

RQG – [23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

Content warnings

- Zombies & body horror (inc. eye trauma)
- Physical violence & injury
- Human remains
- Mould & fungus
- Discussions of: death (inc. animal death)
- Mentions of: food, bombs, blood, dismemberment, fire
- SFX: squelching, repetitive clinking

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome back to the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast – episode 23. I'm your host and GM Alex and with me for yet another exciting episode we have

JAMES

James Ross.

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

BEN

Ben Meredith

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith – angry dwarf.

LYDIA

Sasha Racket – smug rogue.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

The freshly frozen corpse of Hamid the Halving Sorcerer.

JAMES

Sir Bertrand MacGuffingham – a man who doesn't have a dog papoose
apparently!

[Group laughter]

BEN

So where we left off the party had gotten in a very sticky situation in the basements beneath Kew Gardens, investigating some missing people and got swarmed pretty hard but Sasha, Sasha Swarm Conqueror, managed to get people mostly...

BEN

That's going on the CV!

LYDIA

I did like the in and out of doors sort of stereotypical thing, like the swarm chases her out of one thing and she leans into ...

JAMES

Like a French farce and/or an episode of Scooby-Doo! It turns out...

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Yeah, next level ultraviolence.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

So, bouncing back in – Sasha’s been doing a little bit of scouting so an enormous shambling scraping form in the mists at the far end of the room swathed in darkness, gloom and a slight, slight noise of (*imitates slight sound of scraping*) and the party’s sheltered itself either upon or beside the enormous crate.

BRYN

Meanwhile, scouting mission. You all right Bertie? A bit better?

JAMES

Might suggest a tactical retreat at this point. Could do with a bit of fresh air I think – that’s about it – a bit of a walk around, you know?

BEN

I think we might have to have a conversation about general conduct on dangerous missions as well. It might be useful.

ALEX

Cut back to Sasha – you’ve just seen the shambling form.

LYDIA

I mean I’m riding quite an adrenalin at the moment.

ALEX

Yeah you are.

LYDIA

I think that she might open the door and follow it.

ALEX

Go for it!

LYDIA

Yeah – I'm trying to stealth after them like cyanide in an almond mix from Sainsbury's.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

That you might give to somebody you don't like...

JAMES

The most middle class assassination.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Here would you like this nut mix?

ALEX

Okay.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

LYDIA

And it's full of cyanide.

JAMES

Midsomer Murders level of sneak...

[Group laughter]

ALEX

So where do you head in the room?

LYDIA

So I've seen this massive thing following the blood trail.

ALEX

The blood trail sort of points towards the far corner, so you saw something shambling around.

LYDIA

Stick my head around the corner.

ALEX

You've got to give me a sneak roll first – jump by 50.

LYDIA

8, so 25.

ALEX

25. Yeah, you poke your head round the corner and you still see the shambling form – it's moving in the direct opposite direction to you.

LYDIA

Where is it?

ALEX

You do see a little bit further into the room which is revealing.

LYDIA

Yeah!

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Hurray!

LYDIA

Where is the thing?

ALEX

At the edge of your vision, so it's just turning the corner and it turns the corner around the crate and disappears from your view again. Again, you can't really make it out from the thing – it looks like it might have tentacles.

LYDIA

What? I go to the end of the thing, it's the last corner that I saw it turn around and poke my head around.

ALEX

Okay. I won't get to you roll a stealth check but halfway along...

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

If you imagine that the large shape has just disappeared in the corner diagonally opposite to the door, the corner that is sharing a wall with the door that you came in.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

You hear another scraping – it's a different sound – it's seems lighter but nonetheless it's there.

LYDIA

I think – okay – fine, I'm going, I'm going back around this way – remember I've never seen the fungus.

ALEX

And you then see...

LYDIA

I see the fungus.

ALEX

The fungus, even from that distance, it feels like it's getting cooler.

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

It's not cold at that point but it's gone from sweltering oppressive heat to oh, this is okay.

LYDIA

Okay, I'm making a dash for the door I think cos this is three weird things in a room and I've already lost half my hit points. Like Sasha is crazy but this is getting weird.

ALEX

Yeah, sure, so if you head back to the group.

LYDIA

Yes.

ALEX

Okay, you head back to the group.

LYDIA

Hey guys, so yeah, so ...

[Group laughter]

BRYN

Will you please tell us if you're just gonna appear like that!

[Group laughter]

BRYN

I almost brained you.

LYDIA

I can't move, can't move.

BRYN

Right.

BEN

Bertie still hasn't noticed she's there.

JAMES

What?

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

All right – so I went in after the giant thing, and it turns out its massive but I couldn't quite see, it was really dark in there. Also did you see the massive cold fungus, whoa!

BEN

Oh yeah, that's what knocked Hamid out.

LYDIA

What?

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Oh that guy's tougher than me – I just looked at it and ran back there – that is too weird, too weird for Sasha.

BEN

You say tougher – he fell over in front of it.

LYDIA

Right – oh well you know, he tried. But yeah, there's a giant thing, like big, just big with like you know, tentacles I think.

BEN

What?

LYDIA

And it squelches, it squelches really loudly.

BEN

Okay.

LYDIA

And then there's another thing and that was the point when there were like three weird things and you can't see anything in there and then there was a massive fungus and I was like, I'll tell the guys before I go in and blow everything up.

JAMES

You know, I think now might be a good time for maybe a breath of fresh air, something.

LYDIA

I can probably blow them up, it's probably gonna be fine.

BEN

You seem very keen to leave Bertie.

