

RQG – 21 – Garden Party!

Content Warnings

- Spiders
- Intimidation
- Alcohol
- Physical violence & injury (inc. towards animals)
- Emetophobia
- Swarms
- Discussions of: food, death (inc. animal death)
- Mentions of: drugs, mould, blood, bombs, fire
- SFX: animal noises, crickets & chittering, loud screaming, ticking

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 21 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

BEN

Ben Meredith

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

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JAMES

James Ross

ALEX

And what character are you playing?

JAMES

Sir Bertrand “Bertie” Macguffingham hitter of things.

LYDIA

Sasha Rackett, grabber onto and rider of things

BEN

Zolf Smith, cleric, player of order

BRYN

Hamid the Halfling Sorcerer, currently very embarrassed by his friends.

ALEX

Oh it’s all very awkward. So we let you...

LYDIA

Dancing in the street!

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ALEX

Literally dancing in the street.

JAMES

Have you seen the video for that!

ALEX

But in full plate armour and with one leg.

JAMES

I will show the video of that. It is the least convincing bisexuality you have ever seen.

LYDIA

So your homework is to pull up the video for Dancing in the Street but imagine them in full plate armour and with one leg and in one of them is a cringing halfling.

ALEX

See I had big news and I can't top Dancing in the Street. What am I going to do?!

JAMES

Go away and make it more impressive and then come back!

ALEX

So we've actually hired both of them to come...no, so we are actually in the process of developing two...not one, two new podcasts.

(cheering)

Yeah and it's all off the back of basically all of the people that we've been thanking because you were great and it meant that we could grow and that's what we're doing. So I can't say anymore because of that's the way things roll but I just thought you'd want to know.

BEN

What a teaser!

ALEX

I know! But what I can say is one of them is going to be based in the TV and film category of iTunes and one of them is a horror based little bit of a podcast but we won't go into more than that

(drum roll noise)

But yeah, something to be...

LYDIA

That one's the Bertie spinoff.

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JAMES

Bertie the human statue!

(laughter)

ALEX

So where we left off you guys had picked up Beaming Gusset and got a more info regarding the metal, specifically finding out that it's **damascene adamantine** piece. You also hit up in no particular order, the British Museum which is where you, after a bit of faffing with some lawyers and skeletons...not the same things, you manage to find out that the origami is almost certainly from Japan. Couldn't get more specific than that which is fair enough. Went to the Tahan branch...

LYDIA

And we picked up a package to...

BEN

P-p-p-p-picked up a package

JAMES

To P-p-p-Paris

ALEX

Oh yeah and then there was the worries that it was some post Paris power.

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BEN

Yeah essential post Paris.

ALEX

That's the one. So after...

JAMES

Scenes of mild Paris

(laughing)

ALEX

So after that you then hit up the Tahan branch and stumbled into an old friend, by which I mean an incompetent enemy.

(laughing)

BEN

Who lasted all of about a quarter of a session.

ALEX

Well I'm going to be honest, would you have expected any more from him?

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BEN

No!

ALEX

But it did provide a useful distraction so that you could find out that the keys can definitely be traced to Cairo and you weren't expected to hand it in because you bamboozled everyone.

LYDIA

Yeah with my wonderful charisma.

ALEX

And with a sad little once birthday gift for Hamid released, you stumbled out into the street and what I'll do...

BRYN

Just remind me how much I disappointed my parents

ALEX

Yeah. We'll skip ahead. We'll say that you guys got some food and slept off your various problems as far as you could and have reconvened the next day.

BEN

With hangover?

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BRYN

Brutor will be gradually regenerating him

ALEX

Brutor we'll be regenerating him. Ben give me a roll for a hangover

BEN

I roll a 25 for hangover.

ALEX

We'll say that that means that you're not having much of a hangover rather than the most powerful hangover.

LYDIA

Do I heal overnight?

ALEX

You regain your level in hip points. If you have dedicated care, I mean around the clock care, you can regain double your hip points and obviously there's healing which Zolf could've burnt through before he reset for the day.

BRYN

He was too drunk.

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BEN

I was far too drunk.

LYDIA

And I bruised my shins. I think I can deal with that overnight.

ALEX

Ok. Well then. What next? You guys have reconvened, maybe over a hearty breakfast where Zolf is looking not so bad as he could've done. Let's say in a tavern. You're having a tavern breakfast.

BRYN

So the one thing we said we had left before we go to Paris is the seed and we said we might go to Kew Gardens

ALEX

Yes

BEN

I love a jaunt out to the countryside.

BRYN

They do a lot of horticulture out there. They might know a bit more about it.

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LYDIA

Never been there. I mean there's not many...not many buildings around...it sounds like a garden

BRYN

That's why it's called Kew Garden.

LYDIA

That's fine...

BEN

It's 15 miles away so we'd probably need a cab unless anyone can drive a carriage

JAMES

Well very nearly. No, I nearly bought one yesterday but no.

ALEX

Smash cut to Bertie having a whale of a time driving a carriage that you've already rented and you're well on the way to Kew Gardens.

JAMES

Weeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Dribbling spittle behind us. Just got this slipstream of dribble coming out behind the carriage.

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BRYN

Inside the character. He's not actually bad at this.

LYDIA

So, like, how...how far away from London are we going? I mean there's still...there seem to be some space in between the buildings now.

BRYN

You're going to get me not a city...

