

## **RQG – [40] – [Wheels Within Wheels]**

**[Show Theme - Intro]**

**ALEX**

Hello and welcome to episode 40 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

**BEN**

Ben Meredith

**LYDIA**

Lydia Nicholas

**BRYN**

Bryn Monroe

*Roar*

**EVERYBODY**

Da-da-da-da!

**BEN**

And a notable silence!

**ALEX**

Yes!

**LYDIA**

Roar, roar, I'm James! Or Brutor, it sounded a bit like Brutor.

**ALEX**

They're kind of similar when you think about it!

**LYDIA**

Yeah, roar – funny interlude

**ALEX**

Who are you playing?

**BRYN**

Heartbroken Hamid.

**LYDIA**

Flattened but you know, reinflated Sasha.

**BEN**

Oscar Wilde sucks!

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

Oh, Zolf Smith, sorry.

**ALEX**

Sure – Bertie’s gone! Bertie’s departed! So, with that in mind, we shall pick up where we left off. The party were in Paris.

**LYDIA**

Yes.

**ALEX**

And whilst investigating Lark D’Ordinateur Sasha got her memory a little bit modified and the party are a little bit suspicious.

**LYDIA**

And we thought that was the worst thing that could happen to Sasha that day!

**ALEX**

Ending up chasing up Amelie Rose who was working for L’Gazette Grand, which turned out to be a fairly run down...

**LYDIA**

Massive newspaper.

**ALEX**

And stumble into an elderly overweight man.

**LYDIA**

And he took us down.

**ALEX**

He took you down hard. Sasha almost died, Brutor soooo close to dying and yeah, it all went a bit pear shaped but nonetheless, you managed to have a dig around and managed to find an alternate address for Amelie Rose and a few more, a few more little details, a few more info.

**BEN**

Something strange is going on.

**ALEX**

But it was very clear that something strange is going on – this was backed up by Hamid when he went on his date.

**BRYN**

Yeah, but I haven't shared that info with you guys yet cos we were rudely interrupted by Mr Oscar Wilde!

**ALEX**

Yeah who came and had a little bit of a back and forth with Zolf Smith.

**LYDIA**

Water, outfit change, water, outfit change, water, outfit change. There, you don't need to listen to last week's episode!

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

We've also found out that he's a magic user, which is an interesting development from the real life Oscar Wilde who as far as I know was not a wizard.

**(Laughter)**

**BRYN**

A wizard of language!

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

A wizard of the word!

**ALEX**

Nonetheless, you just manage to – after Oscar Wilde warned you – catch up to Bertie to see him depart on a train.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

He is gone.

**BEN**

It was like some kind of 50s movie.

**BRYN**

*Sings* – leaving on a steam train.

**ALEX**

*Sings* – that's powered by magical elementals.

We will pick up with Sasha and Zolf catching up to Hamid who's been chasing after Bertie.

**BRYN**

I'm on the platform.

**ALEX**

You're on the platform.

**BRYN**

Looking forlorn.

**ALEX**

Looking very forlorn.

**LYDIA**

What – did you see Bertie? Where is he?

**BRYN**

He was on that train – I think he saw me but he didn't stop to say goodbye.

**BEN**

That didn't go well, so he's obviously...

**LYDIA**

What did you say to him that annoyed him so much?

**BRYN**

I didn't say anything – I didn't get to talk to him.

**LYDIA**

Oh right.

**BEN**

This is interesting.

**BRYN**

I know he can be difficult but he's been my friend for a long time – I wish he'd said goodbye.

**LYDIA**

Well he was probably sad about his dog innit?

**BEN**

Yeah, I guess.

**LYDIA**

I dunno but he feels sad but if he did, he would feel it about the dog.

**BEN**

Well he didn't lose much capital so...whatever. Right, anyway, we can't be dealing with him sulking. If he comes back he comes back – if he doesn't he

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doesn't, we've got to be professional about this. I know he's your friend but I've got to, you know, we've got to draw a line under it.

**LYDIA**

And save the world and everything.

**BEN**

Well that's what I'm ... you know ... I've just been chased up by ...

**BRYN**

We've still got an important job to do.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**BRYN**

There's lots to do – I mean in the morning though yeah?

**BEN**

Oh God yeah, I need... I need sleep for days.

**LYDIA**

My back is still...

**BRYN**

I mean Madeline told me some stuff about you know, the Ordinateurs and the stuff going on at the arc, but we should talk about that in the morning. It's not urgent.

**BEN**

Okay, right yeah – look a good night's sleep, things will look a bit brighter in the morning.

**BRYN**

Always useful, always, always useful.

**LYDIA**

Maybe he'll have come back by the morning.

**BEN**

Yeah – awkwardly pat Hamid on the back – there-there.

**ALEX**

We will skip time ahead. You all head back to your – you take comfort in your enormous ridiculously ostentatious flat but even then I think it might be feeling a little bit empty.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

Without the yells of (*imitates Bertie*). Anyway...

**LYDIA**

Was that supposed to be Bertie or Brutor?

**ALEX**

Does it matter?

**LYDIA**

No.

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

We've undergone such losses.

**ALEX**

So, next morning, you've slept well despite all of the problems and...

**BEN**

Slept with the sleep of the dead.

**ALEX**

It is morning – what is your plan?

**LYDIA**

Sasha has realised that the massive scar on her back as she was getting dressed in the morning looks a lot like a giant falcon has been impressed into her back from potentially when the massive suit of armour with the tiny brain stuck in it.

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

On top of her from a great height so, she might come back into breakfast slightly annoyed.

**BEN**

You all right Sasha? You seem..

**LYDIA**

Yeah, it's just such a shame that Bertie's no longer with us when we will carry him in our hearts and on our back.

**BEN**

What???

**LYDIA**

Nothing!

**BEN**

What? Cos of that scar?

**BRYN**

Hamid and Zolf make eye contact.

