

## **RQG – 44 – Rock Bottom**

### **Content Warnings**

- X
- X

**[Show Theme - Intro]**

**ALEX**

Hello and welcome to episode 44 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

**LYDIA**

Lydia Nicholas

**BRYN**

And Bryn Monroe. And just us! Because Alex has killed or driven off everyone else.

**LYDIA**

Or thrown down a hole.

**BRYN**

It's so lonely and we're just wondering who's next.

**ALEX**

So things aren't going great. Like, we are haemorrhaging characters here quite quickly.

**LYDIA**

Why do you keep insulting their families Alex? Why do you keep doing that?

**BRYN**

Alex is like I have too many friends. Quick!

**ALEX**

And who are you playing?

**LYDIA**

Sasha Rackett

**BRYN**

And Hamid the one handed halfling sorcerer.

**ALEX**

You don't know, it's too dark to see!

**BRYN**

It's true.

**ALEX**

So yeah things have gotten a bit perilous.

**BRYN**

Yes we've ramped up from mild peril to moderate peril to severe....

**ALEX**

No, no, no, you're still in moderate. You'll know when you're in severe peril.

**LYDIA**

I'm hanging off a bridge. There is a monster with tentacles where the face is supposed to be and faces where the tentacles are supposed to be. I think that's moderate.

**ALEX**

You know you're in severe peril when you don't think you're in any peril at all!

**BRYN**

What?!

**ALEX**

And then you die!

**BRYN**

You wouldn't warn you about it if you weren't aware of it. It's not like...it's not like oh these are happy penguins but secretly they're about to eaten and that's what scares the children. Surely it's when the penguins are clearly about die that the children get scared.

**LYDIA**

This is where I begin to see it's a dramatic irony if the audience know that we're in peril but we don't. Like if Alex is cutting in, as they walk through the happy after place singing the nursery rhymes, the giant monster loomed closer.

**ALEX**

You'll know it's a bad TPK when I just say, game over. What killed us? You never even knew

**LYDIA**

[screaming]

**BRYN**

There's no different levels of TPK. There's no bad TPK, good TPK. There's just TPK.

**LYDIA**

No, no, sometimes we might go off to live on a farm somewhere. So nice farm...

**BRYN**

Like Brutor did!

**LYDIA**

Lots of things to steal.

**ALEX**

Ok so just to do a brief recap we're currently in Paris...

**LYDIA**

In peril!

**ALEX**

Nominally investigating the Simulacrum, in actuality embroiled in some reportage and conspiracies and...

**BRYN**

Mind control.

**ALEX**

It's all very messy.

**LYDIA**

And we decided to go down the dark tunnel without any preparation which thinking back...

**BRYN**

Well we were doing some scouting and we spotted an opportunity.

**LYDIA**

We scouted really well.

**ALEX**

It was fine, you had a light and now you don't and the person who can see in the dark is...

**LYDIA**

Has fallen down

**ALEX**

Is plummeting down

**LYDIA**

Into a dark that is further than even he could see.

**ALEX**

And Sasha's hanging from the bridge that was collapsing.

**BRYN**

He's literally far enough from us to be in Brighton right now.

**ALEX**

And Sasha's currently hanging from a bridge whilst Hamid is already one arm down.

**LYDIA**

Well I suppose if I've thrown a fire vial into the thing's mouth then I only have one arm on the thing.

**ALEX**

Yeah, so with that in mind...

**BRYN**

You left us last week with a bit of a cliff hanger one might say.

**ALEX**

So we are currently in initiative order.

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

Sure!

**ALEX**

To repaint this picture, it's pitch black so there's no picture to paint. What there is, is you've just thrown a fire vial at the creature. You are hanging from the side of the bridge by one hand having done so. The creature is clinging to the wall beneath the bridge, it was clearly waiting in some way for you and you saw a brief kind of glimmer of tentacles and just, just death on legs. And by legs I mean tentacles but that is only sort of a brief flash from, you know a gassy flame you can get where it's quite flickery and there's not much light to it really as it splashed on the side of the cliff face and it's already going out. Hamid given that that was under the bridge you saw a flash of light under the bridge and that's it.

**LYDIA**

And Hamid's got...made it across the bridge right?

**ALEX**

Hamid has made it across the bridge. You are currently hanging off it. Sasha it is your turn.

**LYDIA**

Oh gosh! I'm going to try to pull myself up onto the bridge.

**ALEX**

Ok go for it.

**LYDIA**

Is that an acrobatics?

**ALEX**

Actually it will be an acrobatics check, normally it would be a climb check but because the bridge is so coming apart in your hands, actually I'm going to rule that it's closer to acrobatics than climbing.

**LYDIA**

Ok

**BRYN**

Your acrobatics is better!