LYDIA

Do you think...I mean, it just feels like a bit of a waste, there's so much space, there could be things there. You know, there could be alleys.

BRYN

Sasha you know you wanted to get out of London. You know most of the world isn't a city

LYDIA

It's fine. I know. It's...

BRYN

Just wait till we get to Cairo, I'll show you the desert.

(laughing)

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Wait till we get to the sea where it's all flat.

LYDIA

Ok guys, alright, alright, alright, fine.

BEN

The sea's not very flat, it's up and down.

LYDIA

Well it sort of moves. Ok I knew that. I knew that it moved. I want to...I want to see these things. It's fine.

BEN

It'll be fine. It's not as bad as it sounds. Except for the heat

JAMES

Oh yeah and the death.

ALEX

And you pull into Kew Gardens. Pulling up to the...

JAMES

Bertie does a very impressive reverse three point of turn just showing off.

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ALEX

In a carriage

JAMES

In a carriage

ALEX

That's really impressive! You give me a handle to pull off a three point turn in a carriage.

BRYN

Attempting the three point turn in the first place automatically triggers it.

JAMES

12 plus handle 6 plus ...that's 19.

ALEX

19. You're not making me love it but neither is it the most flawless thing ever. There is loads of ho, what a space. How would someone fit into this space ha, ha, ha. Just with a...

JAMES

Quite adequately is the answer to that question.

ALEX

So yeah you pull up to the meritocratic botanical gardens. There's a few people. Obviously there's no one particularly hard up who's having a wander around here but you're in a fairly green area. There's sort of lush parkland to the left and right of you, little bit more open space behind you and then large buildings of the botanical gardens with some huge greenhouses off to the left hand side. The righthand side being more sold brick...it looks like it's a converted manor house or something similar and yeah, that's where you are. And up the steps you see a face you recognise. Give me a perception roll?

JAMES

Who could it be?!

BEN

I don't know

JAMES

9

BRYN

21

LYDIA

18

BEN

16

ALEX

Hamid and Sasha you recognise a certain person in a white coat which he insists on wearing all the time.

LYDIA

Red and blue stripes

(laughter)

ALEX

You see Colgate going up the steps.

BRYN

Ooh Bertie it's your friend Colgate.

JAMES

Oh, oh Colgate I only just noticed that there is in fact a garden.

ALEX

Sir Bertrand do come.

JAMES

Oh love to see it, blah, blah, blah.

LYDIA

For as long as possible I keep my back to the vehicle and sort of look around, scouting about and then run, almost narrative style like, up to the group and then trying desperately to keep my back to a surface. Bertie being the surface.

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BEN

You can put my jacket over your head if it makes you feel more comfortable

LYDIA

Thanks Zolf. You're a real...a real star you are. A real help.

ALEX

Good to see all of you. What are you doing here then today?

JAMES

Well Colgate, well we found this fascinating thing and we were hoping to consult your quite substantial wisdom on the matter. You're a noted expert in the field so I thought wave it under your nose, let you have a sniff. Sniff the biscuit...it's not a biscuit but...

BRYN

We're here for a horticultural consultation

JAMES

Horticultural consultation and we thought who might we consult on horticultural matters.

ALEX

And of course you concluded Mendel yeah?

JAMES

Yes Mendel of course yes, that was of course...

ALEX

Give me a bluff check?

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JAMES

11 total

ALEX

He's not a stupid man. No. Yes...quite. So, yes I'm actually going to see Gregor myself. Anyone else? Are you all here for the same reason?

BEN

Yeah we're still a team. Just like we were.

ALEX

Excellent. It's good to see you again Zolf by the way you did some good work.

BEN

Oh it's no problem. How's Bryon doing?

ALEX

He's alright. He's taking a European constitutional.

LYDIA

Oh right

BRYN

What's funny?

JAMES

Oh well you know when Byron takes a European consistorial...European constitutional it's means he's taking some opium near some opium

(laughing)

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BEN

Basically is he going to take that nearby opium after he's taking the current opium

JAMES

The opium is very much a route to further opium when it comes to Byron. Basically if there's a sentence describing what Byron is up to, if you substitute all of the verbs and nouns in for the word opium

(laughter)

You're probably right.

ALEX

I'm going to be honest he keeps insisting they have medicinal properties but I have to be quite frank, they don't. They really, really don't. Honestly. They don't. Just don't. Just stay clear.

BEN

He's not dead yet!

JAMES

To be fair opium is an excellent cure for not having any opium but that's about it.

ALEX

Well anyway I'm heading in if anyone cares to join me.

JAMES

Delighted!

BEN

Why not?

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LYDIA

Sasha looks at a tree curiously.

ALEX

It's a palm tree.

LYDIA

Yeah it looks all squished.

ALEX

Well I'll tell you what....

LYDIA

The leaves are flat, is that supposed to be how it is?

ALEX

I'll tell you what, I'll give you a brief tour...

LYDIA

No it's like all...

ALEX

As you're having this discussion Colgate sort of moves you in and then has a look around. He seems to know what he's doing. He puts his hand in there, gives a nod and gestures and Colgate starts moving through the greenhouse.

LYDIA

Oh a tour!

ALEX

Yeah, the door opens and heat and steam wafts out over you. A lot of heat and a lot of steam and you notice that some of the plants seem to be a bit wilted. Like over heat.

LYDIA

I don't actually.

ALEX

No, well I'm sure people have seen plants before.