**BEN**

Yeah, I mean it's just a scar – you're not really badly hurt.

**LYDIA**

Stupid scar. The burn was fine.

**BRYN**

I mean I can take a look at it if you want, see if I can do anything to help it.

**LYDIA**

No!!! No!!!

**BRYN**

All right. I am trained and magic so...

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

What seems to be the problem? It's okay I'm magic!!!

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

I need to just find Amelie Rose and see if she's got any birds stuck on her.

**BEN**

What???

**LYDIA**

Nothing.

**BRYN**

I fill you guys in about the date and what I learned and how it seems like maybe there's... what's going on at the Ordinateurs is quite similar to what went on at the paper with people like leaving mysteriously and that kind of thing.

**BEN**

Do you think somebody's may be replaced Francois with someone else? That would explain why he's not taking any calls and changed the memory – you know, it might be an illusion getting him in and out and...

**LYDIA**

He was a lovely guy. I just said hello.

**BEN**

What did he look like?

**LYDIA**

Ah, normal.

**BEN**

No, but anything else? What were the colour of his eyes? Hair? What was he wearing?

**LYDIA**

Just average eyes. Like grey/brown/green kind of colour.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**BRYN**

I mean if someone can mess with peoples' memories and peoples' personalities, they could be doing that to him as well – like it may not have been him that cast the spell on Sasha – it could be whoever was doing it to him.

**BEN**

Well that's what I mean – replace him.

**BRYN**

I mean it doesn't need to be a replacement.

**BEN**

I suppose yeah.

**BRYN**

It could just be manipulation but yeah, something really strange.

**BEN**

And replacing people looks like may be ... she said the mood changes.

**BRYN**

Getting rid of people – yeah, changing their personalities.

**BEN**

So they're trying to control people and then may be getting rid of people – like making them want to leave.

**BRYN**

Yeah.

**BEN**

If they can't be controlled, so it's slowly just filtering out.

**BRYN**

It's very strange, yeah.

**BEN**

But why and what's it got to do with the ...

**BRYN**

Well if someone could take control of the Ordinateurs, I mean that would be a really big deal. I mean they could change the entire world through the application of you know, economics essentially. They could topple governments, make new ones powerful.

**BEN**

I don't feel like economic espionage is really our wheelhouse though.

**LYDIA**

But what? What?

**(Group laughter)**

**BRYN**

Spying on people to steal their money.

**LYDIA**

That sounds like something we do quite a lot.

**BYRN**

But in a slightly different way than normal.

**BEN**

Big, big, like really big.

**LYDIA**

Big people, they're really easy to spy on.

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

No on a grand scale, like governments.

**LYDIA**

Oh right.

**BEN**

Whole economies.

**LYDIA**

Ah they are hard, they've often got gargoyles.

**BEN**

The banking systems.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, no – they're difficult.

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

The locks in Westminster are pretty hard.

**BRYN**

I did not hear that, that didn't happen. You didn't try to break into anywhere where people that we work for.

**BEN**

It will be bad.

**LYDIA**

Right.

**BRYN**

Well I think we need to establish what's actually going on. I mean it might not be our job but we don't have enough to go on right now to take it to anyone else.

**BEN**

Yeah we can report.

**LYDIA**

And what's a wheelhouse?

**BRYN**

Area of expertise.

**LYDIA**

Right okay, so shall we go ask this Amelie Rose woman?

**BRYN**

I think that's the best thing to do yeah, is to go and talk to her.

**LYDIA**

Right, I think maybe be careful in case – I'll go up the front, you go around the back or whatever, or maybe the other way round so they don't run off and then drop...

**BEN**

Yeah, that'd be...yeah all right, if we prep it. Well I'll go to the front cos obviously I can't move very fast.

**BRYN**

There's something else I need to check as well quickly – Oscar Wilde seemed to think that my family had been in the press recently and that got me a bit worried.

**LYDIA**

All right – I'm trying to leave this discussion of abstract concepts.

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

Which you can't stab!

**LYDIA**

I mean I just can't stab them, never been taught them, not really exactly sure what a government is apart from a place where lots of money is kept.

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

And go away to ask about newspapers.

**ALEX**

So you ask one of the butlers to bring all the papers. Okay.

**BEN**

Reading montage!

**ALEX**

There is a delay, at which point four butlers come in with every single publication basically within Paris, including all the British papers that they have delivered.

**BRYN**

And the Egyptian papers.

**ALEX**

Oh yeah – there's reams and reams and reams and reams.

**BRYN**

From all over Europe.

**ALEX**

It's more than if you all sat and read all day you would be able to and they're just going (*imitates sound of piles of newspapers being dropped*) – dropping piles and piles of it – they've gone completely overboard.

**BRYN**

I'm going to start with the Egyptian papers. I'm glad that we have the rest of them I need them.

**BEN**

I'm going to start with the British papers cos that's the only language I read, cos I'm an ancient Greek.

**LYDIA**

Do you want me to ask one of the butlers whether to stay here today and read through and then may be tell us?

**BRYN**

No, I'd rather do it myself.

**BEN**

I mean if it's your family it'll probably be pretty big news anyway.

**ALEX**

Tell me how long you're willing to search.

**BYRN**

An hour, may be two.

**BEN**

I go straight to the FT.

**ALEX**

Sure. Both of you give me a perception check.

**BEN**

20.

**LYDIA**

I think I read the French tabloids.

**ALEX**

Got for it – give me a perception check.

**BRYN**

9.

**LYDIA**

28 so I really hope that whatever it is you've got has got into the gutter press.