**LYDIA**

Ok so that's 22.

**ALEX**

Yeah you're up.

**LYDIA**

Yay!

**ALEX**

So you manage to climb up but as you are doing so bits of the bridge are quite literally coming away as you are climbing up. You still have a move action left.

**BRYN**

It's super dark.

**ALEX**

It's pitch black. The only slight ambience is from beneath the bridge and it's already going out and the only reason that you can see that is because it's been so dark for so long with the only torch light being the thing that you could see that you can just make out. But it's not giving you anything to go by apart from the edges of the bridge exactly where you stood.

**LYDIA**

Ok well I'm going to try and run across the bridge and get daggers. Can I do both things?

**BRYN**

You've got your special wrist sheathes.

**LYDIA**

Yeah but I've already used one...

**ALEX**

You stabbed one in the back but you never told me that you reloaded your wrist sheathes.

**LYDIA**

Yeah so that was only one stab and then...yeah, that's why I'm saying I need to draw more daggers.

**ALEX**

Yeah in which case then...

**LYDIA**

If I can't do both then I would definitely run.

**ALEX**

Give me a perception check just to make sure you're picking vaguely the right route.

**LYDIA**

That's true actually.

**ALEX**

It's not very high but...

**LYDIA**

24

**BRYN**

That's quite high.

**ALEX**

24. You're fine. Using the faint glimmer you manage to pick out where the edges of the bridge are and then you realise you're going to have more luck by just closing your eyes and running because you're only get false images and so on.

**LYDIA**

She's very used to orientating herself underground in the dark.

**ALEX**

So feel free to move yourself with your move action. You make it to the other end but just running with your eyes closed because it's as useful.

**LYDIA**

So I don't actually reach Hamid?

**ALEX**

As far as you can tell you're on the other side of the rocks which you did see before everything went dark. Hamid you're up.

**BRYN**

I can't see anything.

**ALEX**

It is now pitch black. The fire has already been dying out. You can see the slight outline of what might be Sasha running towards you.

**LYDIA**

But it could be anything!

**BRYN**

I hide.

**ALEX**

Give me a stealth check.

**BRYN**

I rolled a 2 so that's 8 on my stealth check.

**ALEX**

You hide badly

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

It's completely dark, I don't know that!

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

You just stand in the dark quietly

**ALEX**

With a roll that bad I'm afraid that you hide, sit there, there is a moment of stillness and you go, no this was terrible. This was a really bad...

**LYDIA**

I'm aware of how awful I am at hiding.

**ALEX**

Ok, at which point...

**BRYN**

If I got a 1 I wouldn't be.

**LYDIA**

You just make yourself incredibly obvious.

**ALEX**

Could you please remove from the battle map the creature which you cannot see. Do a quick roll. Ok. I'm just going to look at the battle map and figure out what's happening.

**LYDIA**

Please don't edit the silence out. Everyone needs to feel our agony.

**BRYN**

He's already killed off two characters. He can't kill both of us off.

**LYDIA**

We don't know if they're dead Bryn! We don't know! Just because they don't answer our phone calls anymore

**(laughing)**

Just because that party that was supposed to happen, they didn't open the door.

**ALEX**

Good news, Sasha, you're alive enough to make it to your next turn. It's pitch black. Give me a perception check.

**LYDIA**

I rolled a 4 but that's still a 13.

**ALEX**

Ok.

**(laughing)**

What do you do?

**BRYN**

It's better than my stealth roll.

**LYDIA**

You can't hide from me.

**ALEX**

You don't know how it is, you can't see him but you know where Hamid is

**(Laughing)**

**LYDIA**

He's that badly hidden. It offends me so powerfully. Bad hiding but it becomes like, in my awareness...

**ALEX**

It turns out that Hamid's pretty well but what you hear is [sobbing noise]

**LYDIA**

Oh you're sobbing. Ok if I actually hear you sobbing then that's fine.

**BRYN**

I'd be crying.

**ALEX**

Hamid's not a pretty crier.

**BRYN**

It's ok, it's pitch black. No one can see my ugly crying.

**LYDIA**

So I will crawl over to where Hamid is and whisper...

**BRYN**

[screams]

**LYDIA**

Yeah so crawling over the rocks which I don't know how long that takes but since it's only two rocks...

**BRYN**

Sasha is that you?

**LYDIA**

Yes it's me! We're not dead yet so it's me!

**BRYN**

What?

**LYDIA**

Can you see anything?

**BRYN**

No

**LYDIA**

Why don't you try and see something. She's just going to stand over him with daggers like trying to listen with all of her might.

**ALEX**

That's fine.

**BRYN**

I can see if it's magic.

**ALEX**

Hamid, it's your turn. What do you do?

**BRYN**

I cast detect magic.

**ALEX**

Go for it.

