.

LYDIA

Just a bit of respect Bertie, okay?

ALEX

Right well...

JAMES

He's in first class.

ALEX

Now just accepting the situation, beaming, puts the eyeglass back into his pocket and just goes, I owe you an apology Sir. That is definitely the wrong size. I did have to check and I apologise, obviously, I mean we're both a bit shaken up obviously with everything that's happened ever so recently, and a lot of new people turning up and obviously my shop's been trashed so I just, I

think I lost track of the situation there, I'm very sorry but do you happen to know the history of the ring at all or?

BEN

No.

ALEX

Well.

BEN

And I don't care.

ALEX

Okay, well fair enough. May I stand now Mr MacGuffingham of old Botham.

JAMES

Sir Bertrand to you.

ALEX

Yes, yes.

JAMES

Coming into land (*imitates roar of plane engines*) oh is the runway clear?
Whoa!

LYDIA

Just a little bit of respect right? Just he's a good friend and mentor.

JAMES

There will be a trolley service coming around unclear 33:19.

LYDIA

Bertie, I don't even know what that means.

BEN

Thank you Mr Gusset for your time.

LYDIA

Yeah, you've ... thank you, like I would have had to chop off Hamid's hand.

ALEX

Sasha, come here, come here.

LYDIA

Going for another hug.

ALEX

He then starts pulling towards a back room.

LYDIA

Oh, right, no, stumble along.

(Group laughter)

Unclear crosstalk 33:38.

(Group laughter)

BEN

We'll just wait here then will we?

JAMES

I hope you had a pleasant trip of MacGuffingham Airways and you'll choose MacGuffingham again!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

He closes the door and goes, I'm just checking – you are all right? Everything's okay?

LYDIA

Yeah, like it's you know, it's what I'm good at and they're not forcing me to stick around, and I guess that's what kind of makes me want to stick around, it's the first time I've actually been asked if I want to do a job, you know? I mean you never forced me to stay here, but it was, you know, he suggested it and it worked out.

ALEX

I am happy for you. Listen, one moment – he reaches over to a chest of drawers which is kind of on one leg and been trashed, he then reaches out and twists three of the handles and then pulls out the drawer underneath which is suddenly significantly larger than the drawer should be for underneath, reaches in, pulls out another bag, another burlap sack which is comparatively empty and just hands it to Sasha. If you're going travelling I think you're gonna use this more than I am. I think you'll find it more than adequate for your travelling needs. You've always been a light packer, ha.

LYDIA

I take it, open it.

ALEX

It seems peculiar, like the folds of sack-cloth, it seems like you're having a bit of trouble getting, finding the bottom of it, it's very fuffy, do you know what I mean?

LYDIA

Right, I think I won't check it in front of him, that's looking a gift horse...

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

That's rolling up a perception check on a gift horse!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Anyway, he passes it you and then he closes that sort of secret drawer again and goes, right, well...

LYDIA

Mr Gusset, is there anything I can do? This is my fault, they smashed everything because I ran away.

ALEX

Oh Sasha, it's not your fault. Some things happen and they're not your fault and you just get swept up in them Sasha, honestly, I mean goodness knows, I've been here long enough and you're still helping me but that doesn't mean that I'm somehow the cause of your problems and you're a cause for mine.

LYDIA

I get it Mr Gusset, it's fine.

ALEX

Right well there we go.

LYDIA

They're good people. I'm gonna go back to them. I'll let you know if we learn how to make Adamantine. I'll send you sketches of some of the cool devices that I take apart.

ALEX

Do, it'd be fantastic and he reaches over to the door, stops and turns around – and if you ever need it, I've seen that armour before, if you just apply a little bit of pressure to the right knee plate, you can cause that leg to lock. You know? Just FYI.

LYDIA

Good to know.

ALEX

He opens the door and ushers her back in.

BRYN

Whilst they're in the back room, Zolf, are you okay?

BEN

Absolutely fine, thank you Hamid.

BRYN

Are you sure?

BEN

Yep! Not everyone's so keen to talk about their past as Sasha is so, thank you for **unclear 36:00 leaving it?** .

BRYN

Okay, yeah, if that's better. That's just, okay.

JAMES

I on the other hand am delighted to talk about my past at any available opportunity. Do you remember that time at university when I threw you over that fence?