BEN

There are some green things. Some of the green things are still here.

ALEX

And yeah walking through and Colgate is going borealis extremis, borealis gigantis and he's just heading through and pointing out all these various plants. Interestingly here that one has incredibly potent contact poison but it only causes hair loss, who would've known. And he's just sort of heading through and pointing out the various things and then at the end of the double doors there, he steps through and heads into a much more darkened one. Here we have the vivarium, very interesting. And inside that...ah here we go! This arachnid gigantis. He knocks on the door, at which point this spider...

BRYN

That was an amazing sound there!

ALEX

No edits, I don't need them. A spider as tall as Bertie just goes straight up to the glass, right up and then he's just sort of [licking sound], right up at the glass.

JAMES

Bertie turns to Sasha and goes, that's Latin for giant spider!

LYDIA

Sasha is not there anymore!

(laughter)

She is another few metres back.

ALEX

Oh yes they got a colony in. A breeding colony. Who'd have thought. Honestly.

LYDIA

Wait, wait, wait, so I thought that there would be stuff when I left London but this is basically in London. Like I'm not sure whether to run away or to stay at home.

ALEX

Oh gosh it wouldn't make a difference. They've got a land speed of 60 feet, some of them. It's astonishing.

BRYN

Where do these things usually come from?

ALEX

Oh well, you know, they come from all over the world. They tend to get them shipped in and then they'll try to breed where possible and they'll try to distribute them for research purposes.

LYDIA

I don't think that they should distribute spiders.

ALEX

Oh well I wouldn't worry. This is a...ooh you'll like this one. He points at the glass. This violet fungus, fascinating thing. Probably kill every single one of us it wasn't for the glass. And you just see this horrible man sized fungus. Very furry underneath. Bright, bright violet and he's just sort of trundles, sort of unmoving across the ground and then kind of creep up across the glass and then back down to the ground again. Fascinating creature. Really, really interesting.

BEN

So I'm just going to say this now, let's not have a repeat of the British Museum. Ok. No smashing glass.

ALEX

Sorry what?

LYDIA

Nothing. There's...no things happened.

BRYN

There was some mild restructuring in the...

JAMES

Oh look a distraction!

ALEX

Oh yes there is! Oh god that is really interesting actually. You know the poison of this one...and then he goes off on one. Anyway he leads you through the vivarium. You walk past the last one and he taps and goes, now this is interesting, the...oh well that's died.

BEN

Oh no

ALEX

He looks down and there appears to be six or seven dead lizards on the base of it. That doesn't look right at all.

LYDIA

Wait has something bigger than those lizards killed the lizards?

ALEX

No, no, these are sealed units. And he carries on and then he heads through the double doors and there's another desk and there's a young black man behind the desk and he's sort of scribbling away and he goes I'm here to see Dr Mendel, is he in? And the man behind the desk gives, no, he's not in. He's out. It's unlikely I've got an appointment with him, I've brought some people he might like to meet actually. No, he's out. Out where? Oh, he's on a research trip, that's where he is uh huh but it's in the city and I'm sure he'll be back soon.

BEN

Has anybody told you that you're a terrible liar?

ALEX

Excuse me? Hmm, what?

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JAMES

Bertie leans in. Well now young man. And this is going to be an attempt at an intimidation pompous pageantry.

(laughing)

BEN

Now then young man is like your overly...

ALEX

Roll it then play it. One day you're going to fail these and I am going to chew you up and spit you out Bertie

JAMES

Ok so +1 pompous pageantry blah, blah, blah. So it's $13 + 7$ is 20. Now then young man, you're clearly very pleased with your job.

ALEX

Oh god yeah it's amazing, I think....

JAMES

Bertie presses his fingers, big, armoured finger to the lips of the man. Shhhhh.

(laughing)

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Very pleased with your job and it would be a real shame if anything were to happen to that job, perhaps if very important guests were to be delayed in any from seeing Dr Mendel

ALEX

I feel like you might be barking up the wrong tree a bit. I appreciate it and also incidentally there's a peanut oil which we are able to synthesise here which would sort out that squeak out something special. But yeah, he's definitely not here. I don't know what to say. I'm sure, he'll be back soon.

LYDIA

Do you have somewhere to wait?

ALEX

Oh, you wouldn't want to wait on site. I mean, he could be back soon but he might not be back soon but he probably will be

JAMES

You know I think I am going to wait. And then Bertie sits down on the desk and makes direct eye contact with him, like three inches from his face.

BEN

Dr Colgate didn't you say you were here to pick up a medicinal preparation that Dr Mendel made for you? I'm sure he probably just left it on his desk. We'll just go on and get it.

ALEX

Yes I agree quite, yes, you wouldn't mind. It's me. He knows me. He just heads straight up and then starts heading up the stairs and the bloke's already running upstairs. No, no, you don't want to do that. Honestly it's fine. He's just not in. I'm telling you he's not in.

BEN

When he gets up to run after them can I just poke out my trident and try and trip him up.

ALEX

Yeah sure. So he's like oh no, you don't want to, ah, ohh. He just plants and then Colgate just ignoring it, striding, heads straight in. Mendel I don't...no one in there. Very standard office. It's quite small actually comparatively. Lots of books on the wall. Single desk.

BEN

I'm going to go in and start having a look around and see if we can find in the office any reference to a meeting in London or something like that.

ALEX

Sure. The guy at the front desk runs and goes look guys you can't be in here, ok. I'm telling you...