JAMES

I am really horribly wounded.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

And so are you and so is she and so is Hamid.

BEN

Actually Bertie...

JAMES

And then look! And then I retrieve Brutor from the non-papoose.

ALEX

So on top of the crate then.

JAMES

On top of the crate – look, this is what happened! Look!

BEN

Bertie, you're not that badly injured.

JAMES

Sir Bertrand to you.

BEN

No.

JAMES

Aaggh!

BEN

Bertie, is that when you start calling me Boss?

JAMES

Sir Bertrand.

BEN

Subordinate.

EVERYONE

Oh!!!!

LYDIA

I thinks that's an unclear 05:55 character.

BEN

We're in quite a perilous situation here.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

And you're sad that your dog has died but we have a mission to do and you are not that badly injured, nor am I – Hamid may be – dunno about Sasha, but I healed you up and I know how, you know, hurt you are – it's not that bad, so where's the big brave knight with the big sword and the armour? Where's he gone?

LYDIA

Yeah, like you just ran away before didn't you? It's not very hero-ish of you, you just let me, me take care of everything, yep.

JAMES

Well I never! Mmm.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

You're gonna have to get your face back in front of this incredibly common person.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Hey!

BEN

What?

LYDIA

All right, I mean I guess, yeah, no like I'm proper common, yeah and you know what? Saved you yeah – common! Clapham Common-y type common! How common am I common?! Lots of common!

BEN

And you've just been bailed out of financial debt by another person with lower standing than you.

LYDIA

Common – common we are, common better, yeah, yeah, I can do that – common.

BEN

Right Sasha, just, that was good.

LYDIA

Okay.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check.

[Group laughter]

BEN

And you were all killed and eaten.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Whilst having a petulant bicker!

LYDIA

17.

ALEX

17 to beat.

BEN

Not better than 17.

BRYN

7.

BEN

12.

ALEX

Sasha?

LYDIA

Yeah?

ALEX

It's hard to tell – you think you might have heard a noise coming from the door, the one that leads into the enormous warehouse-y room, not the one that leads into the screaming mushroom ambush room.

LYDIA

Yeah, guys, there, I think I've heard something.

BEN

All right, get ready, go check it out.

LYDIA

Maybe I don't want to! Okay, right, I'll go deal with it again! Right, okay! It's fine. Just something with giant tentacles, a frozen mushroom and scrabbly crawly things that pulled at my – yeah, fine.

BEN

It's probably heard you by now.

LYDIA

Yeah, I look round the corner **unclear 07:55.**

ALEX

Did you leave the door open or closed?

LYDIA

I might have it so there's a little crack so that I can see through, but they look closed to other people. Pretty much what I do around the house!

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Nothing is ever quite closed.

BEN

Closed but not secure.

ALEX

Sure, so it looks like the door is sort of naturally closed to – you hear a sort of *imitating scraping sound* and then there's a sort of scratching, a little scritch and scratching from the far side of that door and then a hand...

LYDIA

I'm backing up now, I'm backing up.

BEN

What did you see?

LYDIA

There's scratching and then like a little ... there's claws or something. I didn't see.

BEN

So let's turn the ambush around – stack up behind this door and make a noise as it comes in – we just get it.

BRYN

Just to redescribe the scene – the hand is coming through the door.

BEN

You don't know.

LYDIA

It is dark and I have told you that it is claws.

ALEX

You can poke your head round the door if you want – you've all taken position on the far side of the doors – not the doors that the scratching was coming from but the next set on so that if it was to come for you.

BEN

Yeah, it would have to come round the corner.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

Ready?

LYDIA

Yeah.

JAMES

Hmm-hmm!!! (*clears throat and coughs*)

LYDIA

Bertie, you're being so alien to Sasha, the idea that you would make a noise like that, that she didn't really understand the plan before, so she looked at Zolf as if he is absolutely insane.

[Group laughter]

BEN

I give you an encouraging thumbs up!

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Absolutely completely baffled by this idea, like what? Right, okay.

ALEX

There's a...*scratching sound* – and you hear that noise approaching you – unless you poke your head round you don't know what it is.

LYDIA

I look through the crack in the door.

ALEX

Looking through the crack in the door – bear in mind that you guys were carrying lights with you that you've currently extinguished, so it's dark – there's a small amount of luminescence coming from various growths and things but that's about it.

BEN

Dark vision.

ALEX

Obviously.

BEN

Just for...

ALEX

Yeah, yeah and Sasha, you see it looks humanoid and you're not able to discern much more unless you were to take a dedicated perception check which will mean that you're sort of still getting a look as it approaches.

LYDIA

It looks like it's a dude. It gave me a sore throat.

BEN

I can bring it back up if it goes down.

ALEX

Shuffling closer – as it comes closer.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Clearly humanoid – it appears to be wearing what's left of a white lab coat – it keeps shuffling – there's a brief parting of the haze and you see it looks like it might once have been a human but they're so far from that now. There are growths coming out from their cheeks and from their head – their eyes appear to have been effectively encrusted over with moles and things.

LYDIA

It's copyright infringement from the Last of Us.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

I whisper to Zolf.

ALEX

And you see that it's holding in its left hand one of the creatures from the swarms, just it's limp dead form, it's dragging it along and as it comes towards you, it stops, looks down, sees another, picks it up, passes it to the other hand and keeps going towards you guys where the noise was – *imitating laboured breathing*

LYDIA

Look, I think it's a dude – right, like it's moving slowly – I'm gonna open the door and say hi and like if it can't talk then I'll just throw a bomb at it, that's fine.

JAMES

Bertie smashes the door – *smash sound effect* – oh!