BRYN

Yes, probably a lot better than you do Bertie.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Do you remember that other time that I threw you over that fence?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And Sasha returns with Gusset – remember, right knee lock. Okay, so well, I think that's everything covered.

LYDIA

Right, so what's next?

BRYN

Well may be... what's here? I mean the queue's a bit far, but may be the bank or the British Museum – do you think the Museum would be better than one of the universities?

JAMES

Oh, you know, I did once remember meeting – I think there was somebody at the British Museum, think Bertie, think – you met him at a party – hang on, one second chaps, I'm just gonna go into a mind shed!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

That does seem more appropriate!

JAMES

Aargh... unclear 36:59 and compost.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

There's a hole.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Argh, what.

ALEX

I'll just make some more tea while we wait.

BEN

Bertie, do you know what a mind thingy is? I suppose it'd be a memory aid, not a literal...

JAMES

Hang on, I can't hear you – the walls of the shed are really thick.

ALEX

Right, we'll jump the five minutes it takes for Bertie to finally come to a conclusion.

JAMES

I know someone at the British Museum.

ALEX

Really?

JAMES

Well I met him at a party once. Seemed like a nice man – he had a face ...

BRYN

So the museum next then or the bank?

Unclear 37:36 crosstalk.

BEN

Wander round the museum, see if you recognise anyone.

JAMES

Yes.

LYDIA

We can go to the clocks and clockwork exhibition.

ALEX

Oh they've got a new exhibit – it's really interesting this. They've found magical water clocks where the clocks drip up but it actually keeps better time.

LYDIA

That's extraordinary.

ALEX

I know!

LYDIA

Like what kind of water do they use?

ALEX

That'll just go on. We'll go ahead and assume that you guys have finished this conversation – I'll let you guys wrap up.

LYDIA

I think we're dragged away from it.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Sure, in which case are you heading to the British Museum then?

JAMES

Yes.

BRYN

Yes.

ALEX

Okay, so yeah, you guys head on to the British Museum – you guys head through the city and you work your way across till you're heading into the museum district, by which I mean enormous, enormous, enormous, enormous, enormous buildings and they're sort of few and far between with some parks and stuff between. Eventually you make your way to the British Museum, large column structure, big dome and wings off the left, wings off to the right, it's a big place, you could probably get yourself lost in there quite quickly if you wanted.

BEN

So the British Museum.

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

Do you know whether curators hang out?

Unclear 38:39.

BRYN

There'll be an office probably at least but we should go and ask there and maybe we'll recognise this friend of yours.

JAMES

They had a face.

BEN

Lots of people have faces.

JAMES

Hang on, so if I move the ceramic pots, unclear 38:55.

ALEX

We'll say that you're moving into the museum as this is happening.

BEN

As the mind shed exploration.

ALEX

There is a desk at the front, a large set of staircase at the far end of a big hall and effectively there is – think of it as an information desk with a little clerk behind it. He looks up, looks at all of you wearily, looks at Bertie, squints, then goes – oh – puts a finger up for a moment – and then just runs off!

LYDIA

What did you do to the clerk Bertie?

JAMES

Unrest him by looking fabulous!

BEN

Are we in trouble or is that a good one?

BRYN

I think that was probably a good thing.

BEN

What did you do to this curator at the party?

JAMES

Well you know, there was port, it was passed to the left and you know, when you have a circle of one person, it goes around surprisingly.

ALEX

Sir Bertrand! At which point a large well-dressed man, not as over the top large as Bertie is, but nonetheless well fed and fairly broad shoulders striding, he's wearing a suit, like a proper suit, sharp, very well made, spectacles which are on a chain around his neck. Sir Bertrand! Goodness me! To think one of the old bottom clan back in the British Museum at last, such a pleasure, such a pleasure.

JAMES

Ah well of course learning is such fun, so I thought what better place to do some learns than the British Museum.

ALEX

Goodness me, yes, honestly, I must confess, you were so far gone I didn't think you'd remember me from that party but clearly...

JAMES

Oh perish that thought, of course no, I remember everything with crystal clarity.

ALEX

Do introduce me.

JAMES

The crystal in question is decanter crystal and is much more visible cos there's no port in it, but with that said.

ALEX

Well naturally. So who are your friends? Do introduce me.