BRYN

I'm going to cast charm person on this dude.

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ALEX

Go for it. What's the DC?

BRYN

14

ALEX

He makes it

BRYN

A spell that is yet to work.

ALEX

Guys I'm sorry, ok but please you can't be in here.

BEN

Why not?

ALEX

Because it's his office, ok.

BEN

Where is he?

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ALEX

I don't know.

BEN

Right, that's it, trident out, points it at him, starts walking towards him.

ALEX

Look he's on site. I know he's on site. He has to be on site but he's gone ok and there's not a lot we can do. I don't know why you're doing this.

LYDIA

Are you saying that one of the...one of things has eaten him? Did the spiders eat him?

JAMES

What do you mean by gone?

ALEX

Colgate just sort of leans across and goes why exactly are the thermostats in the tanks more than 15% higher than optimal. I...we've lost control of the boilers. I don't know what to say. We can't tell anyone. We were told before he went that we couldn't tell anyone.

BEN

Ah well we are rangers. We are a travelling mercenary company who just kind of wander around sorting people's problems out.

LYDIA

Yeah we're working on a better name.

BEN

Right, why don't you tell us what's the problem, we'll go sort it out and then we'll be able to sort out payment afterwards. Or you can sit at your desk and

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let all the horrible, dangerous beasts get too hot and maybe escape and kill you.

ALEX

I'm really scared they will die but...

BEN

Ok do you think you would keep your job if they died?

ALEX

At which point Colgate sort of reaches a tonic. There's a lot of alcohol in this podcast. We need to get you out of urban areas and into somewhere nice...

BRYN

Victorian-esque London where everyone is drunk all the time.

ALEX

Or on opium apparently! Yeah he pulls a tonic for the guy and Colgate just plunks it on the desk and says George just sit down, calm down, tell me what's up. Well and...basically a couple of people went missing in the sublevels. Dr Frederick and then Mason didn't turn up and so eventually we went to send someone down to check up and basically Mendel he went down and told us not to tell anyone because, you know, there's a reputation to maintain and he hasn't come back and it's...we've heard a couple of screams and I don't know what to do.

BEN

Right well I guess we'll head down there and find out.

BRYN

Sounds like our kind of party

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JAMES

And so our brave heroes sallied forth down to the lower levels of the deep, dark, mysterious dungeons.

ALEX

It's not so much a dungeon, it's a basic storage and research depot.

JAMES

Down to the deep, dark, mysterious storage and research depot. Ooohhh

BEN

Pretty much that. Shall we go.

LYDIA

Right, are the boilers down there?

ALEX

Yeah I mean, I don't know what to say though. I really can't advise this. I'm forbidden from notifying the police until he came back and he's explicitly stated that no one should follow.

BEN

We are not the police.

ALEX

That doesn't make things better.

BEN

If we die it's on us!

LYDIA

Yeah we dealt with four skeletons before breakfast yesterday.

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JAMES

Then we had breakfast.

LYDIA

Yeah then we had breakfast

BEN

Well lunch, we had had breakfast

LYDIA

Brunch

JAMES

You're right we dealt with skeletons before lunch. And then we had lunch.

ALEX

Dr Colgate do you have any idea whose these people are? Oh yes they're fine.

They actually helped with the Eddison affair, they'll be fine. Oh ok.

BRYN

You didn't see the papers? We're in them.

LYDIA

Those two were.

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ALEX

Oh right, ok. Yeah, no, no you should not be here. We do not want the papers here.

BRYN

Well there's no need for that. We'll just go and sort it out and we'll be discrete.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Got any directions?

ALEX

Ok, ok. He starts heading back down the stairs.

LYDIA

Also any idea what's down there? Is it one of your spiders?

ALEX

As he's walking through he starts leading you back basically to the vivarium. So what we do is we take shipments and they actually come through here and the walkways are very wide, it helps with the movement of crates and so on. We take animals and plants downstairs, we do some basic testing on if they're

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dangerous or not, and things like that. Then we can put them into storage long term or short term and then we can bring them up here. Basically everything that's gone down in the last about four days hasn't come back up. Not a sound, nothing. No alarms raised or anything and then we started hearing screams this morning. There's the freight elevator here. He sort of heads down a staff only big freight elevator and opens it up. Dr Mendel took one of the security guys with him and neither of them came back. I can't condone this.

BRYN

We'll find him, don't worry.

ALEX

And what happens when you don't?

LYDIA

Yeah well no one will miss us for a while. You're probably be in the clear. Do any of your mates know that you're going down here?

BEN

No you never say us.

JAMES

No, no. One question though. Now Colgate you noticed that there a load of dead lizards in the bottom of one apparently empty vivarium. Now what was the creature who was in there?

ALEX

Lizards. That's what I'm saying...

BEN

In every other tank has there been some sort of terrifying deadly creature?

ALEX

Not everything's terrifying. Interestingly though those lizards are actually incredibly poisonous when consumed but I don't know why you'd want to do that. No it's just...well it's the vivarium running hot, I mean, can you feel it in here. It is incredibly like warm and sweltering in there.

BEN

I just assumed that was a greenhouse.

ALEX

Not like this. Goodness me. As it is I'm surprised we haven't burnt out.

JAMES

So what was the last creature that was transported to the lower levels?

ALEX

I have no idea. Dr Frederick, he likes a lot of privacy when he's working. We did get a shipment. It was something big. Nothing...as far as I was aware there

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were no animals. Nothing like that. Nothing mobile. It was meant to be a plant.