**BRYN**

Ooh I think I might've rolled enough. I've only got one useable hand...

**ALEX**

It's impeding you.

**BRYN**

I now have to make a spell craft check every time I cast a spell.

**ALEX**

Yeah

**BRYN**

But the DC of the check is the 10 plus the spell level. And my spell grab modifier is 9 so...

**ALEX**

You're going to have to roll pretty low.

**BRYN**

Basically have to roll a 1 to fail. So I rolled a 4 but that is sufficient because it makes a total of 13 and the highest level spells I have are level 1 so as long as I roll a 2 or better I cast my spells.

**ALEX**

You successfully detect magic.

**BRYN**

I can see Sasha.

**ALEX**

In the pitch black there is a sudden comforting glow to your vision as Sasha's leather jacket is suddenly outlined to you. Standing above you protectively, very sort of alpha pose straddling you with the legs, ready to fight a thing she can't even see.

**BRYN**

I can see both my hands because I'm wearing one magical ring on each.

**ALEX**

Oh yes, good point.

**BRYN**

And my sleeves. I'm basically perfectly dressed for raving because my hands are glowing and when I dance they'll create really awesome patterns. It's like a VR experience, I'm just a disembodied person, just with two hands.

**ALEX**

But that's it. You can't see anything else.

**LYDIA**

Oh no!

**BRYN**

I can see you now.

**LYDIA**

What?! I need to hide better!

**BRYN**

We have to get away from it.

**ALEX**

What are people's ACs.

**BRYN**

That's always a reassuring question.

**LYDIA**

Yeah. 17.

**BRYN**

19 because and I made a note of this last time I still have a shield spell on myself that lasts 30 minutes and it has not yet been 30 in game minutes since I cast it.

**LYDIA**

Out of game hours, hours.

**BRYN**

Out of game literally weeks.

**ALEX**

See I'm not rolling on a soft surface so it hasn't got that satisfying rattle to it.

**BRYN**

I really hate this soft surface, it's not ok.

**ALEX**

Yeah it's good for recording but it's bad for dice. I'll need to get a chopping board to just roll one.

**LYDIA**

I think a lot of people only listen to us only for the dice rolls

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Ok give me a perception check both of you.

**BRYN**

Oh god!

**LYDIA**

14

**BRYN**

Another 2 so a total of 10.

**LYDIA**

You're only able to see yourself!

**ALEX**

Nothing happens off your turn. Sasha?

**LYDIA**

I'm going to grab Hamid, like the scruff of his jacket and try and run forwards.

**ALEX**

So away from the bridge?

**LYDIA**

Away from the bridge, yeah. I suppose walking fast more than running and testing with my foot everything. So I assume that would be half speed and I also whisper to him, come on we want to get our backs to the wall.

**BRYN**

Go slower, we can't see where we're going.

**ALEX**

So shall we go ahead and say both of you use both for your move actions.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, well I...

**ALEX**

Are either of you trying to be stealthy or are you just committing to moving?

**LYDIA**

Sasha's going to try and be stealthy. No wait, you are so noisy what's the point.

**BRYN**

I'm not. I'm much stealthier than the two dead members.

**ALEX**

You've got to remember we finally managed to get rid of all of those noisy people who were slowing you down.

**LYDIA**

Those people with those jokes and their warmth and what did you do to them Alex!

**ALEX**

You'll see.

**LYDIA**

Ok so yep we're moving...

**BRYN**

I really miss quantum leopard. I really enjoyed it but now James is dead.

**ALEX**

We can all comfort ourselves by going to one of Ben's...oh no, never mind!

**LYDIA**

Yeah we'll try and be stealthy.

**ALEX**

Ok give me the stealth rolls.

**BRYN**

I rolled an 18 which gives me a total of 24.

**LYDIA**

I rolled a 9 which gives me an 18.

**BRYN**

Stealthier than you! Take that! I realised why I rolled so many ones last recording session, it's because I wasn't wearing my "I roll 20s" t shirt so I've worn that today. That'll correct the problem.

**ALEX**

Because I mean you know what Ben always says, that's how statistics works.

**LYDIA**

Said. Said.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Ok what was the ACs again just so I've got them.

**LYDIA**

17.

**ALEX**

That was it.

**BRYN**

And 19 assuming it can see me.

**ALEX**

Hamid.

**BRYN**

What?! I got a stealth roll of 24, an AC of 19.

**ALEX**

Yep.

**BRYN**

You're a monster!

**LYDIA**

Hamid, you survive that's probably what's coming next.

**ALEX**

So let's just...I'm going to roll some more in secret. Don't mind me, I'll just...ok. Now I'm going to have to do a thing I said I'd never do. I'm going to have to engage with the grapple rules.

**BRYN**

Don't do it! It's not worth it.