**ALEX**

Okay, so going round, on the 28, what you find is there isn't anything that you think could be referring to the Tahans – what you do notice is there's been a really interesting sort of pendulum swing on public opinion from the Bertie piece, so what was sort of a joke and so on like that is ... there's been lots of articles going, lots of comment pieces "I'm glad that some people are just willing to put themselves out there – we ought to have more stuff like this" – actually public sentiment seems to be shifting very much in Bertie's favour for it. It's like it's good to see that a strong, a strong figure whether male or female can be willing to be vulnerable which is a strength in itself – it's taken a weird empowerment angle in all of the popular media of Paris. In the UK there's much less of that – it's not really getting that much traction as a story. You notice there is a lot to do with Dover, which is their flood finally appears to have broken, the financial damage from it is massive and there are actually, there's been some reports of unusually high levels of violence in Other London. It's mostly cos the papers that you're heading are kind of skimming past it cos the UK you know, doesn't like publishing papers in this world that are disparaging of themselves but you get the impression there may have been riots in Other London recently or something similar. Hamid, from your search, you find barely a mention of it but there's just a couple of little stubs here and

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there mentioning that the Tahan branches in Egypt, Cairo specifically, have been having some errors, effectively computing problems, some accounts that have closed without meaning to, opened without meaning to, a sudden spike in clerical errors which is ... once you get...

**BRYN**

Those clerics!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Once you get past that sort of back and forth of “oh, this is very inconvenient for me” – people are just going well it’s an endemic problem, once systems get this complicated of course there are problems, blah-blah-blah.

**LYDIA**

*Sings* – entropy my great nemesis.

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Yeah exactly, so yeah. Take from all of those what you will.

**BEN**

Right.

**LYDIA**

Right it looks like all these things are actually quite good about Bertie, like look at this – and I put it in front of Zolf and although it's in French it I assume has a reprint of the Bertie photo. Like it's saying that it's good that he's been all soft in the picture because that is strong – it's hard to be soft.

**BRYN**

Right.

**LYDIA**

I did a pun!

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA**

I did a pun! I did one.

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

Oh sorry yes. Well done.

**LYDIA**

I'm trying now he's you know, he's gone. You read anything interesting?

**BEN**

Yeah – nothing about the Tahans but there's been, there appears to be some riots in Other London.

**LYDIA**

That doesn't happen, no! Barret's got it all under control.

**BEN**

Open the article – point to the bit where it says there's been some riots in Other London.

**LYDIA**

They're probably trying to cover up some weird stuff, like they've done some big...

**BRYN**

Why would they cover something up with a riot?

**LYDIA**

They've been trying to – like so the higher ups will be like, oh well there's been some damage done above ground because he's committed some crimes and

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yeah, and so they'll have said that there's a riot but it's knowing riots down there. I mean you get gang fights but they don't get massive cos everything's locked down.

**BEN**

Right fair enough, I thought I'd mention it.

**BRYN**

There doesn't seem to be too much about my family bust just some sort of off-hand references to a few issues with our systems.

**BEN**

While also something has been published, yeah.

**LYDIA**

Is it weird system stuff like that the Ordinateurs do?

**BYRN**

I hope not.

**BEN**

I wonder if that's... shall we check other banking news, not just the Tahans but ... is this a trend?

**LYDIA**

Sasha's getting quite antsy over the idea of staying in and reading more papers about economics.

**BRYN**

Let's come back to it all this evening after we've done...

**BEN**

Right, okay yeah.

**BRYN**

Other things today.

**BEN**

Sure, so we're going to see Amelie. Well, we're going to go visit her house.

**BRYN**

It seems to me a bit unlikely that she'll be there but best place to try.

**BEN**

So yeah, I guess if I approach it sort of at the front, cos I aren't moving much.

**LYDIA**

Let's go see what the house looks like.

**BEN**

Yeah, yeah.

**ALEX**

Okay cool. So you start heading off.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**LYDIA**

Get a cab part of the way.

**ALEX**

Sure – one of the automated ones we'll say.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, definitely, definitely, pick the automated one. Does it fly? Can you make it fly?

**ALEX**

I love the idea that you're slowly taking apart the cab that's getting you to where you want to go.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, sort of looking at how it works.

**ALEX**

You've arrived at your turn left, turn left, turn left, you have arrived at your turn left.

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

We will skip ahead. You've travelled through Paris and you're close towards the outskirts – it is not a poor area, it is not a wealthy area, it is just a middling district for working professionals, that kind of thing. You find the address that you've come to and it is an apartment block and there is a bunch of buzzers effectively on the left hand side – they're actually tiny little pentagrams that you have to push but there is even one which should be Amelie Rose but it's actually the Johnsons.

**LYDIA**

Are we at the right house cos it says...

**BRYN**

But we know that she might not have been there for a few months so perhaps someone else moved in – maybe the Johnsons wouldn't mind us just asking them when they arrived. They sound English.

**BEN**

Yeah, could be. After that maybe try her mum.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, yeah – she might have left.

**BEN**

She probably won't have moved.

**LYDIA**

It could be a forwarding address.

**BRYN**

It's most likely yes.

**LYDIA**

People that want to be found have heard.

**BRYN**

That's true, yeah.

**LYDIA**

Leave forwarding addresses.

**BEN**

Yes, we could be asking like oh we thought that ... yes.

**LYDIA**

Almost.

**BRYN**

Just ask, be polite.

**BEN**

All right.

**LYDIA**

I'll round the back and stand around the fire escape. You do it Hamid cos you can't speak French, I say to Zolf, as if he wasn't aware of that.

**(Group laughter)**

**BRYN**

Okay, I'll do the talking then.

**LYDIA**

Tactics.

**BEN**

Right.

**ALEX**

Okay, so Hamid out front, Sasha round back.

**BEN**

But, not Bertie – what’s going on – help!

**(Group laughter)**

**BEN**

Zolf is standing next to Hamid.

**BRYN**

I push the buzzer.

**ALEX**

Sure - there’s a brief delay – you don’t hear any noise or anything and eventually there’s someone coming down. A huge man – Bertie sized, big bushy beard, very, very sort of muscular, very kind of weathered, and he looks very, very strong, very, very sort of capable.