JAMES

Ok so no markers, no indication of where the package was from.

ALEX

We get a lot of plants sent here that people don't know what they are and they bring them here so that we can identify them. I don't know what you want from me. They brought a big crate, the big crate went down.

BRYN

We'll go down now. We'll just be ready for anything guys.

ALEX

It's been days. We only noticed people were missing two days ago so I have no idea.

BEN

Well we'll get on it.

ALEX

There's a fire escape at the far end but it only opens from the inside. It's a security measure. If you're in trouble I suppose head to that, it's the far end of the long term storage.

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LYDIA

Wait do you have like a map?

ALEX

Not really. There's maps down there for like fire safety.

BEN

Let's just go. Take it on.

BRYN

We didn't expect skeletons to come out in advance but we dealt with that ok.

BEN

Exactly.

JAMES

This time we are expecting horrible, horrific monsters that produce screams and missing people. So if anything we're ahead of the game.

BRYN

Exactly!

JAMES

Going down!

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BRYN

I get out my cross bow and load it.

JAMES

I unsheathe my sword

LYDIA

I spring load my daggers.

ALEX

The doors close and I'll take a break there and we'll come back in a couple of minutes.

And welcome back. So yeah. Dropping down in the really slow elevator. Oh you've skipped the light slowly passing up your feet, across your torso and across your eyes in a menacing repeating pattern.

LYDIA

Sasha feels a lot more at home.

ALEX

Who brought the orchestra. Why aren't they playing some sinister music. Lots of strings slowly working their way up a very high scale. But yeah...yeah...

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LYDIA

Oh this is great

ALEX

And it stops and the door is still closed. It's not an automatic one. [Door opening sound] By which point you're looking out into mostly darkness.

JAMES

Bertie flicks on his little falcon light.

ALEX

Yeah so a big sharp beam shoots out. You find yourself in a...

JAMES

It's a red light just so we're aware

(laughing)

BRYN

I will grab one of the ever burning torches that comes with our supply kit.

ALEX

Sure. Presumably to use.

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BRYN

I will carry it.

ALEX

Yeah. So with the lights you see you're in a very simple foyer. Maybe 15 foot distance from you is a basic desk for probably an administrative person to sit at. There's an open door behind that. You hear a faint scratching.

BEN

Behind the door?

ALEX

Behind the door. Off to the left extends as a very wide corridor and then takes an immediate right turn. To your right there is a wide corridor that goes off and then takes an immediate left turn.

BEN

What is the door with scratching behind it made of?

ALEX

Simple wood with a glass lattice work on it and it just has administration written on it.

BEN

Can it be seen through the glass bit?

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ALEX

All of you give me perception checks?

JAMES

Ooh 20. A natural 20 from Bertie.

LYDIA

Goodness me!

ALEX

We'll go with the natural 20.

LYDIA

Yeah I just got 19.

BEN

Bertie's the one who goes up to the door and looks through it.

ALEX

The door is ajar. You can't see through it. It's not possible to see through it. You do notice however when casting around that the lights...the reason it's dark is because it looks like someone's been physically pulling the lights out from the ceiling. Like chunks of plaster and stuff have been removed along with light fittings that are just dropped behind the desk.

JAMES

So the scratching wasn't coming from immediately behind the door.

ALEX

It's certainly coming from that room but you can discern it's definitely not directly behind the door. It's not one of the things where you know, you step through the door and something comes out from behind the door. It's not like that.

JAMES

Ok so Bertie shoves the door, sword in hand, flashes the light around to scan the room to see what's in there.

ALEX

So bursts through the door, slamming it open

JAMES

Burst, slam, wallop. What's going on?

ALEX

Finding an empty room with a half-eaten meal still left starting to go a bit manky with a chair pulled out and a gramophone that's just [yelling noise]

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JAMES

Do a power attack on that gramophone. 2 – 1.

ALEX

Again on an inanimate object. Just.

BRYN

Plus your attack bonus

JAMES

Oh yes, plus my attack bonus.

ALEX

I'm afraid the AC of the stationary gramophone is still higher

(laughing)

Yeah you basically take a swing and just bury your...your bastard sword, which is too long, into the ceiling briefly and then pull it back it down with a little bit of dust.

BEN

Did you get it?

JAMES

Yes!

(laughing)

BRYN

Just quietly knocks it over on to the floor.

ALEX

Right so in there, it looks like there's a...just a real basic canteen set up and barely made for like four people. A tea urn and some washing up sink and just a few odds and ends really. It's clearly just somewhere for people to go when they're off shift.

JAMES

And is there any other exits?

ALEX

There is only the exit that you came in from. Ok. So what do you do?

JAMES

Setting forward our intrepid heroes travelled down the left hand corridor.

LYDIA

Bertie stop talking so loudly, things will hear us.

JAMES

Our noblest hero was rudely interrupted by a really annoying lady voice.

LYDIA

I'm just saying be a bit more cautious because...

BEN

I'm with her.

JAMES

His dramatic monologue barely silenced or interrupted by the chattering voices of naysayers around him.

BRYN

Surely it's other people's jobs to write these stories Bertie. We should concentrate on accomplishing the great deeds of daring do without dying.

JAMES

You won't like what I write in my novel.