**LYDIA**

Why would you do that?!

**ALEX**

I'm opening this Pandora's box. You take 4 damage. So what happens you're sneaking along with Sasha pulling you along, it's alright, you feel something just brush up the front of your leg and then snaps on your leg dragging you immediately prone. You feel something sharp stab into your upper thigh.

**BRYN**

I yelp.

**ALEX**

Yep

**LYDIA**

Does Sasha keep hold of him?

**ALEX**

Yes. However this is where we engage in the ridiculousness....

**LYDIA**

Are we going to play tug of war with Hamid with a tentacle monster.

**BRYN**

Apparently so.

**LYDIA**

And we can't even see it.

**ALEX**

Hamid. What is your combat move defence.

**BRYN**

Not very high.

**ALEX**

That has not come up before.

**BRYN**

**ALEX**

You are now grappled. You can attempt to break the grapple on your turn. So currently you are now being held horizontally with a creature pulling you back towards where you came from whilst Sasha is pulling you in the opposite direction. A searing pain in your upper thigh, a tenacle wrapped around your leg and it's pitch black as far as you can see.

**BRYN**

And one hand hanging limply by my side.

**LYDIA**

It's just about the only thing you can see because it's glowing.

**ALEX**

Sasha. You're up.

**LYDIA**

I pull on Hamid and if I can pull him as far as I can try and stab forwards.

**ALEX**

So I'll give you a choice just because of the way the game mechanics work. Either you can attempt to stab at the thing that is holding Hamid or you can attempt to pull him free. However pulling him free and stabbing is too much to do in a single round so which would you do as a priority.

**LYDIA**

Try and stab it.

**ALEX**

Ok in which case then...

**LYDIA**

I'm more confident in being able to do that.

**ALEX**

Give me an attack roll. It will obviously be getting concealment because it's pitch black.

**LYDIA**

So 16.

**ALEX**

16. Ok.

**BRYN**

And then there's a 15% missed chance completely

**ALEX**

Before you even factor in AC. Yeah.

**BRYN**

It might be higher.

**ALEX**

You miss. Hamid. You can either make an escape artist check to escape the grapple, an opposed combat manoeuvre check to sort of gain control of the grapple or break the grapple or you can attempt to hit the thing that's grappling you. From the mechanical side, just for anyone who's listening, if you ever attempt to attack the thing that's grappling you it almost never works just because of the way the mechanics play out.

**BRYN**

So I'm on a non-combat character and I'm small sized so my combat manoeuvre bonuses and defences are both terrible. I have basically as many penalties as is possible to have for those things. So there's no way I'm going to beat this thing in a grapple so I'm going to make an escape artist check.

**ALEX**

Go for it.

**BRYN**

Because it's a skill you can use untrained. I have no ranks in it. But I roll a 15 and I have a dex of 2 so I get a total of 17.

**ALEX**

17. One second.

**LYDIA**

Wiggle free. Please wiggle free.

**ALEX**

You do not succeed.

**BRYN**

I'm not getting out then. I mean like I can't really expect to roll better than that.

**ALEX**

Sasha, give me a strength check.

**BRYN**

Oh goodie more strength checks. Those went so well last session.

**LYDIA**

6 – 1 is 5.

**ALEX**

The creature yanks Hamid free from your grasp and starts dragging him away.  
Hamid you...

**BRYN**

I'll pack my things, take this mic off.

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

Bye Bryn

**BRYN**

See ya guys.

**ALEX**

Stop it! You're not dead yet. I mean at least wait until next round and then pack up your things. It begins dragging you back...

**BRYN**

Taking my dice with me.

**ALEX**

You feel pull you just directly over the rocks that you were hiding behind so clearly it's mobile enough to drag you just straight over them. At which point, Sasha it's your turn. You've just had Hamid yanked out of your grasp.

**LYDIA**

Just dive forward.

**BRYN**

I'm probably screaming. I'm probably screaming Sasha.

**ALEX**

You can determine that he is effectively about 20 feet away just from...the thing's moving fairly quickly and you can hear him screaming.

**LYDIA**

I'm going to run towards the scream.

**ALEX**

Sure you run forwards and basically run straight into the boulders that were in the way earlier. Would you be going around the boulders or climbing over them? Last time you were sort of wiggling between them. It will be slightly slower but you can still do it.

**LYDIA**

I'll go over them. Direct.

**ALEX**

Ok. You manage to make it back to Hamid because he's being that loud. Give me a reflex.

**LYDIA**

Come on Sasha. Oh gosh! It is dark so don't blame her for rolling a 5. So 11.

**ALEX**

You reach out, you can't make contact with Hamid.

**BRYN**

I can see her torso but not her hands.