**BEN**

You’d expect to see him in some sort of pit fight.

**ALEX**

He looks like he has been out in the sticks somewhere and then opens the door and goes, hello? How can I be helping you today?

**BRYN**

Oh, it's nice to hear an....

**ALEX**

English!!! I love it, fantastic, how can I help you?

**BRYN**

Right – terribly sorry to bother you, we were actually...

**ALEX**

Oh hello there little man!

**BRYN**

Hi.

**ALEX**

He reaches his hand out to shake.

**BRYN**

I shake his hand.

**ALEX**

It's like encompassing your arm – he's huge and he's very tanned, very, very tanned.

**BRYN**

We're really sorry to bother you – we're actually looking for a person we think might be the previous occupant of your apartment.

**ALEX**

Ah-ah, mmm-mmm.

**BRYN**

How long have you been living here if you don't mind my asking?

**ALEX**

Oh well, me and family we moved in oh, about four months ago now.

**BRYN**

Okay so...

**ALEX**

Loving it! Loving it!

**BRYN**

Do you know who lived here before you?

**ALEX**

I've got a forwarding address.

**BRYN**

Oh that would be brilliant, yes, it's Amelie Rose we believe is the name. Is that correct?

**ALEX**

Yeah, I dunno – I never met the woman.

**BEN**

If you wouldn't mind giving us a forwarding address.

**BRYN**

That would be so helpful.

**ALEX**

Of course – do you want to come in for a drink? It's nice to hear a friendly voice, ha!

**BEN**

We're quite busy – it's an urgent thing unfortunately.

**BRYN**

It would actually be really nice but we should really...

**ALEX**

His manner completely changes and he just looks very aggressive.

**BRYN**

No, no!

**ALEX**

We know that lawyers can't lie so if I ask you and you say you're not.

**BEN**

I point to the trident.

**ALEX**

His manner completely changes again – great!!!

**BEN**

Why are you worried about the lawyers?

**ALEX**

Can stand lawyers – can't stand them – he disappears upstairs. He comes back down eventually.

**BRYN**

Okay.

**ALEX**

Comes back down eventually with a piece of paper.

**BEN**

Yes, and when he's gone I don't think we'd ever leave – I think he's too hospitable.

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

Just hands it over – there you go! I mean for what it's worth.

**BRYN**

Thank you so much.

**BEN**

No, that's really helpful.

**BRYN**

Thank you so much and always nice to meet someone who speaks the same language in a foreign country.

**ALEX**

I know right! I just, you know, like I'm here with work, I didn't want to be but you know, it's growing on me but the language is...

**BRYN**

It's a good city.

**ALEX**

Yeah, it's cool right?

**BRYN**

What's your work?

**ALEX**

Well I actually, I used to be working in mining in the Americas actually.

**BRYN**

Oh yeah, yeah.

**ALEX**

But it's not a place to bring up a family, not really. It's ...

**BRYN**

Still quite wild out there I hear.

**ALEX**

Yeah it's pretty hard, it's pretty hard living.

**BRYN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

So yeah, when, when my wife got pregnant we came here, you know. There's work to be done.

**BEN**

Are you still mining or are you doing stuff for the catacomb?

**ALEX**

I do some construction with the catacombs, although it's dropped off a lot recently actually – we're kind of on a hiatus.

**BEN**

Oh why's that?

**ALEX**

You tell me!

**BEN**

Right, fair enough.

**ALEX**

The man says stop, we stop – the man says go, we go. He claps you on the shoulder and “boom”.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**BRYN**

Thank you so much for your help.

**ALEX**

Hey no worries.

**BRYN**

Good luck, good luck.

**ALEX**

And yourself – what was the name?

**BRYN**

Hamid.

**ALEX**

Hamid – pleasure, always good to meet a halfling, you guys know how to have a fun time.

**BRYN**

Thank you.

**ALEX**

Mr?

**BEN**

Zolf Smith and I will give him like so enough for a nice drink and say you know, for the information, thank you very much.

**ALEX**

He looks at it and looks a little bit hurt. Now come on! Drops it back down – hospitality is not dead my friend.

**BEN**

Well I just wanted to say I appreciate it.

**ALEX**

Well nonetheless, now you've forced my hand – he reaches in and pulls out a hip flask, pulls out a collapsible cup.

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**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

Pours you a tiny bit – I will not let you go until you've had some.

**BRYN**

Thank you very much.

**BEN**

Subtly sniff it.

**ALEX**

It's basically petrol!

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

Brilliant.

**ALEX**

It's so potent.

**BEN**

That means it's probably not poison because a lot of things would probably die in there. That's not how poison works – down it!

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

It doesn't have much in the way of flavour but it's strong. He takes it back.

**BRYN**

Wow that's ... yeah, that would ...

**ALEX**

I used to brew it myself – got to say that you can't really do that in an apartment am I right?

**BRYN**

Yeah! Yeah, wow!

**ALEX**

Well anyway, it's been a pleasure guys.

**BEN**

No thank you, pleasure.

**ALEX**

Have a good one.

**BRYN**

You too.

**ALEX**

Closes the door.

**LYDIA**

Sasha sorts of peeks round – it's been a while cos the unclear 20:26 gone up and down – oh no Zolf, Zolf!!!! Cos he seems a little dizzy – like did he magic you? Are you all right Zolf?

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

No he gave me a drink.

**LYDIA**

One drink?

**BEN**

I'm fine, it was just quite a, you know, strong – it'd got a bit of a kick to it.

**LYDIA**

Right – he kicked you?

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

Sasha are you having a problem with metaphors today?

**[Group laughter]**

**BRYN**

Is the address the mother's address?

**ALEX**

Yeah.

**BRYN**

Is it the same one?

**ALEX**

Yeah, it's the same, yeah.

**BRYN**

Yeah that's fine – that's kind of what I, yeah, but that's good.

**BEN**

Right, good well it's her mum so it could take a while.