ALEX

Ok so you head left and heading along the corridor you see yet more of the lights have been plucked out and it's swelteringly hot. It's like steam moving in front of your eyes hot down there. Really hot. And out of the sort of mist you

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see another door ajar directly in front of you. Again it seems like a small one and it just says janitorial on it. Same kind of door.

JAMES

Why would all the lights have been taken out?

LYDIA

So it's dark

BRYN

Some sort of nocturnal

JAMES

The monster took the lights out.

BEN

I'm going to have my trident in a bracing position in case we're charged.

ALEX

Sure

LYDIA

Do you want to...

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BEN

Check the door again Bertie?

LYDIA

Maybe Bertie considering...being in the armour and all.

BRYN

Everyone remember just to look up occasionally.

JAMES

Our noble hero bravely volunteered to check the janitorial cupboard.

BRYN

Why is this a new thing all of a sudden. Why is this now a thing?

ALEX

Ok so you're currently facing a janitorial door and as you cross the corner and look to your right you see there are two more doors leading off to the left, much larger ones probably for the movement

JAMES

Bertie leans over to the door, braces, gets ready and pulls the door backwards, raising his hand just in case.

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ALEX

And a mop falls forward and hits you on the face.

JAMES

Argh, take that mop!

(laughing)

ALEX

Again just a caretaker's cupboard I'm afraid.

JAMES

Gah! Mops!

BEN

Well you sure defeated the heck out of that one.

JAMES

Well it's not getting up is it?! That's you told I think.

BEN

I mean it's definitely true.

BRYN

It's important not to leave any potential threats behind us as we pass forward.

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check.

BEN

20

LYDIA

10

JAMES

9

BRYN

22

ALEX

Zolf and Hamid, you simultaneously notice it looks like someone's messed around in there or something and then as your eye straight up after you've said make sure you keep looking up, you see that it looks something has torn through a vent and metal appears to have just broken outwards and open and torn away from the ceiling. It's a small vent, certainly not big enough for a human.

BEN

Look up guys. That's not good.

BRYN

Does it look like it came down and then out this way.

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BEN

Came down yeah.

BRYN

It wasn't going up?

BEN

Well it could've gone back up through the hole it's already made.

LYDIA

Is there any kind of shapeshifter that could become a mop so it's now...

JAMES

Well it's definitely dead if it is.

BEN

Bertie attacks the mop just to be on the safe side.

BERTIE

4

BRYN

Plus 7 so it's 11

ALEX

I'll give you a few tries to kill it

LYDIA

Take 10

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JAMES

I take 10 to destroy the mop.

ALEX

Sure that's fine. It takes a little while but you manage to slowly just...slaying the mop.

JAMES

We'll leave this bit out of the story!

(laughing)

BEN

No please continue narrating yourself while you kill a mop.

LYDIA

I mean could we like get one of the smaller guys to maybe look up, smaller to see what's up in the vent maybe.

ALEX

You can also see another door opposite the freight doors, a single one. Again same kind of size as the caretaker and administrative kind of ones.

BRYN

Well let's just keep exploring. There's a lot of rooms to have a look at.

LYDIA

Sure, fine. If Hamid doesn't want to look

(laughing)

BRYN

We don't really have anything to gauge by sticking our head up there and getting our face eaten off.

JAMES

It is a little bit risky at this point when there are still other doors to check. Now let's proceed down the corridor, maybe we can have a look at this next one on the left.

BEN

Together?

JAMES

I'll take the far door and you take the near door and on three. One, two, three. Pull back yours.

ALEX

And the first thing you see is a huge broken crate. Turns out there's a plinth, sort of plain stone wide plinth in the middle of the floor and upon it is a large crate. The door to your right, the one you can't see, the side is out, you know, on the ground, down. You see a crowbar is just flat on the ground beside it but it looks like something's taken chunks out of the crate itself. There is something written on it in, what languages do you guys have?

JAMES

I have Latin, Greek and English.

LYDIA

I've got sign language and French and English.

BRYN

Arabic, Halfling, English, French, Czech.

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BEN

English, dwarven and ancient Greek.

ALEX

Then just Bertie, you see there is a Latin explanation and just for the elitism of it, the whole explanation is written in Latin too. It's not just the name. It's academic but you can still go across.

LYDIA

Pure academic.

ALEX

Pure academic. It can only be reasoned by the highest minds but anyway...on the left hand side you see what looks like a basic lab set up. Large steel table, you know conical flasks, condensers, that's what I remember from my GCSE chemistry. Lots of glassware effectively and retort stands, things like that.

BEN

Ah science happened here!

ALEX

Yeah, directly on the far side of the crates you can see just sort of amongst the dark glows and so on, it's wall to ceiling and the ceilings here are high, wall to ceiling in cages. Small ones, not huge. They're varying sizes. I mean towards the far, far right hand side deep in the gloom you see some larger ones which seem intact but it's mostly smaller ones and I'd say that maybe three quarters of them appear to have things broken out from them and the remainder appear to have still forms in them and looking around you see that there is a blood trail that leads from in front of the crates out through a pair of double doors at the far side.

JAMES

Bertie reads the transcription...so what's this then?

ALEX

I'll paraphrase but it's effectively, plant unknown origin. Found Peru. Shipping time three to six weeks. Outset of voyage mass 10kg. Voyage end it was like 100kg and it's just listing various stats to do with it. Nothing you can really make head nor tail of, you haven't really got the education for it really.

BEN

It got big!