**ALEX**

Yeah obviously you're flailing at odds and you just don't manage to make that connection. Hamid, you're currently still grappled and being dragged very close to a bridge.

**BRYN**

I'm going to go, Sasha save yourself. And curl up into a ball and accept my fate.

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

Oh Hamid! Oh you idiot!

**ALEX**

Oh Hamid! Oh god.

**BRYN**

I can't cast spells Alex because I can't see it. I literally have to have line of sight and I can't..

**ALEX**

Ok you are dragged further away. Sasha you obviously hear his voice moving away back down the bridge.

**BRYN**

I've gone quiet now.

**ALEX**

Sasha...

**LYDIA**

Yeah but you make sounds as you're dragged off.

**ALEX**

Yeah it's not actually being quiet. There is still [dragging noises] of something heavy, that Hamid weight being dragged along.

**BRYN**

I want to roll diplomacy to persuade Sasha to leave me to my fate.

**(laughing)**

I don't really!

**ALEX**

You'll be taking a massive penalty!

**LYDIA**

The thing is it would give her quite a lot of hope that she can hear it struggling to pull you over. Not that it's able to lift you up.

**ALEX**

It's not just lifted him up and sprinted off.

**LYDIA**

So I'm going to run after the grating sound of his little body being dragged over the floor and try and grab him again.

**ALEX**

Ok give me the reflex save just to basically make the contact through.

**LYDIA**

For goodness sake Sasha. So that's 13.

**ALEX**

13. Again you're close but...

**LYDIA**

These are all things she's supposed to be good at.

**ALEX**

The problem that you get is that you make contact and then it just wriggles and writhes out of the way. It wriggles and writhes out the way. It's very mobile. So you're getting the impression that it may not be fast, it may not be strong but it's very, very agile. And Hamid you are accepting your fate currently.

**BRYN**

I literally can't do anything else. I can't beat it in a grapple. I can attempt escape artist. I might as well attempt escape artist again. I might roll a 20. I'm wearing the right t shirt for it!

**ALEX**

Yeah you are!

**BRYN**

A 12.

**ALEX**

Nope. You are still restrained. It pulls you further across the bridge and...so it pulls you further along the bridge. Again it's moving the same distance. It's dragging him, not pulling him so it's not moving quickly. It seems to be almost just not considering you a threat at this point now that it's pitch black. Sasha you're up.

**LYDIA**

I'm going to try and grab him again.

**ALEX**

Ok.

**LYDIA**

Scramble forward into the dark.

**ALEX**

However going on to the bridge, the weight of all three of you on the bridge is clearly beginning to be too much for it to bare. You hear a crack of timber as rocks begin to shift and tumble. The creature gives a surprise noise. The first one it's made since everything went wrong. Give me a reflex save.

**LYDIA**

17.

**ALEX**

The bridge collapse. It collapses completely. I don't just mean bits go, it's clearly so ancient and it's just gone. The weight of those people and the creature was too many. Hamid drops. Still in the grip of the creature. Sasha you manage to leap backwards the way you came and land yourself flat on your back at the top of the cliff.

**LYDIA**

Oh dear.

**ALEX**

Hamid you drop. The creature drops with you. You have enough time to call out something if you want to.

**BRYN**

I've already said my last thing.

**ALEX**

He drops silently.

**BRYN**

I mean I probably scream again.

**ALEX**

Oh right, we'll have a bit of a scream. Sasha. I'm going to drop you out of initiative order, feels a bit superfluous now. You're alone, in the dark by a chasm. No one knows you're here.

**LYDIA**

I'm going to tie a rope around a boulder and then begin to try and go down.

**ALEX**

Ok give me a climb check.

**LYDIA**

I mean it's going to take me a while.

**ALEX**

That's fine, that's fine. In fact given that you're attached to the rope I would allow you to basically take 10 because if you drop 10 you just drop the length of the rope.

**LYDIA**

And like throw a rock over.

**ALEX**

So you start climbing down. You're taking your time. There's not exactly much reason to go quickly. Eventually you reach the limit of the rope. So you're

saying that from that point you drop a rock. You eventually hear a splash. It is a good...in fact let me count it. You drop it...splash. Amongst all of the noise of the combat and the battle and scrapping you wouldn't have been able to hear it earlier but now that's it a bit quiet and you're alone with your thoughts and echoes.

**LYDIA**

And so I can't hear anything moving at all.

**ALEX**

Nothing.

**LYDIA**

Right well I guess...

**ALEX**

Just let me roll...no you can't hear anything.

**LYDIA**

Thinking about the dark and the possibility of getting out of here, she's going to keep climbing down the cavern wall.

**ALEX**

So you untie from the rope and keep climbing down.

**LYDIA**

Yeah

**ALEX**

Now give me the climb check.

**LYDIA**

18.