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Argh!

LYDIA

I think that's how he says hello.

ALEX

It drops the two creatures and proceeds to lurch towards you and by lurch, I mean it covers the entire intervening distance almost instantaneously to your right – it's just – *imitates groan*- and just – *snaps fingers* – a sudden burst of speed it comes for you. Everyone roll me initiative.

BRYN

Oh! 17.

ALEX

Okay.

LYDIA

I got a natural one, four in total with my modifier but I think she did something stupid.

ALEX

Let's have a look, see what happens.

BRYN

Oh yeah, the fumble table.

LYDIA

Oh dear.

BRYN

Oh.

JAMES

Probably explode!

BRYN

Yeah!

ALEX

So, using our little fumble table, all your enemies have concealment from you for one D4 round, so for the next four rounds, the creature is effectively shrouded in mists to your eyes – we'll say that...

BEN

You have stabbed yourself in the eye.

Oh my cataracts again!

ALEX

We'll say that you draw your daggers – you're all ready and in your big flourish, you nick one of the pipes beside you – *imitates gushing water* – being blown straight out at your face, you're not burnt or anything – this is not particularly hot, but nonetheless your head is effectively shrouded in mist whilst everyone else is fine.

LYDIA

Pretty epic fail!

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Yes, it's a pretty bad one.

JAMES

As the zombie lurches in the direction of Bertie – while it's doing the lurching, Bertie gives Zolf a meaningful look as in "you dare tease me!"

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Zolf, you're up first.

BEN

I will give him another meaningful look as in “I’m competent” – five foot step to not provoke an unclear 12:43 opportunity – and just ram my Trident into its ribcage.

ALEX

Give me attack.

LYDIA

Yay.

BEN

I hate you dice! That is an 8.

ALEX

A total for 8?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You miss!

BEN

Oh good.

ALEX

So giving a meaningful look you miss.

[Group laughter]

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

BEN

Competent!

JAMES

Do you miss on purpose?

[Group laughter]

JAMES

To teach me an important lesson!

[Group laughter]

BEN

I wish I did.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Bertie you're up – it's in your face, it's got one of its eyes is completely overcome with growth, the other one clearly can barely see. You see there's things in its mouth and it's scraping at your armour ready to get you.

JAMES

Yeah, Bertie holds up a shield, unclear 13:23 attacks.

ALEX

Go for it.

JAMES

12 plus 7 – 19.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

ALEX

Hit.

JAMES

And so the damage is D10 plus four.

ALEX

That's a 10.

JAMES

That's 10, so that's 14 damage.

ALEX

14 damage. That's a one hit kill, not even KO on this. Describe it to me.

JAMES

Bertie, with his ...

BEN

Bertie with something to prove!

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Without breaking eye contact with Zolf.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Brings his sword up and then something just runs on neck first on to the sword.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Twizzles it, while still maintaining eye contact with Zolf.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

And then wiggles it a bit.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Argh and then proceeds to do something which can only be described as ventriloquism like we've seen puppetry before.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

I'm a terrifying zombie, argh, coming to get you, whoa!

[Group laughter]

JAMES

And then moves, moves the head of the zombie which is now kind of, as the neck gradually sort of shuffles off because there's no longer really the tension of the neck muscles to hold it in place.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah.

JAMES

Bertie moves the head in the direction of Zolf's face – argh! Argh! Terrifying!

BEN

Are we in combat?

ALEX

You're effectively out of combat now - that was a one-hit kill.

BEN

Cool, I'm gonna slap it off the top of his sword with my Trident.

LYDIA

I'll give you that one.

ALEX

When it hits the far wall, it shatters like an egg and spores come out from it – not very, they're not spreading out through the room, just a *pfff*.

LYDIA

I mean Sasha doesn't see any of this because of the steam, so basically by the time it's out of my eyes, there's some spores on the other side of the room and the thing is there and I was like oh well done Zolf.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Cos he's now got the thing on his Trident, he just poked it off.

BEN

It was actually verity.

JAMES

The sword is over young lady. Come on.

LYDIA

Right.

BEN

Okay, right.

LYDIA

I look in the lab coat pocket.

ALEX

Okay – give me a perception check.

BRYN

That’s an 8 – 15 total.

ALEX

15 total.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

So you start to paw at the clothes and part of them – the first thing you find is that the lab coat’s almost just combined with the flesh beneath it. It’s all...

BEN

Unclear 15:48 torso.

ALEX

Yeah, it’s all just – that’s a really good way of describing it actually.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

In fact, I'm gonna border on having to like give trigger warnings as you pull the coat, it sloughs off some of the flesh.

LYDIA

Okay, yeah, it's grim.

ALEX

It's grim.

LYDIA

At that point you'd realise that this isn't the scientist we were looking for.

ALEX

Poking around in the breast pocket though you find what looks like a wallet of some kind and inside you find a card with the name Friedrich Holtzman written on.

LYDIA

It's Holtman apparently or was. Is that the guy we were looking for?

BEN

No, that was the guy who originally went missing, and then leave.

LYDIA

Well we've found him so is that...

JAMES

He's here and there.

LYDIA

Is that us done?

JAMES

And pfftt – there.

BEN

Yeah, I'm gonna chalk this one up to near dead and we're not getting paid for this and not a problem, let the authorities deal with this.

LYDIA

I mean like the other guy could still be alive. Well – the corpse that was in the mushroom – what was, who was that?

BEN

There's a corpse?

LYDIA

I went through his belongings and he's all gross. You didn't think to check who that was?

BEN

I didn't go near it, that's what got Hamid.