JAMES

Oh, so here of course we have Zolf Smith.

BEN

Pleasure.

JAMES

He is cleric of Poseidon and here we have my old university chum, Hamid.

BRYN

Hamid, nice to meet you.

ALEX

Pleasure to meet you young man.

JAMES

And of course this young lady is Sasha Racket.

ALEX

Oh pleasure to meet you.

LYDIA

Hi.

ALEX

And I'm Elijah Wormwood, yes, pleasure – he kind of looks awkwardly.

JAMES

Of course Wormwood doesn't barely need saying of course, we all know precisely how Elijah Wormwood is.

ALEX

Well yes, quite obviously. Give me a diplomacy check to see – a bluff check sorry, to if he evens buys that.

BRYN

13 plus 1, 14.

BEN

Does he get a flattery bonus?

BRYN

Pomp and pageantry!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

We'll give you the pomp and pageantry plus ...

BEN

That would make it 15.

ALEX

Yeah, he looks a bit confused for a moment then goes, oh yes, of course, of course, yes! I mean obviously yes, ignore me, ignore me – goodness, well you'll be wanting to see the... you'll be wanting to see the old bottom wing presumably – right this way.

LYDIA

The old bottom wing? You've got a wing? You can fly?

(Group laughter)

BEN

I think they mean a large part of the building!

JAMES

It was a bequest my great-grandfather to the British Museum, of course he ran out of places to keep his bootie.

ALEX

Fascinating man.

JAMES

Yes, and really a most prodigious bootie.

LYDIA

Is all that junk outside of trunks?

JAMES

It did and well it was in trunks and then it was moved from the trunks and put on display.

ALEX

Goodness me, the fact that he stored these things in trunks, honestly, treasures beyond imagination.

JAMES

Yes.

ALEX

And he's putting them in trunks.

JAMES

So now the bootie is on public display for all to see.

LYDIA

Seeing masses of bootie.

BRYN

I mean yes, we'd love to have a quick look but we did come to consult you about something and I mean Bertie mentioned your expertise and we were hoping you might just take a look at something for us.

ALEX

Oh of course.

BRYN

May be we should see the wing first?

ALEX

Walk and talk young man, walk and talk. He starts walking. So, do...

BRYN

I'm struggling to keep up.

ALEX

Yeah, he has a – what he...

BRYN

Professor **role**, his stride.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, very, very sort of “strideful” movement, very “swoosh”, quick nonsense. So do talk to me, yes – what seems to be the problem young man?

BRYN

Well you see we found ...

ALEX

Keep to the left.

BRYN

This is – oh yeah – this, this – and I present him with the origami swan.

ALEX

Fascinating. Mind the pipe – he ducks.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I don't!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Wait for it – clunk!!!

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Oh!

BRYN

Well we just wondered you know, where it might be from – do you see there's something written on it as well and I thought maybe that was significant.

ALEX

Oh yes, thank you for reminding me not to forget your culture – it's like the appropriation, it's not what we're really into here but nonetheless, okay, interesting right. Well the paper's thin-ply. This is right and interesting, yes, watch the stairs and, yes, it's probably Japanese origin, it's sad that it's such a mundane answer but you can tell by the paper you see – it's a single ply rice.

BRYN

Are there multiple islands, so could it be you know, made more specific to one of the regions maybe?

ALEX

Honestly, I'm looking at kind of this – I mean you've noticed the water mark presumably?

BRYN

Oh no I hadn't.

ALEX

He definitely unfolds it – he's actually got very, very quick hands for someone so large and holds it up to the light and you can see that it has – imagine you had one of the Ying-Yang symbols – except you removed the black half so it's just the white half, like a drop and that's encased in a circle but a sort of wider circle so you don't sort of have that Ying-Yang symbol – interesting, argh, the water mark means nothing to me but honestly, with that kind of industrial processing you're looking at this kind of ply, you're looking at either mainland Japan or Hokkaido, it requires certain industrial complex in order to be done.

BRYN

Okay well...

ALEX

It's certainly not of any kind of ancient origin.

BRYN

Of course, yeah, no. Clearly not.

ALEX

Oh and Squiddick.

BRYN

Oh really.

ALEX

That's not something you see every day, fascinating, well there you go – make of that what you will, I hope that helped.