**ALEX**

18. Ok. Technically, I believe in the core system you're meant to do a climb every certain distance. Who has the patience for that. So you keep climbing down, keep climbing down. You start hearing the sound of what's clearly running water. It's not churning but it's very, very quick moving which is where there's not much noise to it. So it's moving along what you presume is a very...something very slick.

**LYDIA**

So my heels...

**ALEX**

So your heels are now hitting water. There's sufficient current to properly pull your heel.

**LYDIA**

This is the worst it could possibly be.

**ALEX**

Well I'm your GM and I don't know how else this was going to play.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, yeah, I'm just thinking about letting the current take you. There isn't...I'm going to shout. Hamid! Zolf!

**ALEX**

Eventually there's an echo.

**LYDIA**

Yeah I will just climb along the direction the water is taking. I'm going to guess that eventually she's going to get...

**ALEX**

Give me another climb check. It's extremely slick.

**LYDIA**

She only rolls a 9 which is a 14. Does she fall...she falls into the water doesn't she. For 14 what does she do?

**ALEX**

She climbs along. She's edging along. It's very, very slick. Very cold the water, extremely cold. It's clear that isn't a sort of surface that's run down. This is some kind of underground river or something similar. Crawling along and finally you notice, this is a good like 30 minutes, so you're starting to shake a bit under the strain because you're being really careful. It's pitch black, you can't see what you're doing. Eventually you start realising that you're coming up against another cliff wall. It feels like the thing just disappears underneath the cracking wall so you reach out to touch it [clicking sound] your hand slips and sucked down.

**LYDIA**

Let's follow Sasha down the river.

**ALEX**

So I think it's time to talk about how backup characters work in....no!

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

I've got a bot for that!

**ALEX**

At this point, Zolf. You wake up. You are still beneath water. You feel like you're drowning. You feel like you're drowning however it's bright. In fact it's

so bright that you cannot actually see. You just have bright light shining on you from effectively all directions and you feel like you're drowning.

**BEN**

Ok, I'm going to make a sail check...no I'm going to make a swim check to know that this is....

**LYDIA**

Sail check, do I have a boat?

**(laughing)**

**BEN**

Actually, no what I'm going to do is drop my D20. I'm actually going to make a survival check to know...basically I don't know which way's up.

**ALEX**

No you have...I'm giving you all of the context you've got.

**BEN**

Right, 20 on a survival check.

**ALEX**

20 on a survival check.

**BEN**

How do you best orientate yourself while you're drowning because flailing's probably not going to help. Swimming in a random direction is not going to help until the pressure gets too much...

**ALEX**

So panicking but nonetheless you take that moment to sort yourself out and you realise that you feel like you're drowning but like a good 20 seconds pass, you realise you're not holding your breath. In fact as you realise and you start, you know, taking stock beyond the initial shock. It was a proper shock awake. You can feel something down your throat. It isn't giving your air. You're not breathing. However you feel there is something coming out from your throat and upwards. Through the glare you can see there's some kind of pipe which is coming from above you, down to your mouth...

**LYDIA**

Oh this is grim!

**ALEX**

And as you move you push up against things and realise you're in a very narrow tube. A very narrow tube. As in the second that you go oh, and move your hands out, you can move your hands so that your elbows are just away from your body. That's it.

**BEN**

Ok so the first thing I do is feel my leg. Do I have legs? I don't know. Because when I fell it was all pretty bad.

**ALEX**

You have no legs.

**BEN**

Oh brilliant, this is great. Well at least I'm lighter. Ok...

**ALEX**

And your left...oh no, we're not finished!

**BEN**

Ok

**ALEX**

And your left arm, you realise there's a large number of pipes, flexible, more like tubing, not plastic. What's it called, the...you know the shower...

**LYDIA**

Are we waking up in a new cyberpunk world?

**BEN**

I was going to say it's really appropriate we were talking about the matrix.

**LYDIA**

He got bored of the whole kind of steampunk...

**BEN**

Yeah no dungeon punk rubbish.

**LYDIA**

So now we're in a nightmare cyberpunk adventure.

**ALEX**

It's flexible copper piping, appears to be running into your left arm.

**LYDIA**

Ah steampunk piping, that's fine.

**BEN**

It's plastic but they painted it bronze to put us more at ease.

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

How is copper flexible?

**BEN**

Magic!

**ALEX**

No it's like those rings you get when you have a shower head. You know how like it's metal...

**BEN**

Oh it's that. Right, cool. Anyway I'm going to roll a will check not to freak out. Nat 20 plus my will of 9.

**ALEX**

This is by far the most freaked out you've ever been however there is an element of how much worse could it get. In the sense of like when you've hit rock bottom, you kind of hit a certain amount of calm.