LYDIA

I mean you've got a Trident.

BEN

It was cold and frost.

LYDIA

You can pull him out with your Trident.

BEN

Okay, what about the other thing that was in that room?

LYDIA

I went in.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Fine.

BEN

If you haven't noticed, I can't run away from things.

LYDIA

That is a good point actually – you got me – you do got me there.

JAMES

Should we at some point wake Hamid up?

BRYN

I'm out. I'm out.

LYDIA

You got a potion.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

JAMES

Oh fine, so Bertie comes over to Hamid and ...

BRYN

You guys know I carry a bunch!

BEN

Oh yeah.

Overtalk 17:28.

ALEX

On top of the crate is both Hamid and Brutor lying there.

LYDIA

Cool, so you're gonna give the potion to Hamid then? Your university friend that you've known for years - you've got one potion.

JAMES

Hang on, let me think.

LYDIA

Dog and...

JAMES

Ah...

LYDIA

Okay, look.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

BEN

I am going to walk up to Brutor.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

And I'm going to slap him off of the crate with my Trident.

EVERYONE

Oh!!!

ALEX

Tension in the group!

BEN

Hamid – up!

LYDIA

There were actually other potions you could use.

JAMES

Bertie wouldn't realise that.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Of course he would.

JAMES

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

He wouldn't think about it.

LYDIA

Yeah.

JAMES

Bertie gets out the potion and gives it to Hamid.

BRYN

I'm also, while he's doing that, going to go over and check that Brutor is dead.

ALEX

Okay – one thing at a time.

BRYN

Cos I've only been told.

ALEX

So, roll me the heal check Hamid.

BRYN

I get six hit points back, yay!!!

LYDIA

Isn't that most of them?

BRYN

All of them.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

That's not true – I still have two non-lethal damage marked on which is basically the sniffles.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

The last thing that you remember – everything was going pear-shaped, you were running to find Sasha and got moulded and there were still swarms left, right and centre.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

What, what happened?

LYDIA

You got like – there's a fungus and you got cold. I got rid of all the swarms.

BRYN

It's cold – it's really – don't go near it, it's really, really cold.

BEN

From Brutor's body, I didn't go near it.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

Okay, give me a heal check.

BEN

That is 27.

ALEX

Brutor is moments away from expiring but has not.

BEN

Oh for goodness sake! Stabilise.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

He wasn't dead!

LYDIA

Well I don't know!

[Group laughter]

BEN

He's looking at Bertie!

[Group laughter]

BEN

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

Did you not check for a pulse?!

JAMES

Bertie holds his big metal gloved hand.

[Group laughter]

BEN

Come on! I thought this was your friend that you were so terribly upset. Ah!
Just put him in your bag or something.

BRYN

I get out a healing potion and hand it to Bertie.

BEN

We're not wasting it on the dog.

JAMES

Bertie takes the healing potion and feeds it to Brutor.

BEN

Ah!!!!

ALEX

I will roll the heal for Brutor – it's a D8 right?

BEN

D8 plus one.

ALEX

Hurray!

BEN

He gets the good! Right that's it.

ALEX

It's a natural aim!

[Group laughter]

ALEX

You feed it and as your feeding it, it just – *nom, nom* – and it's all right – you can see it visibly healing from the thousands of nicks it has – your arms now match your dog!

JAMES

Ah!

ALEX

Imitating canine sounds

JAMES

An horrifically scarred dog.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

It just proceeds to lick and just it goes on to its back and flops itself upon Bertie – *ruff, rurr*.

JAMES

Right o, who's a good boy? Who's a good boy? Rah-rah-rah. Rah-rah-rah. There we go, there we go, whoa. Oh there.

LYDIA

I mean there is a tentacle monster in the other ...

BEN

I come and give Brutor a little pat as well.

LYDIA

We could leave now cos there's the tentacle monster.

BRYN

What, what happened? You've dealt with the swarms?

LYDIA

I've dealt with everything yes.

BRYN

Well done Sasha.

LYDIA

See that's why I was ...

BRYN

I said well done.

LYDIA

All right, well, well done for you getting the zombie guy – like you seemed to have him right on the sword.

BRYN

Zombie guy? What zombie guy? Who's a zombie? What?

BEN

Oh...

LYDIA

There was a zombie.

JAMES

Not anymore!

LYDIA

Also a giant tentacle monster.

BRYN

What?

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Where's that? Did you kill that?

LYDIA

It's quite a long way away.

BEN

Basically everyone down here is dead, we're not getting anything of use, we're not being paid for this, it's not our job, the authorities can deal with it.

BRYN

Did you check the corpse in the fungus?

BEN

No! Because I found you covered in frost in front of it!

BRYN

We still need to know who it is.

LYDIA

You've got a Trident.

BEN

Ah! I can't walk quickly!

LYDIA

Could I take – I mean, you didn't want me to take the Trident.

BEN

No, you can't take the Trident!

LYDIA

Can I take the sword?

BEN

If he wants.

LYDIA

And then I can like drag it out.

JAMES

No!

LYDIA

Well how about you do it?

JAMES

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

Oh fine!

ALEX

You try to do so stealthily.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Yes, yes Bertie tries to do stealthily.

LYDIA

You're not going to yourself killed doing that Bertie.

BRYN

Yeah well I mean the fungus looked like it went through the door, did anyone check in the corridor at the other side to see what was going on?

LYDIA

He's clever.

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

LYDIA

All right, let's go.