BRYN

Ah thank you.

ALEX

Here we are. He gestures to a big set of double doors which are currently closed and there's the old bottom family seal of the three Maltese Falcons.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Above the doorway. Without further ado, he opens the door and pushes it aside and the first thing that is staring at you is an enormous tank in the middle of a room.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

It's cylindrical, full of green liquid and has the most hideous abomination – it looks like someone tried to build a human out of all of the bits of dead human it could find that was about two times the size of a normal human pickled in the middle of the jar, just floating there.

LYDIA

Oh God, Bertie were you parents necromancers? What is that?

BERTIE

More romancers than necromancers!

ALEX

Oh you like our flesh Golam? Yes, yes, quite the draw it has been in the past. I mean we've had to close the exhibit recently just you know, not much footfall as there once were but nonetheless, very impressive and if you just follow me – he starts walking round now – and actually you'll see some of these are very interesting, some things from the Parisian catacombs that are quite interesting. He gestures to a sort of clay jar on the wall – it's said that the bandit Lords are still locked in there, goodness me, that was an interesting...

JAMES

Oh bandit Lords, knock-knock.

ALEX

I would not do that if I was you.

JAMES

Sounds to me you...

(Group laughter)

BEN

High class detect magic?

ALEX

Okay, you encounter an enormous amount of magical energy from most things in the room and anything that doesn't have a big powerful glow to it has a residual glow to it. Of particular note is the next things that he references – you see a pair of staves which are next to one and other right next to that part and he goes, that'll be the cackling wrath and dark flame, the two staves of the **Cythian** sisters, goodness me, those were a problematic pair as I understand it! Ha!

BRYN

Hamid's eyes are just getting wider and wider as he's struggling to cope with all the ridiculous things.

BEN

Quite a heritage you've got here.

ALEX

Oh yes, I mean that'll be from the Mediterranean exhibition, I mean it's smaller than it once was – we've got some things out on loan you see and over here we have the Egyptian arrow, quite interesting, it's said that this is the cursed jewelled shawl of Nefertiti herself.

LYDIA

Sasha's hands are shaking!

ALEX

Oh I wouldn't if I was you my dear, the very thought of putting on something that would suck the life out of me and pass it to the next wearer, no I don't think I'd be wearing that anytime soon, goodness me!

BEN

Well how does that work?

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

What, it leapfrogs wearers?

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

No, no, no, no, no. The first person who wears it dies, the next person who wears it gets double life.

LYDIA

Ah.

ALEX

But if they take it off they die.

BEN

How many people have worn it?

ALEX

Oh I don't know – care to chance your luck ha! Don't touch it. I'm being very serious, it's incredibly dangerous and that's why there's a velvet rope.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I know something, I'm keeping out when I see it.

(Group laughter)

BEN

And a small discreet sign thing.

BRYN

Please do not touch!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

He works his way round and you'll see ensconced in another part of the wall an enormous crystal with a hideous looking woman with her hair is all splayed out behind her, she doesn't appear to have much in the way of legs yet she has arms reaching out for the person who's viewing encased in crystal, oh yes.

JAMES

Grandpa used to have this as a paperweight, got rid of it, minging thing, I mean look at it!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Oh yes, I mean that's actually the banshee from the Parisian catacomb, very, very impressive, I mean honestly God knows how he put it in a crystal, but you know he was brilliant and you know what they say, the old bottoms, they're a smart lot eventually.

JAMES

Yes, yes, no we're known for our intellect.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Yes!

BEN

Yes!

JAMES

Our intellectual prowess is widely renowned, if ambiguously.

ALEX

There is himself, the man himself, Sir Everard MacGuffingham – and he points to like a final encasement and there's a full sized statute of man wielding a sword, big shield, stood there, mid-battle ground, big scream in his voice.

LYDIA

Wait, wait, wait – are we sure this is just a statute?

BEN

What, not just his like petrified corpse?

LYDIA

No, not just like someone in really good disguise.

BEN

Ah!

BRYN

It does look just like you Bertie.

JAMES

Quite the family resemblance isn't there! Aarrgh!!! Look, look, this is me, and this is him – look, Aarrgh.

BRYN

Sasha has got a point – if we put that in a pond it would be almost ...

LYDIA

Exactly.