**LYDIA**

In many ways it's quite a relief to find he didn't hit rock bottom

**(laughing)**

That's what he was expecting right, the rock bottom was what we were all looking for.

**BEN**

So I'm going to bite down on the tube so that it doesn't drive any further into me and try and climb up and find what's happening at the top. How far does this tube go.

**ALEX**

So you bite down on the tube and immediately start to feel quite dizzy.

**BEN**

Ok I'll fight that.

**ALEX**

You can continue. Give me the climb check.

**BEN**

That is...well I'm only using my arms. I get a minus lots for having no legs.

**ALEX**

You're quite light now.

**BEN**

Yeah so my strength is 1, I'm going to ignore my misc. mods for the moment so 14.

**ALEX**

Ok. Yeah you manage to climb up. You realise that you're barely below the surface and there's not a lid on whatever it is.

**BEN**

Oh so I'm actually in just like a fish tank kind of...

**ALEX**

So you break the surface, your mouth is still...you've bitten down on the thing, there is metal apparatus in there. It is holding your mouth ajar. Like you can bite down on whatever the piping was but it's...

**BEN**

Oh there's something doing the job of what I...

**ALEX**

Yeah so currently you've broken the surface. The second you do, give me a perception check.

**BEN**

Ok and I'm going to think, am I the one?! 16

**ALEX**

You see Sasha across from you on a table. However...

**BEN**

Yeah I was waiting for that!

**ALEX**

She looks in a really bad way.

**BEN**

Does she have all of her body parts?

**ALEX**

She's laid on her back on what appears to be a metal table.

**BEN**

Yeah I really care about the material of the table. Does she have her body parts?

**ALEX**

There are a large number of pipes containing fluid pumping in and out. Some green, some black and it's clear that some of her innards are on the outside held in varying configurations above her torso.

**LYDIA**

What?!

**BEN**

Ah cool welcome to the body horror episode. Fantastic!

**ALEX**

You also see Hamid.

**BEN**

Ok and what state is Hamid in?

**ALEX**

Hamid currently appears alright.

**BEN**

He's in a white lab coat giggling to himself

**(laughing)**

Hamid's back story that he didn't want to tell anyone about! His parents were disappointed in him, he was his own parents!

**BRYN**

Hamid has been the bad guy all along! Me and Alex have been playing the long con and it's worked to perfection!

**ALEX**

You know that someone's...

**BEN**

What's going on? I've not a clue!

**ALEX**

So Hamid is a little further distance off. And he is currently lay on a table. His arm, where the scarring that you've healed him is opened up again but that's it currently.

**BEN**

Ok brilliant. I guess I pull the apparatus or try and pull the apparatus out of my throat.

**ALEX**

Give me a strength check.

**BEN**

No!

**(laughing)**

I'm going to give you a heal check.

**ALEX**

It has piping leading down into you. It's not just to your mouth.

**BEN**

So I'm not going to take a strength check because I don't want my lungs to join.

**ALEX**

Sure.

**BRYN**

Oh no I've pulled out my own lungs!

**BEN**

How embarrassing!

**ALEX**

So I would say...so give me a knowledge heal check actually. That would be useful.

**BRYN**

In the few minutes remaining of which I live I'm going to apologise.

**ALEX**

Give me a knowledge heal check actually, that would be useful. Actually no just give me a heal check

**BEN**

There is no knowledge heal Alex.

**ALEX**

Give me a heal check.

**BEN**

Oh damn. 15.

**ALEX**

15. Ok you're aware that...

**LYDIA**

This is weird!

**ALEX**

This isn't a good hospital at all! The procedures are very below standard,

**BRYN**

This is what private healthcare does! I feel like someone has to represent what James would say were he here. Were he say sitting next to me nodding along.

**ALEX**

You see a monster thing, NHS. Oh it is a nightmare! No. So what you know is that healing wouldn't push out from the body things that have been placed in there so if you were to have something impaled, you would have to remove it before healing.

**BEN**

Yes a heal check as in I'm not just going to be like [clicking noise] magic.

**ALEX**

Sure

**BEN**

So I'm going to attempt, with my 15, trying to take it out in a way that isn't going to harm me as much as possible. Instead of just blindly yanking...

**ALEX**

I understand. I thought you were saying, I use magic to heal me and remove...

**BEN**

No because then I wouldn't have made a check, I would've said I convert this into cure light wounds.

**ALEX**

That's fine. In which case, I'll take the first heal check to properly diagnose what's been going on. Give me a second one to remove it.

**BEN**

The diagnosis hmmm...

**ALEX**

Everything's fine, there's nothing wrong!

**BEN**

I've got no legs so...15.

**ALEX**

15

**BEN**

No 20 sorry. I can't count.