ALEX

Okay so you head out into the corridor from which you first entered. Obviously there's still the door opposite to the broken crate room which you still haven't checked and you see the far side of the double doors that are shrouded in

mould – you see there is a small amount of mould has come onto this side, just sort of out of the crack between the two doors. It's a very, very small amount – it's not like there's – at this distance from it, on the other side, you were already feeling the cold – on this side, you don't even notice it and you see that the corridor stretches again on beyond it disappearing into gloom and darkness and at that, I think we'll take a break and we'll come back in a couple of minutes.

And welcome back so, yeah, you're in that corridor – creepy corridor.

LYDIA

I open the door that we missed.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

I'm still looking at the big double doors into the huge warehouse room. I don't think it'd be safe to open those – I mean if we let that cold mould thing out.

LYDIA

No one was thinking of opening the doors. No one was going to do that.

JAMES

There's a very small amount of the mould there – perhaps we should gather some of it up – I wonder if the scientist chaps might have some interest in it.

BEN

Well they're all dead so but there's plenty more upstairs. Basically the thing I'm trying to get across here is we don't need to be down here anymore.

BRYN

We need to find out what happened.

BEN

No we don't!

BRYN

We need to know who the person is.

LYDIA

Go and find some people to drown!

ALEX

And as you've said that, we'll say that you've opened that door.

LYDIA

Yeah.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Yeah, just like I'm wandering off opening the door.

ALEX

You open the door and you see a room full of filing cabinets – they line the walls, there are rows of them in the middle, it appears untouched – in fact, it appears like there's nothing creepy or gross in there at all – it looks completely untouched.

LYDIA

Guys, there's all the records here – we might be able to find like, I mean maybe there'll be – I could look under like S for Seed to look up something on what we've got.

JAMES

That's nonsense – you should look under W for weird seed.

LYDIA

True, or isn't it slightly metallic – M – metallic seed.

JAMES

Ah. We make a great team.

BRYN

I think we need an actual scientist to help us.

JAMES

Yes.

BEN

But they're not here and unless George knows a lot about seeds. Kew's kind of empty so we might as well just move on to Paris.

BRYN

We don't know that everyone down here is dead!

ALEX

You give me a perception check.

BEN

No!

LYDIA

Oh dear!

JAMES

Two minus one is one!

[Group laughter]

BEN

24.

ALEX

24.

BRYN

6.

LYDIA

6 plus 7.

ALEX

You're not certain – it might just be a trick of hearing but you think you hear this Hamid – tap, tap, tap, scrape, scrape, scrape, tap, tap, tap.

JAMES

I totally know what happens!

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

We all know what happens.

BEN

Even I know!

JAMES

Agh.

ALEX

It's very hard to pinpoint – it sounds...

LYDIA

Unclear 24.21

ALEX

It sounds like it's running – you're looking up – there's a couple of pipes just running along the corridor above you. It sounds like it's coming from the pipe. Ssh!

LYDIA

I'm already silent.

Sound of tapping on pipework

BRYN

Someone's tapping out a code. It's SOS – someone's sending us an SOS.

Sound of tapping on pipework

BRYN

That's literally the only Morse code.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Just tap hello.

JAMES

Tap something else that's recognisable like a sequence of ascending prime numbers perhaps.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Could you tap out something like de-de-de-da-de-da – like that. So they know it's not a fungus cos the fungus don't know tunes.

JAMES

I can do Land of Hope and Glory on the spoons.

BEN

If we don't where they are.

BRYN

That's why we need to keep exploring.

LYDIA

Just tap something back.

BEN

Unclear 25:17.

ALEX

That's not what's coming.

LYDIA

I knock the bottom of my dagger – I'm like de-de-de-de-de-de. See?

ALEX

There's a bit of a pause and then a repeat of exactly what you just heard.

Tapping noise from pipes.

ALEX

There's a break and then ... and a really, really complex sequence of taps and scrapes is coming out.

LYDIA

What does that mean Hamid?

ALEX

Tap, tap, tap, tap, scrape, scrape, tap, scrape, scrape, tap, scrape, tap scrape, so it's going tap, tap, tap, scrape, scrape, scrape, tap, tap.

BRYN

It's definitely Morse code.

BEN

Oh let's follow the pipes.

LYDIA

Does anyone speak Morse?

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Does anyone take Morse Code as their language?

BEN

I'm totally doing that for a character, that is amazing!

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

Yeah, they're probably telling us something really important.

BEN

Yes, yeah.

LYDIA

Like coming right now!

BEN

Yeah, okay, let's follow the pipe, keep exploring.

BRYN

Avoid the mould of cold!

ALEX

The mould of cold!

Unclear crosstalk 26:13.

JAMES

Where within the room does the pipe...

ALEX

So the pipe runs through the wall out from what was clearly the large warehouse and then curves left and then curves right, into basically the wall further along the corridor and on the right hand side.

LYDIA

Let's see what's in that room then.

BEN

Yeah let's not go into the room with these scary things in it.

BRYN

We're adventurers – why are we not trying to deal with the monsters?

LYDIA

I dealt with monsters.

BEN

Because we're not heroes.

JAMES

I'm a hero!

BRYN

So am I!

[Group laughter]

BEN

You'll end up dead for that.

BRYN

Well I'd rather die heroically than live my life as a coward!

BEN

I will ask you that question again when you're in the process of dying and I think your answer might be a bit different. Get a bit of perspective.

LYDIA

If we follow the thing, maybe we'll find something and they deserve to drown, right? That seems to be what you're hinting.

BEN

Oh yeah, that's one thing, all right? Poseidon is angry okay? I try and heal you all and ...

BRYN

He's always angry, you don't know anything!