**BRYN**

Yeah, we should probably hire a vehicle.

**LYDIA**

A gyrocopter, yes, I was thinking the same thing. If we took a gyrocopter we could get there today.

**BRYN**

We'll get there today anyway – I mean it's not that far.

**LYDIA**

Sooner today.

**BRYN**

Yes, but none of us know how to pilot a gyrocopter.

**BEN**

A taxi?

**LYDIA**

We could hire one.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [40] – [Wheels Within Wheels]

**BRYN**

That's really expensive.

**BEN**

We could put it on the hotel's account – I don't know why I'm agreeing.

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

Tell the hotel! Tell the hotel! Yeah.

**BRYN**

I think we should hire a car that we can drive ourselves.

**LYDIA**

Wait? Drive ourselves.

**ALEX**

Smash-cut to there is three small one person vehicles driving along the road – they're very, very small, it's basically transport only, no space for baggage or anything.

**LYDIA**

You're saying there are three but there's two because Sasha is so far ahead.

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

But yeah, it's actually effectively a driverless car – you can drive it if you want but you just...

**LYDIA**

She doesn't want!

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

May be then she's behind cos she keeps trying to drive and is making much worse decisions than the rest.

**ALEX**

Then let's go to the car immediately, puts it back on the road that she was, and she turns right, puts her back on the road she was on.

**BRYN**

That's interesting.

**ALEX**

It's actually – the closest thing is – imagine a side car for a motorbike – something that you can actually sit in so it's not you know knees up to your

Rusty Quill Gaming – [40] – [Wheels Within Wheels]

shoulders but it's kind of a like a little buggy thing. We will skip time ahead, a few hours pass.

**BRYN**

I take it that Google exists in this world.

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

We'll skip ahead like I said – eventually you start heading back in towards the countryside. You're actually heading vaguely near to where you guys washed up – not the same village, nowhere near the same distance but nonetheless, you are sort of approaching it and then you find yourself getting a bit more isolated and you're approaching an isolated farmstead. It looks like it's not an actual active farm – it looks like someone's bought some rundown old place and sort of done it up something like – it's quiet, there's a yard, there's a couple of dogs barking.

**BEN**

Right so...

**LYDIA**

I could cover the back.

**BEN**

Be a good plan. I don't think anything's gonna wrong here but Hamid?

**BRYN**

Harder to run away through fields than over a rooftop.

**LYDIA**

You think like...this is ... Sasha has absolutely no idea how to chase someone.

**ALEX**

This is the biggest expanse that Sasha's had in a while.

**LYDIA**

This is not comfortable – I mean she was distracted while she was in the car, that was amazing and you know, tries to back against a hedge and backs into the hedge.

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

It's spiked and is covered in leaves.

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

I think Hamid, you should do the talking because...

**BRYN**

Okay.

**BEN**

She might be dead, so asking after your daughter, that could be bad and we need somebody with a skill for that.

**BRYN**

Yeah, I'll see what I can do.

**LYDIA**

Oh, cast a message on me then if it goes well, like I can just turn up again.

**BRYN**

Okay.

**ALEX**

Presumably Hamid goes up to the front door.

**BRYN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

Zolf?

**BEN**

I'll be with but I'm just not going to talk cos I'm me.

**LYDIA**

I'm just going to sort of just be around roughly where the back edges are but I'm just...I can see...

**BEN**

Skulking!

**LYDIA**

The windows and door and hiding behind a tree.

**ALEX**

Okay – there's a door knocker – presumably you knock it. Eventually, it takes a little while – the door opens, it's on a chain, there's a not elderly, sort of a late middle aged woman there behind it and again, it's in French – hello? What can I do for you?

**BRYN**

Good afternoon – again I'm as polite as it possible to be – good afternoon, I'm terribly sorry to bother you – are you Madame Rose?

**ALEX**

Who's asking?

**BRYN**

My name is Hamid. I'm actually looking for your daughter.

**ALEX**

What do you want?

**BRYN**

Just to talk to her – nothing else – we're investigating a matter we think that she may have already investigated and we want to join forces with her and help her and hopefully she can help us as well.

**ALEX**

Give me a diplomacy check.

**BRYN**

20.

**ALEX**

Okay. She sort of unlatches the door – you're not the first.

**BRYN**

Yes, that's what I wondered.

**ALEX**

Who are you with? Why are you here? What do you actually want? I know you want to speak to my daughter but I could do with a bit more than that.

**BEN**

Is she talking to me?

**BRYN**

I switch to English.

**ALEX**

She's swapping between both of you assuming that you're speaking.

**BEN**

Yeah, yeah.

**BRYN**

I switch to English – she's talking to both of us, she wants to know what we want.

**ALEX**

I am capable of speaking in English.

**BEN**

Oh sorry.

**BRYN**

Oh, terribly... I switch back to French – I'm terribly sorry, I didn't realise, I mean that wasn't an attempt to exclude you – it's just my friend here doesn't speak French – I switch to English – would it be okay if we talked in English?

**ALEX**

Yes, that's fine. I'm still waiting to find out who you are and why you're here.

**BEN**

Bored of reading subtitles as well.

**[Group laughter]**

**BRYN**

So we are mercenaries from London – we're investigating a matter independently currently – we're not directly reporting to any specific employers but we're trying to discover what might have happened at La Rond Gazette or with the Ordinateurs.

**ALEX**

Why? You haven't actually answered my question. What you've done there is evaded – I'm not an idiot.

**BRYN**

Because something very is strange is going on with the head of the Ordinateurs and we believe you may have information related to an event that happened in London that we were accidentally involved with.

**ALEX**

She looks at very, very cannily.

**BRYN**

I'm not specifically evading – I just don't know how much detail to go in.

**ALEX**

No it's fine.

**BYRN**

How much do you know about the recent...

**ALEX**

This is Edison isn't it?

**BRYN**

Yes.