BRYN

You wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Again, I'm not particularly comfortable – you saw the velvet ropes didn't you?

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Yes, also the very powerful magical barriers around everything in this wing.

ALEX

Well you know, we have to keep some things safe. I mean ultimately the security's not what it once was but it's ... we lock it down at night, you know – he kind of stands next to Bertie, looks back to Bertie, looks back to Sir Everard on his plinth – you know, you have got a certain air about you now with the armour.

JAMES

Mmm.

ALEX

Brings a smile to my face like history's come alive.

JAMES

Ugh, I'm alive, ahh!

ALEX

Oh goodness me, yes ha-ha-ha, that's very funny. So yes, I have to say I'm very impressed with your enthusiasm which actually leads me on to ... I have to say (*whispering inaudible 49:28*). There is some basic maintenance, I mean if truth be told your friend's quite right – we did once have little magical barriers which

we can't really maintain, we can't afford at the moment. Anyway, we're just overdue ... I mean I'm sure it's fine obviously but just to make you aware.

JAMES

I'm sure it's a simple clerical error. I shall discuss this at good haste with my lawyers and not a problem at all.

ALEX

That's fine, I mean we accept cheque as well so I mean do feel free, I mean we can process it on site if you'd rather.

JAMES

I must have left my cheque in my other incredibly glorious falcon encrusted armour – pats himself down.

(Group laughter)

JAMES

Where, where did I leave it? Was it under the plant pots next to the trowels.

ALEX

I mean the thing is, I'm going to be honest.

JAMES

I'm just having a think.

ALEX

The money was actually required to fund Carter's latest expedition and you know what with the maintenance, the prior payment before that didn't actually make it through either.

JAMES

Oh!

ALEX

Mr MacGuffingham, I do hate to put you in this position Sir, but ultimately we may be required to disband the exhibition.

JAMES

Oh, oh well.

ALEX

Obviously I wouldn't want to do that, I mean apologies, apologies, I don't mean to show up your good friend here in front of all you like this.

BEN

It's all right, no damage done.

JAMES

A simple clerical error requires no embarrassment whatsoever of course, you know I'm sure that the gentlemen and lady would be very interested in just standing in this room and looking at things while we perhaps go off slightly further away.

ALEX

Yes, very well. Oh.

LYDIA

Sasha goes over to the weapon rack and stands with big eyes!

BEN

I go and study the two magical staves I saw earlier.

ALEX

Okay, as you go over to the magical staves you see your dog, which has followed and the curator didn't seem particularly bothered – it's sniffing around at the staves and it's sniffing around the base of them.

BRYN

Oh dog, no, no, don't dog!!!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Dog come, come here dog.

ALEX

The dog proceeds to ignore Hamid entirely! Mr Bertie...

JAMES

Good dog, good dog come here.

ALEX

The dog proceeds to sort of nudge one of the staves and it starts to topple. Argh, oh dear!! Oh dear!!!! Oh dear!!!

BEN

Don't leave it and catch it.

ALEX

Give me a reflex save.

JAMES

4 plus 1 is 5.

ALEX

5, so yeah, the stave begins to fall – you reach out to grab it, fumble, the thing clatters on the ground, there’s an enormous boom.

Boom!

ALEX

And a section of wall appears to not be there anymore. Specifically, the section right next to the vase or vase, depending where you’re from – bits of masonry start falling down, the curator starts panicking – oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! What have you done? What you have done? What you have done? What have you done? The vase then falls and shatters.

Shattering

ALEX

At which point, a large cloud of smoke starts coming out of it.

BRYN

Oh dear.

ALEX

This is bad! This is very, very bad! Everybody out of the room! Out of the room! Out of the room! Out of the room! The curator starts walking – I say walking – running to the main doors – good idea to get out of the room now, good idea to get out of the room now – he just steps out and doesn’t wait for you all.

JAMES

Good plan!

LYDIA

Yeah, we run out, well I run after him.

BEN

Yeah, I'll totter out of the room.

ALEX

And with a mysterious cloud of smoke beginning to spiral around the broken vase or vase, as the chunks of masonry continue to fall from a blasted outside and the curator having a bit of a panic outside and you guys fleeing – I think we'll end it there for the rest of the week!

LYDIA

Bye!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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