BEN

This is a conversation for another time.

BRYN

Agreed.

BEN

But I will not – I stalk off down the corridor knowing that I am faster than Zolf.

[Group laughter]

BEN

I will not accept your religious prejudice!

JAMES

Bertie follows Hamid down the corridor going only very slightly faster than he knows Zolf's maximum pace is.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Walking backwards going like this doing a **unclear 27:34**.

[Group laughter]

Crosstalk 27:40.

JAMES

There goes the unclear 27:41 and Cleric and Poseidon.

BEN

My hands start almost involuntarily moving in the pattern to create burning unclear 27:47.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

I stick with Zolf.

BEN

Okay.

LYDIA

I am not a hero – I just quite like running into dangerous situations – they're quite different things.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Sound the same to me!

ALEX

As all you walk past the door at various points, it feels markedly colder but Hamid, obviously from your experience, you know that it's a heck of a lot warmer than it was on the other side of the door and yeah, walking past you see there's a very, very small amount of mould that's made it out on to the other side, although given the fact that there's barely a thumb's width of mould on the crack is enough to make the entire area cold. It's some pretty potent stuff whatever it is.

LYDIA

Do you think it's valuable?

BEN

Almost certainly.

LYDIA

Just grab ... like I've got flasks and stuff.

BEN

But you probably can't harvest it safely. You're welcome to give it a go but ...

BRYN

I think it sounds a bit risky.

BEN

You might lose some more fingers.

LYDIA

I do need those, yeah.

JAMES

Try giving it a scrape with this – the sword out.

BEN

Shall we find this person first?

BRYN

Yes, like if we were gonna do that, we should come back with proper gear for dealing with the cold.

LYDIA

That doesn't sound fun.

ALEX

So you carry on down the corridor.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

You cross a corner which turns to the right and you see a rather interesting sight – what's left of a door, chunks of it have been torn out and it looks like a table is propped up against it, however, that also looks like it's been pretty heavily annihilated, but for the most part, it's open it seems to be, from this angle – you're basically looking at the open door but it's blocking your view from the inside.

LYDIA

Since everyone's already been quiet noisy.

ALEX

Oh clang, clang, clang.

LYDIA

All right mate?

BRYN

Hello?

LYDIA

How's it going Morsey?

ALEX

Nothing – you’re still getting from the pipe above you – *tap, tap, tap.*

BRYN

Are you the one tapping on the pipe?

BEN

Let’s keep following the pipe.

BRYN

It goes into that room.

BEN

It might not necessarily end in that room.

BRYN

Well we still need to look inside the room.

BEN

Look inside the room then – I thought you wanted to be a hero!

JAMES

Is it a table up against the door?

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

It looks like some...

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

BEN

You said a table just now.

ALEX

Yes, yes.

JAMES

Bertie power attacks the table.

[Group laughter]

BEN

Classic Bertie!

BRYN

Bisecting the man!

[Group laughter]

JAMES

18 total.

ALEX

You hit the table!

LYDIA

Yay!

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

ALEX

Argh! Whoomph, you hit the table – describe ...

BEN

All damage.

JAMES

Oh yes, damage on the table.

LYDIA

Unclear crosstalk 30:02.

JAMES

7 plus 4 is 11.

ALEX

11.

BEN

That's an extra 2 for the power up.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Oh yes, 13.

ALEX

13, so enough to KO things at your level, that's fine.

JAMES

Yeah.

ALEX

So describe your attack and then I'll get off.

JAMES

Bertie sees the table, sees bread, sees the table, he's not moving his head during any of this, it's the same object.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Raises his sword in the air – why you, I'm going to make you a very occasional table.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Smashes!

ALEX

You swing your sword, bury it into the table, like you say, smashing it.

JAMES

It shatters into matchwood.

ALEX

Pretty much, yeah – it falls apart, chunks of..

LYDIA

Unclear 30:44 something.

ALEX

Chunks of table fly out past other party members' heads.

BEN

I honestly don't know what this is all about!

[Group laughter]

BRYN

Hello?

ALEX

Revealing yet more ...

BEN

Table.

ALEX

Sort of ... it looks furniture or something is piled up against – it looks like someone got thin pieces of things that are effectively as tables, and just piled up against that door.

LYDIA

All right mate?

ALEX

Again – scrape, tap, tap, scrape, scrape, tap.

BEN

What else is in the room?

ALEX

You will have to actively try to dig your way through what looks like a barricade of things.

BEN

I also attempt to do so.

ALEX

So just hacking, slashing, no unclear 31:17 attacks, just crank, crunch, crunch... you slowly you know hack your way through.

BEN

While this is going on, I presume it takes a little while.

ALEX

It does take a little bit of time.

BEN

I turn around and look back down the corridor, which with dark vision I can see quite well.

ALEX

Sure.

BEN

Just to make sure we're not being...

ALEX

There doesn't appear to be anything unusual happening.

BEN

On the subject of lights, I've switched my paldron light back on, yeah.

ALEX

That's okay – hacking and slashing and hacking – you eventually make your way through to something that you can push aside, revealing inside – you find

yourself in yeah, a set of toilets – cubicles to the left and right, however it looks like someone's been tearing at the cubicle walls and piling them against the door that you came in. The walls are awash with red stains that are definitely blood and there is a body appears to be poking out from behind a set of sinks which are in the middle – you just see a leg poking out.

BRYN

Zolf, there's someone here hurt.

ALEX

Give me a perception check – Bertie, since you're first in.

JAMES

12 minus one is 11.