**ALEX**

Fine. She gestures for you to come in.

**BRYN**

Thank you so much. There's one other member of our group with us – is that okay if she joins us as well?

**ALEX**

Sure.

**BEN**

I message Sasha.

**LYDIA**

I go quite a long way out so it looks like I'm coming up the road as if I was walking behind you rather than coming out from the back of the house.

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

Covered in leaves.

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

It's like you've had a fight with a hedge and lost.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, I've had a fight with nature and I am not enjoying it.

**BEN**

Slightly spooked wide eyes.

**ALEX**

For anyone who's paying attention, she knows exactly what it was – she seems to be quite on it. She closes the door, sits you down, fetches tea.

**LYDIA**

So is this Amelie? Hi.

**BRYN**

No this is her mother, Madame Rose.

**ALEX**

Well let's be blunt – my daughter's almost certainly dead.

**LYDIA**

Sasha jumped her – pulls a stick out of her jacket.

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

So yes.

**BRYN**

I'm terribly sorry to hear that. What makes you think that?

**ALEX**

Journalism sort of runs in our family – she wasn't the first, neither was I – put two and two together.

**BRYN**

Yeah, right okay.

**ALEX**

It's not exactly difficult is it? The Gazette shuts down from nowhere.

**BRYN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

I know they're in some financial trouble but not that... then you have the Ordinateurs, you've got all of the glitches in Paris – I hear it's happening in Egypt now too. Is something going on? Has she found out too much? She's almost certainly been killed.

**BRYN**

Right...

**ALEX**

She's handing out tea.

**BRYN**

Well...

**LYDIA**

You should know that like this address is sort of available at your daughter's old one so people could totally find you cos we did and we weren't even, we're not even very good at investigating.

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

I will go just go ohhh and put my heads in my hands.

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

It wouldn't be the first time I've had someone after me and I wouldn't worry love.

**BRYN**

You said someone else had come asking about Amelie – who was that?

**ALEX**

First was the Gazette reporters and then there was a police officer a while ago now. She's gone.

**BRYN**

Right.

**ALEX**

I know that officially I received a letter from her and that she is, according to her letter, taking a new exciting position on the East Coast of America. She's not interested in America – she's never been interested in America – she doesn't want adventure. She's interested in the literary side of it. She wants to be a novelist. If I'm frank, she didn't have the skills but she was perfectly good as an investigative journalist.

**BRYN**

Right, well it sounds similar to the other people who left.

**ALEX**

I've received letters since. If it is her she's behaving incredibly strangely.

**BRYN**

Yeah.

**LYDIA**

Well on the upside there is that they've got powers to make you act strangely, so.

**ALEX**

Who's they?

**LYDIA**

The people that messed with my head.

**BRYN**

The truth is we don't know – that's what we're investigating but we think that someone or a group were interfering with the operation of the Ordinateurs and the Gazette and they seem to have some ability to compel people to make decisions.

**ALEX**

No different from the Meritocrats really when you think about it – compelling people to make decisions. As it stands, I mean – *sighs* – look, I'm trying to be frank with you – if you're coming at this from the Edison angle you're almost certainly coming at this from some kind of military I'm guessing?

**BEN**

We're freelancers.

**ALEX**

Freelancers, so military then right.

**BEN**

We're mercenaries, that's not military.

**ALEX**

Same difference in my experience.

**BRYN**

I'm certainly not a military man Madame.

**ALEX**

A mercenary is merely a soldier who can sell himself. For what it's worth, all the others have disappeared who come around – I haven't heard hide nor hair of them since. I believe the police officer was promoted working somewhere in the south – I can't remember now.

**BRYN**

Right – do you know what Amelie was investigating when she disappeared specifically?

**ALEX**

Yes, that'd be... there's been a bunch of disappearances, both of the Ordinateurs around the place – I believe it began with Jean ...

**BRYN**

Jean-Luc Bolieau.

**ALEX**

Yes, that's the one. She was chasing him and then ...

**BEN**

Yeah, about six months ago.

**ALEX**

That's about right.

**BRYN**

Well we know the people at the Ordinateurs said that some... she was there asking about him only three months ago.

**ALEX**

For what it's worth that doesn't really surprise me when she's doing this kind of thing, she can disappear for some time.

**BEN**

Right so...

**LYDIA**

Well what do you mean about going about it the Edison way? You know what Edison's built?

**ALEX**

Was that ... it was that machine wasn't it? The one that makes more of itself.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, it's army basically.

**ALEX**

Pretty much.

**LYDIA**

Infinite army.

**ALEX**

Cos that's what the world needs – another army – fantastic!

**BEN**

Well, someone put a stop to that, till they sell it to the highest bidder, but...

**ALEX**

You're chasing it aren't you?

**BEN**

Yes, because we're trying to stop it being created by ...

**LYDIA**

Made into an infinite army.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**LYDIA**

That wouldn't be good.

**ALEX**

She looks at Zolf, looks at Sasha, turns to Hamid – you really think that's how this is going to play out? Genuinely?

**BRYN**

We have reason to believe Madame that Edison was not the true creator of that machine.

**ALEX**

She leans back, surprised.

That is new, okay.

**BRYN**

We're trying to track down the person we believe is truly responsible, to make sure that the inventions can't fall into the wrong hands.

**ALEX**

One second – she goes away, comes back, puts a box on the table – Amelie left this with me – she knew there'd be people coming around. Not the first person I showed – I showed one of the Gazette lot, they disappeared too. For what it's worth, I don't actually think you're knowingly chasing this from the wrong angle – I still think that it's gonna come back and bite you. Help yourself.

**BRYN**

Thank you.

**BEN**

I open the box.

**ALEX**

Opening it up, it's full of paperwork.

**BEN**

Do we want to make this a bit easier because I can just make sure that no-one's lying.

**ALEX**

Cleric?

**BEN**

Points at the trident.

**LYDIA**

Some people just like tridents Zolf.