JAMES

So plant started tiny, now much bigger. About 100kilos on arrival. And then there's a trail of blood.

ALEX

Good brilliant.

BEN

Anyone got any fire? Anyone?

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LYDIA

I've got some bombs. I can make some bombs. I don't know if any of you know this but like, I picked up some of the stuff in the alchemist and I've just been playing around with it.

BRYN

Do you have any fire blasters?

LYDIA

Oh er...

BEN

Maybe not from my end, I'll have a quick check in my bag.

LYDIA

I've got a couple.

BRYN

Oh good. We might need those. I didn't know you'd been working on bombs

LYDIA

Yeah so...

BRYN

Sorry probably wrong time and place but afterwards we'll have a chat.

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LYDIA

Yeah, they're really fun

BRYN

Shall we follow the trail of blood then?

BEN

I suppose so.

BRYN

Ok.

BEN

Same again?

JAMES

Same again. Ready.

BRYN

I'm going to put this torch away so I have both hands on my crossbow

BEN

Torch might be more useful for a plant.

JAMES

Ready? Three, two, one, go!

ALEX

At which point there is an enormously loud human sounding scream.

(scream)

Just sustained. Effectively like someone's stood in front of your face and screaming as loud as possible for a human scream. As you push the doors open you expose a room of larger crates and so on, most of which appear to be sealed and one of which, at the far end appears to be broken and there is a huge mushroom there. The second that you push open the doors an enormous scream starts erupting from that mushroom and it just won't stop (screaming noise) as loud as you can stand. It starts again (screaming noise). It just stops screaming and then implodes upon itself and it's just...

JAMES

An infinite number of times

ALEX

Yeah and it collapses in on itself and then all is quiet again.

BEN

Well that was deeply unsettling.

ALEX

Until the chittering starts. Lots and lots of chittering. It starts small just...and then spreads lots and lots and there's lots of chittering.

LYDIA

Can I have a perception check

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ALEX

Yeah go for it.

LYDIA

Ok $16 + 7$. I can do maths. It's 23.

ALEX

It appears to be coming from amongst the crates. It's behind you in the room that you just left and in the room ahead and is definitely, as you look around, you see a few more broken vents and it's loudest coming from the vents.

LYDIA

Coming from something in the vents. A lot of things in the vents.

BEN

I'm going to holster up my trident and get my mace out because I think donking is going to be better than poking.

LYDIA

I get a fire flask in one hand.

BRYN

Actually I am going to cast a spark on the mushroom.

ALEX

Ok. Go for it. And doesn't get a saving throw because it's dead. It also doesn't catch alight because the air is incredibly damp because it's incredibly hot and steamy and it's a fungus so it doesn't go up it just down. That was your prep time, Bryn.

BRYN

I'm just gripping and trying not to shake.

JAMES

I have my sword unsheathed. That's about all I can really do I think.

ALEX

Ok. At which point huge amounts of small creatures burst from the vent, burst from amongst the crates and start darting through the door that's at the bottom and through the door that you came in and just hordes of them. Loads and loads of chittering [squeaking noise] and hundred and hundreds of, give me a perception roll to see what you're facing given that it's dark and that you're not paying attention and the only one was Bertie's light sword.

LYDIA

17

JAMES

12

BRYN

16

ALEX

So 12, 16...

LYDIA

17

ALEX

17.

BEN

As numbers go, not the best.

ALEX

I will give you tiny, vaguely humanoid form that are barely as tall as your forearm but hundreds and hundreds of them. Swarming down the walls, crawling in unnatural ways, crawling up across the ceiling. Everyone give me initiative rolls.

JAMES

16

BEN

15

LYDIA

17

BRYN

12

ALEX

Ok everyone's taken the initiative. Everyone knows what we're doing. At which point the first of the enemy start pouring over the wall. It's dark you can't really tell what they are but certainly they sound vaguely humanoid forms but not more than that. They swam out of the vent above the crates. They swarm into the space here.

BRYN

So they're still surrounded by the tiny things but these things are bigger?

ALEX

No these are the tiny things. All of these count as one thing. They then move 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40.

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BEN

That is unfortunate for us. For the listeners that is on top of us.

ALEX

So yes, the swarm moves straight in through the vents crawling over all of the crates. Moving rapidly, very, very rapidly and move to occupy exactly all of the spaces that the party are.

JAMES

Apart from Brutor

ALEX

Apart from Brutor. Meanwhile a second group burst out into the corner of the room that you just left. The movement of the swarm on top of the party was the first one. They then proceed to deal some damage to the party sharing the space as them. They deal straight off the bat, almost the max they could. 7 + distraction.

LYDIA

Oh dear.

ALEX

Distraction. Let's look that one up for everyone.

BRYN

It's going to be an enemy of stealth.

ALEX

A creature can nauseate the creatures that it damages. Any creature that takes damage from a creature with a distraction ability is nauseated for one round. Save of 13.

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LYDIA

I can't roll below it.

JAMES

I have 8 + 6.

ALEX

Who has made the 14?

JAMES

I have.

ALEX

Bertie has.

BRYN

Nope.

ALEX

Nope.

BEN

Critical fail.

ALEX

Ok, let's see what our fumble have. So Zolf the creatures swarm towards you. You immediately just start swinging wildly with your trident in an effort to keep them at bay.