ALEX

There is also a broken vent directly opposite you again – exactly like before, it appears to have been broken out and chunks of it have been torn out and stuff like that.

JAMES

Large enough for little monsters?

ALEX

Little monstery swarmy things yeah.

JAMES

Like the ones that we had previously?

ALEX

Yes.

JAMES

Okay cool. I think Bertie approaches what he thinks of as cautiously and stealthily.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Clang!

JAMES

Yeah!

ALEX

Clang!

JAMES

Precisely – he’s going up by one side of – are these sinks in the middle?

ALEX

Yes sinks in the middle.

JAMES

Okay, kind of you know hunched over and he’s got his sword ready because he is not sure if this body is gonna be one of the zombie things so he’s ready and poised to attack if it turns out to be so, and he’s gonna go forward and then like just nudge the body.

ALEX

Okay, so you nudge it and then the leg flops over. As you approach you see off to the sides obscured by other bits of barricade and things like that a few of those creepy humanoid things.

JAMES

The little mandrakey ...

ALEX

Mandrakey jobs.

JAMES

Yeah.

ALEX

That appear to have been properly bashed, like smashed in and things and coming round the corner you see what's left of a person – the leg is just the leg, but looking beyond it into the very corner of the room you see a corpse – it's heavily fungified and so on, there's one leg still there and the other leg like I said it's torn off – one of the arms is hanging loose and in the arm that's hanging loose it appears to be holding like a large wrench and surrounding it are the remains of like brained mandrake things and it's just slumped up against the wall and is a massive copyright infringement on the Last of Us!

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Bertie is gonna go up to the body in the corner and just to be on the safe side, he's gonna ram his sword through the head of the double tap, you know.

ALEX

Yeah.

JAMES

Just to make sure – body in here chaps, best have a closer look.

ALEX

There's a small puff of spores as you do so – puff.

BEN

Check for the name tag.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

JAMES

Bertie rubs through the pockets of the corpse.

BEN

I'll go in and look under em and help.

ALEX

You find another badge. This one says Jason O'Connor – give a perception check. One person search, if other people want to help do so.

BEN

I'll search.

JAMES

What am I running for this – it's 10.

ALEX

Give me your perception and then if it's above a certain amount you gain, give a plus sort of two zero as leading in.

JAMES

Okay – oh you were searching and I was helping?

BEN

Yes.

JAMES

Oh right well, my total perception is 9.

ALEX

That's fine.

BEN

My total perception role was also 9.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

So you both know it's a body.

[Group laughter]

BEN

That was off a 2 rather than 10.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

If you had to guess, you'd guess that they were wearing what's left of like an overall, like a one, a coverall.

BEN

The most important thing was the name tag.

ALEX

Sure, it appears – I know an engineer's boilersuit or a caretaker, yeah.

LYDIA

Where does the pipe go?

ALEX

The pipe comes in, leads straight across, and out the other side of the room.

BEN

Come back out of the room and say how we doing in there boys?

BRYN

There's a dead body, Jason O'Connor – I don't think we mention that name.

LYDIA

Well someone probably does.

BEN

We don't. He's dead, unclear 35:33.

LYDIA

Would it count if you drowned some of the mandrakes cos there's loads of them. I'm trying to understand and they're really mean.

BEN

Not a sacrifice.

BRYN

I think the pipe heads on in that same direction, so we'll keep going round till we locate it.

LYDIA

What, like what are the bangs, you know, it's the pipe going in another direction past the tentacle monster and everything.

BEN

If we have to do that, we have to do that.

ALEX

The pipe comes out of the far side of that room, bends right and then bends left running along the ceiling, it effectively seems to enter the elevator shaft.

LYDIA

Yeah, pretty sure that's the other end.

BRYN

The banging's not coming from this end is it?

LYDIA

No.

ALEX

Also the tapping and scraping by this point has now stopped.

BRYN

I can't reach – can you tap on it again and see if we can get a signal back.

LYDIA

Tap, tap, tap.

ALEX

Tap, tap, tap and again, tap, tap, tap, scrape, scrape, scrape, tap, tap.

BEN

Is it quieter or louder from this end?

ALEX

Quieter.

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Right, so yeah.

BEN

And we have to go back into the big room?

LYDIA

Yeah, well this could get us paid Zolf.

BEN

You're on point Hamid, this is your operation now.

BRYN

Okay *sighs*, okay. We'll follow the corridor round back in to the crate room, back through in to the fungus room where I burned that fungus with my acid.

LYDIA

Now with the dog that isn't being helpful with the sneaking.

ALEX

The dog is almost physically attached to Bertie's legs at this point.

BEN

Occupying the same space from a mechanical point of view?

ALEX

Yes.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

It's actively hindering you by being underfoot, tail between its leg, very quiet, clearly actually scared and just is almost tripping you up cos it's so unwilling to part from your side even for a moment.

JAMES

Ah!

BRYN

Do you want to stay here then Zolf so that you don't have to try and run away from something big and scary?

BEN

I'd be happy to come with you. I said this is your operation – you take the lead, tell me what to do! You want to be a hero, be a hero.

BRYN

We could go over quietly Sasha, just you...

LYDIA

No you can't. Not with these two.

BRYN

Well I mean just you and me and they could wait here and if we scream they could come after us.

BEN

Bearing in mind that I will not get there in time.

BRYN

Well I'd scream.

LYDIA

I don't scream.

BRYN

Okay.

BEN

I guess we should all stick together then, we've got to try and find the source of that pipe.

LYDIA

What do you think Zolf?

BEN

This is not my operation at this point, it's Hamid's.