**BEN**

Not really a common weapon.

**ALEX**

Go for it.

**BEN**

Cool, I'll cast Zone of Truth – we're on the gates, so that is 16.

**LYDIA**

What do I need to do?

**BRYN**

I can't lie.

**ALEX**

You are able to lie.

**BEN**

The rest of us can't.

**BRYN**

Yeah, you're unaffected by the spell.

**LYDIA**

Sasha's really quite unable to lie in front of people anyway.

**ALEX**

She turns to Hamid first. What's your most embarrassing memory?

**BRYN**

I'd really rather not say.

**ALEX**

He plays the game or you can leave the house.

**BRYN**

I'll talk about a time at university when I was left standing naked in the middle of the central green of the college.

**ALEX**

It was Bertie wasn't it?

**BRYN**

No!

**ALEX**

That's a nice change!

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

Same question to Sasha.

**LYDIA**

Ah, like so there was one time yeah, we were playing pass the coin and the whole thing is that you're putting it between peoples' pockets and ...

**ALEX**

If you're lying, give me a bluff check.

**LYDIA**

She's not.

**ALEX**

Okay.

**BEN**

She's just choosing to tell the truth!

**ALEX**

Sure, sure.

**LYDIA**

And there was this time right where it was in... it was in like Robber Jones' pocket.

**ALEX**

I'll accelerate!

**LYDIA**

Everyone knows and he saw me, he saw me take the coin right of out there. How was I supposed to know that he was allergic to cats.

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

But I could have checked, I should have done my research – I learned from that day, I learned from that day.

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

I was the one that ended up with the streaming red eyes, aw.

**ALEX**

And finally Zolf?

**BEN**

Same question?

**ALEX**

Yeah.

**BEN**

Being court martialled.

**ALEX**

For?

**BEN**

Going AWOL.

**ALEX**

Fair enough. There you go – there's the box.

**BEN**

And yours?

**ALEX**

Why should I have to do this? I'm the one who's in danger here. You should count yourself lucky that I'm showing you this at all – I didn't have to let you in this house.

**BEN**

Fine, well, I just guess I won't tell you what happened to your daughter if I find out.

**ALEX**

Oh please, you wouldn't be able to find it.

Going through the paperwork, Hamid, it's a really, really well investigated scenario – there are names, dates, places, where people have been eating, points of contact things like that – really boiling it down, there is a lot in there. Dr Jean Bolieau, Ordinatist, he actually contacted Amelie first then he left for London to live with his family and work on new conceptual systems for

Ordinateurs. He basically seems to be heading up an entirely new branch for the United Kingdom for Ordinateurs and really bumping up their systems. It's a very, very prestigious placement. But Paulette Loup turns out to be an archaeologist who wilfully quit her job – she was actually doing archaeological work in the Catacombs and then volunteered for a dig in the Russian wastes – again it turns out that it's being led by a very, very prestigious mind.

**LYDIA**

The information from ...

**ALEX**

This is what's in the box that Hamid's...

**LYDIA**

But it's similar to...

**ALEX**

Oh it's similar yeah.

**LYDIA**

Paulette Loup.

**ALEX**

Yeah, yeah.

**BEN**

But is it better?

**ALEX**

It's more detail, like it's giving you dates, it's giving you times, it's giving you people, contacts etc. Then there's Selene Souchet who's the church groundswoman it turns out for Notre-Dame and she effectively was found having an affair with Piaget, Jacque Piaget and then suddenly moved to live in India of all places with Jacque Piaget. Jacque Piaget, a delivery driver, there a list of where he's been delivering and so on – if you wanted to go into that we can.

**LYDIA**

So if you say an affair, were they married to other people at the time?

**ALEX**

Yes.

**LYDIA**

Ah.

**ALEX**

And moved to live in India with Souchet. There's Vivianne Messier who's a hydraulics engineer who has also received an offer of a dream job who's gonna be working in Japan in fluidic systems and then obviously there's Francois

Rusty Quill Gaming – [40] – [Wheels Within Wheels]

Henri – she’s very clearly indicating that he’s under some kind of compulsion or something similar, very atypical behaviour but he’s a closed box - there’s no way to get to him, there’s no way to see him, no-one will let them see him. It even has actually a little note that she’s going to attempt to woo the receptionist for some more information on the Ordinateurs. It’s very, very complete, but those are the salient points – if you want any more detail I can go into it.

**LYDIA**

Has she checked that these jobs exist?

**ALEX**

Everything’s verified – she has proof of employment, she has dates of birth, she has birth certificates – she’s gone to incredible lengths on this one.

**LYDIA**

So the fact is that as far as she know, Paulette Loup is actually on ...

**ALEX**

As far as Amelie is concerned, she’s got it verified, she’s spoken to them via magical communications, she did manage to catch hold of Paulette Loup on her way to the Russian wastes – like she was packing and leaving.

**LYDIA**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

And Paulette Loup, basically she again suggested she was under some kind of compulsion. There's a little note which says for what it's worth she seems very happy.

**LYDIA**

This seems pretty positive really. Like none of them vanished in terms of dying.

**BEN**

Yeah, there is something far more insidious though.

**BRYN**

I thanked Madame Rose for the information. I say we were aware of a lot of this but this is much more detailed than the information we had so it's really useful, but there's one thing I still don't understand - I mean we've had this list of names before, we knew what had happened to a couple of them but not all of them, but why this list of people? What links these people? That's still never been clear to us.

**ALEX**

The Ordinatist, he got in touch with her first saying there was something peculiar happening there. She started sniffing around, found lots of reports of construction workers not being in the catacombs, that kind of thing, redirected work, redirected funds – from there she seems to have examined the

catacombs. The catacomb angle of course led her via the archaeologist. I'm not sure where she goes, why she goes to the groundskeeper.

**BRYN**

There's so much here but there's also... it's almost like the most important points have been left out – the actual reason for these people to be involved, to be on the same list.