BEN

Mace

ALEX

Mace sorry. Keep swinging your mace wildly to keep them at bay at which point you accidentally slam the door jam and you are going to be taking a -4 on attack with the mace specifically until you can basically get down and sort it out because it's jammed in and got hunks of wood attached to it and it's just been ramped up. Meanwhile everyone who failed it you will be nauseated. I'll look that up. Creatures with a nauseated condition experience stomach stress. Nauseated creatures are unable to attack, cast spells, concentrate or do anything else requiring attention. The only thing you can do is make a single move action.

LYDIA

Is throwing a bomb a move action?

ALEX

No.

LYDIA

I could just drop it because I'm literally just dropping it at my feet.

ALEX

No it's an attack. So for the listeners who is nauseated?

BRYN

Everyone except for Brutor who's not made a save.

ALEX

Brutor is not affected in any way whatsoever.

(laughing)

JAMES

Brutor to the rescue!

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ALEX

What's that Brutor? They're all dead! Oh! They should have listened to me. Ok. Sasha. You're up.

LYDIA

I'm going to try and climb on top of the crate and maybe pull Hamid with me.

ALEX

I should spell out for these creatures they do not get attacks of opportunity should you move away from them or...so you have sort of free movement out and away from them and I would also strongly advise that you do not bunch up.

LYDIA

That's cool.

BEN

We've learned that lesson.

BRYN

You can't grab me because you're nauseated.

ALEX

All you can do is move.

LYDIA

Ok

BRYN

Don't worry I'll...

ALEX

You couldn't even climb. What it is, is that your character, everything that your character wants to do right now is vomit so all you can do is sort of stagger off desperately trying not to vomit but it means that you can't climb. Basically what you have to do in this round is get a new position.

LYDIA

Fine. I'll just move away. How long will we stay nauseated?

ALEX

One round.

LYDIA

Ah ok.

BRYN

Every time we're attacked

ALEX

Ok so you've gone as far as you can and put your back to the wall with double doors either side of you. Yeah that makes sense. At which point, Bertie you're up.

JAMES

Ok so I'm the only unnauseated character.

ALEX

Yes you are. You're completely fine in every way apart from that you've taken a chunk of damage.

JAMES

Yeah so I suppose I start attacking them.

ALEX

I should spell out that you can do as you will. What I would say that the reason you're taking damage is this huge amount of them are crawling all over you, sinking teeth in wherever they can, scraping, scratching, gnawing. They are literally occupying that 10 foot by 10 foot cube almost 100%. Like you can't even see, they're just clawing at you and it's a case of there are special effects. I don't mean like you'll die because you attack them but all I would say is because you've never played this game before, for this type of creature it is much harder to get with normal attacks. So thinks that have an area of attack or shatter and things like that, those are your friends. Hacking at them with a great big sword is less effective. It will work because every time you're taking a swipe you're hitting about six of them but when there are 100 it's obviously less effective.

JAMES

Ok so is there any advice in me moving out of the affected area

ALEX

Very, very much so.

JAMES

Ok.

ALEX

As a piece of advice again because you've never played against swarms you do not want to all be stood next to each other because it will just come for both of you and get both of you in a single turn. It is something that is designed to make you split up. That's the point of swarms in gameplay.

JAMES

Ok so if I took a step to there will I then be able to hit this crate here.

ALEX

Yeah sure.

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JAMES

I will do that.

ALEX

Go for it.

JAMES

Is this because of the swarm's nature is it heavy?

ALEX

It is of average toughness because basically all of the components in it are dodging to get out of the way so it has less AC than you would expect with a creature but not by a lot.

JAMES

Ok

ALEX

So basically just a bad day. This is what these creatures are. They're a bad day.

JAMES

Ok a power attack?

BRYN

Absolutely.

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JAMES

I will power attack then in that case. 6 + 6 is 12.

ALEX

You do not hit. Effectively they're swarming all over you. You manage to pull yourself out, swing wildly and they just pass to avoid the blade and then carry on, mainly swarming on Zolf and Hamid. It's like half the time when they're trying to move one of the other ones will grab them and pull them back into the pile so it's a very like manic mess. Zolf?

BEN

I am going to run.

ALEX

You only have the one move action.

BEN

Right so...

ALEX

That's fine. So Zolf takes his 10 foot basically.

BEN

Dropping a weapon is a free action?

ALEX

Yes that's fine. Hamid? You are currently the only one who's occupying a swarm square?

BRYN

Yes I clearly moved. I am going to go along the wall and head into the corner.

ALEX

Ok the second swarm moves down the line of crates very quickly darting forward swarming over. It's more like a moving ball of the creatures than anything else and it swarms over Brutor. At which point it gets to deal its damage without attack roll because it's a swam.

LYDIA

Brutor!

ALEX

Brutor's down. Brutor is down. You just see him disappear. He disappears beneath a mound of semi humanoid creatures.

BEN

The first death?

ALEX

Oh I hope not, you better save him. And I'm going to call it there for the...

(groans)

The party got dropped on. Brutor's in trouble. Everyone's split up and nauseated. What will this mean? Tune in next week for yet more tales of horror, intrigue and adventure etc.

BEN

God that is a long sign off! You overcompensated there.

ALEX

Yeah a little bit! But yeah, thanks for listening. We look forward to...

LYDIA

See you again soon.

BEN

We will because we'll have to die in the next episode.

LYDIA

Yeah so we'll see you.

BEN

A really short one.

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JAMES

If you see a two minute upload that's why!

ALEX

Bye guys

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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