LYDIA

Let's go in and stab some stuff!

BRYN

Okay.

ALEX

So you poke your head in.

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

I am going to load - can I load a fire flask into one of my retractable wrist shields so that if I were to see a swarm I could throw it.

ALEX

I'm going to say yes.

LYDIA

Cor.

ALEX

We'll say that they're sort of vaguely test-tube-y shaped.

BRYN

From where we were earlier we think that the pipe is heading to the near corner of the room rather than the super far corner of the room where the big tentacle monster was.

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

Okay, so I'm gonna say right, let's stick close to the wall and be ready to get out again if it all starts going wrong but we'll head up towards that corner.

BEN

Oh and also, to say...the audible thing, body language wise, Zolf isn't being belligerent now like when he says it's your thing, very sincere and he's doing what you tell him, he's not like oh.

LYDIA

Bertie is still sulking.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

Hamid's a bit uncomfortable, he got compared to common people.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

James' face!

BEN

So Zolf will shake of the head.

BRYN

Hamid's a bit uncomfortable with the leadership role, cos he's never had one before but he's kind of just okay, let's get on with it.

Follow the pipe right?

JAMES

Bertie's totally on board with this because it might wind Zolf up!

[Group laughter]

ALEX

So you're entering and heading down the near wall.

BRYN

Sticking near to the wall and heading towards that corner.

ALEX

Are you trying to be quiet or not?

BRYN

No, I mean it's the point with the two clankers.

ALEX

And who is it? Everyone? Everyone in there?

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Okay.

LYDIA

I stay a couple of feet back because I don't like the idea of being caught up in unclear 39:25.

ALEX

Sure, so as you start ...

BEN

You didn't say anything about that.

LYDIA

Yeah, I'm sure it was the form guy.

BRYN

Yeah, no, we can spread out a little bit but not too far.

LYDIA

Right.

BEN

That's a good idea.

ALEX

So as you're keeping very quiet and moving along the wall, the tapping and scraping sounds audibly louder and following that pipe you see there's a whole mess of pipes, obviously you're running out and three branch off into the three tanks that are in the middle and are stretching down on to it.

BEN

Okay, having noticed that, as we go past each tank, I'm gonna tap on it. I will tap out, yeah, the rhythm of a famous opera.

ALEX

Okay.

Unclear 40:06.

[Group laughter]

BEN

A famous phrase, just so it's clear that it's...

JAMES

Bertie picks up the libretto on the other side.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

The first one that you tap at with your libretto – does a tap **unclear 40:20** and then swarms of red little legs press up against the glass and are moving all over but you can't see what it is cos of the steam and its just fluttering right next to your finger where it tapped.

LYDIA

Why would it only be a human that can tap?

BRYN

Hamid sort of jumps back slightly but not very much – like actually he’s doing pretty well at not freaking out.

BEN

Do you scream?

BRYN

I don’t think he screams.

ALEX

Presumably you do it at the next one along.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Okay and the next one along, gives a little bit of a tap, there’s a tap-tap, and then you see a frond, a fern just kind of flops up against the glass but it pulls away and then flops up against the glass again.

BEN

Sure.

LYDIA

Is that the thing that’s been tapping?

BRYN

No, it's not the same – it would make more of a rhythm.

BEN

Hamid's like the terrifying unclear 41:07.

LYDIA

All of them can like tap out Morse Code, it's pretty cool. Those tentacle ones, the little red things, they can probably do quite a rhythm.

BRYN

I can't tell which pipe the tapping's coming from.

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check. That's the highest.

BEN

22.

JAMES

7, not bad.

LYDIA

Not good – 14.

ALEX

Okay. As you approach the last one you see that steam appears to be leaving the far side of it – not the side that you're at and not a lot, just a little sort of a – *imitates sound of escaping steam* – seems to be leaving at the far side – you would have to cross round to the far side of the tank in order to see it.

JAMES

Bertie does though.

ALEX

Okay – crossing round you see there is a big, like a visible may be five foot across hole in the glass – it appears the way the glass has broken to be toughened glass – it hasn't just shattered like a big pane. Something's beaten a hole through it and it looks like there's a rock or something is pushed up against it and yeah, that seems to plug the hole and there's just steam coming out from around the sides of it.

BEN

Is this one of the one we've already tapped on?

ALEX

No. You haven't tapped on it yet. Just Bertie's ...

BEN

I'll just tap on this one then.

ALEX

You tap and then a steamy hand presses against the glass, swipes across and you just see a face look at you and going ... you can't hear anything – just *imitates gasping* – and I'm going to end the episode there.

EVERYBODY

Aarrgh!

ALEX

Aargh, I love it.

BEN

On the incredibly effective mind – lots of verbal communication.

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

ALEX

I rely a lot on mime so in audio it comes across terribly!

LYDIA

He's about a seven times better GM in person cos a lot of his mime – he mimes entire plots so ...

JAMES

He's like a **unclear 42:52**.

LYDIA

Subplots or **unclear 42:54 in** mime.

JAMES

Yeah like hearing is actually in many ways the sense in which he GMs the **works**.

[Group laughter]

JAMES

Like he does a very smell heavy – like this...

Crosstalk 43:03.

BRYN

I enjoy the constant hugs.

LYDIA

That's the proprioception GM.

[Group laughter]

Rusty Quill Gaming –[23] – [Hedge Your Bets]

BEN

The vibration therapy as well works very good for unclear 43:11.

ALEX

I'm a big fan of my sign language romantic subplot that I've been running.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

It's going really well! But yeah, we'll end there – we hope you hear us again next week.

EVERYBODY

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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