**BEN**

The catacombs may be?

**LYDIA**

Yeah, is Notre-Dame a good way into different bits of the catacombs?

**BEN**

The crypt?

**LYDIA**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

That was my thoughts.

**LYDIA**

If you were gonna do a job on Notre-Dame, obviously you'd want to go through the catacombs.

**ALEX**

From what I understood, she started doing a wider search – sudden amazing, fortuitous promotion, sudden amazing inheritance and so on.

**BRYN**

Piaget was a delivery driver – did he deliver to Notre-Dame? What was his route? Is that in here? I'm looking through it again like I've tried to read as quickly as possible.

**ALEX**

Sure, so heading through into – there's a list of deliveries – his delivery firm will say he works for a number of companies, but there's highlighted the fact that he's done multiple trips to Lark D'Ordinateur, none to Notre-Dame.

**BRYN**

Okay.

**ALEX**

But he's also done a decent number to catacomb construction work and renovation and so on.

**BEN**

Makes sense.

**BRYN**

And then Vivianne Messier is a hydraulics engineer.

**ALEX**

So Vivianne Messier PhD specialising in large integrated systems, very large thesis on ways of dynamic fluid solutions, by which I mean things like suggested how fluids could be used in Ordinateur work and so on. A couple of years ago was working on the Ordinateurs and was brought in within the last 12 months to do some follow up work – there's not very much detailing on what the follow up work is.

**BRYN**

But she's also worked with the Ordinateurs.

**ALEX**

And then immediately after that, departs for Japan with her family for a very happy life presumably.

**BEN**

Right.

**LYDIA**

Thing is right – once you’ve got Francois Henri as the boss, why do you need to mess with all the others? He could just order stuff done.

**BEN**

Keep the information secret. Stop it getting out if they’re working on something they shouldn’t be. So, is there anything else that you have discovered or is this it?

**ALEX**

She takes a moment and pulls out from her pocket a letter from Amelie.

**BEN**

I will hand it to Hamid.

**ALEX**

Sure. Effectively what it boils down to is:

“This is the last letter you will receive from me which is real. If I’m writing to you after this point, and I am not seeing you in person, it might be me, but it’s not me. I may as well be dead. I love you.”

Gives an address for a deposit box.

“If things go as I expect, you will be mailed what’s inside this box.”

Rusty Quill Gaming – [40] – [Wheels Within Wheels]

It's a dead-hand policy. I've used them myself, it's very good insurance.

**BRYN**

So, have you done any other investigation?

**ALEX**

This arrived a couple of weeks ago.

**BRYN**

Right.

**ALEX**

These things can take a little time.

**BEN**

Okay, in which case, you know, you said it ran in your family – I'm assuming you're an investigative journalist or something of the kind – what's your next move? What would be your next move?

**ALEX**

Give me a perception check.

**BRYN**

Well I mean, I think we should ...

**BEN**

18.

**BRYN**

Re-tread Amelie's steps ourself.

**ALEX**

At that point you see a couple of youngish children sort of just passing through the bay windows at the back playing amongst the fields. What I'm going to be doing is keeping my nose clean, looking after my grandchildren.

**LYDIA**

But if you had three people that were quite disposable...

**BEN**

What would be your next move?

**ALEX**

Catacombs. She sort of leans back, puts her pen down.

**BEN**

That's what I was almost saying.

**LYDIA**

Right Sasha pulls another leaf out of her jacket and looks incredibly happy at the news that she'll be going underground to a complicated dark, potentially evil urban setting. Much more comfortable there than all of this green.

**BEN**

Yeah, right well.

**ALEX**

There's an archaeological dig – it's inactive at the moment but there'll be a decent entrance for you unless you want to go via the sewers.

**BEN**

Yeah one of the miners on it lives in your daughter's old apartment.

**ALEX**

I'd love to say it's a small world but if this world got any smaller, there wouldn't be any space for us, am I right?

**BEN**

Mmm. Right, well...

**LYDIA**

Small spaces can be good for Sasha.

**[Group laughter]**

**BEN**

I assume we're done here then?

**BRYN**

Thank you so much for your help. If we do learn anything, we'll share it with you.

**BEN**

Yeah, even if you don't think we're up for it, we'll...

**ALEX**

She picks up the box – I'd recommend all of you preparing something like this. Places it upstairs, comes down and sort of opens the door for you to leave.

**LYDIA**

Who would you send yours to Zolf?

**BEN**

I wouldn't bother.

**LYDIA**

I'd probably send mine to you, maybe Hamid, or Brock – I don't know where he lives.

**ALEX**

And I think we'll close there – a bit of a downbeat one, a bit of intrigue, bit of good old fashioned detective work, am I right?

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

I'm quite glad we didn't have Bertie sat here!

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

*(imitating Bertie)* Where are they? What's happening? Who are you???

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

Just sitting a dog down dressed as an investigative journalist!

**[Group laughter]**

**LYDIA**

In the house of a woman who's daughter is dead.

**BEN**

I feel like I'm much more confused at the end of that episode than I was at the beginning!

**ALEX**

Then I've done my job!!!

**BRYN**

I think we've got a decent handle.

**BEN**

We know where to go next.

**BRYN**

We know where to go next, but that's, you know.

**LYDIA**

Someone keeps leaving us clues, it's great!

**[Group laughter]**

**ALEX**

I'll give you 101, as long as you know where to go next.

**BEN**

Yeah.

**ALEX**

Everything will be fine!

**BRYN**

I've got theories. All right. It'll be interesting.

**ALEX**

It was Brutor all along isn't it?

**BEN**

Yeah it was.

**ALEX**

Tell you what, that's our most popular fan theory! It was Brutor all along!

Well, like I said, I think we'll close there and we will be back next week. Who knows if James will be here – either way, tune in next week guys!

**EVERYONE**

Bye!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**ALEX**

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