**ALEX**

20. You successfully manage to extricate it. It's slightly painful. It's very clear that whoever fitted this to you wanted to keep you alive but wasn't too worried about...

**BEN**

Didn't intend on me getting out.

**ALEX**

Yeah so you manage to...you manage to pull it out with minimal damage however you do take, just by the act of removing it, 2 damage.

**BEN**

Cool. This is relevant, what's my current health at? Is it...

**ALEX**

So climbing up then you remove that thing and you get to breathe actual air. You realise you're actually, apart from the fact that bits of you are missing, you're in really good condition as in...

**LYDIA**

Minor warriors

**ALEX**

Including like minor cuts and scrapes you got from the caves, they're gone. You are currently missing both legs and your arm is still attached to some kind of machinery that leads up into the ceiling.

**LYDIA**

At the knee or at the foot?

**BEN**

I was just about to ask, now I can see, I can look down.

**ALEX**

Both of your legs, obviously you're looking down into the water because you're still sort of floating, are missing at the same point.

**BEN**

Which is?

**ALEX**

You have had both of them severed at the knee.

**BEN**

Ok fine. So I can totter. Well I'm going to try and keep as quiet as possible because I don't imagine the person who did this has the best intentions for any of us and going to try and climb out.

**BRYN**

I thought I was helping ok!

**(laughing)**

**BEN**

I have the technology I can rebuild you.

**ALEX**

I'm a doctor, just not a medical doctor, I thought I'd try! Go on, give me a climb check just to...

**BEN**

9.

**BRYN**

I thought you said a clown check for a second there.

**ALEX**

There's tasteless and there's not making into a podcast episode. It's inelegant but you manage to haul yourself out and you flop down. As you do, you manage to pop out just by falling some of the stuff attached to your arm. It hurt, it didn't actually deal you any damage. What you do see in your arm once you're out of the water and looking down, is they appear to have put what look like permanent ports in your arm. So rather than it being put into the skin...

**BEN**

Literally the Matrix.

**ALEX**

They have put some kind of ports in your left hand arm.

**BEN**

Right good that's...

**BRYN**

USB ports

**(Laughing)**

**BEN**

That's going on the list. I'm going to check how my legs...

**BRYN**

Can we find these people and drown them in a bucket please?

**BEN**

I mean if anyone's worth a drowning. Yes so I'm also going to quickly check how my legs are being finished. Like is it a ragged wound, is it new, have they been capped with anything?

**ALEX**

You notice that there are similar portish looking things at the knee.

**BEN**

Oh brilliant, so I've got sockets.

**ALEX**

Basically yeah.

**BEN**

Good! I'm actually going to look around for any robot legs because, you know, this kind of technology does exist. Things go in sockets so maybe there's a...

**ALEX**

It does exist. Looking around...

**BEN**

Giant spider leg apparatus!

**BRYN**

Or wheels. I mean why stop at legs!

**LYDIA**

Zolf the Segway

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

So looking around you see, let's give you a proper description now. The basic walls are white, it is a large cube shaped room. So high ceilings. Looking up there are large amounts of very complex apparatus hanging from the ceiling. Piping appears to be running to Sasha which was of a similar ilk to what was running towards you. However there's more of them running towards Sasha. She appears to be breathing, like you can even see across this distance that she appears to be sleeping to all intents and purposes.

**BRYN**

Also her organs are on the outside according to your earlier description.

**ALEX**

Only a little bit.

**BRYN**

Let's not understate how horrifying that is.

**BEN**

This is actually a question that I have is, how are her organs outside? Are they suspended on wires, are they on little plates?

**ALEX**

The torso...so not the lower torso and I'm trying to avoid awful graphic detail but a few key organs are held in what look to be glass apparatus directly over and appear to be functioning with your knowledge of healing perfectly well. They are only slightly above. If anything, give me one more knowledge heal check for her situation.

**BEN**

20.

**ALEX**

20. You get the very clear impression that this isn't someone who's just doing things willy nilly. If anything it just looks like someone who has no problems with, if I'm going to mess around in here, I should get these things out of the way and leave them functioning. So it's not someone who's being wilfully torturous so much as being very bizarre.

**LYDIA**

Accidentally torturous.

**ALEX**

They're being very bizarre in their medical care.

**BEN**

They're being sociopathically efficient.

**ALEX**

Yeah that's a really good way of putting it.

**BEN**

So I'm going to have a listen for anyone coming and get a 10 on my perception check.

**ALEX**

You hear the sounds of distant industry. So you hear sort of...

**BRYN**

Ah we're in Sheffield!

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

You hear metallic, some kind of maybe steam engine or something similar.

**BEN**

Factory noises.

**ALEX**

Factory noises but distant and you don't hear any movement around here.

**BEN**

Far away factory noises. Got it. Ok so I'm going to attempt to get over to Sasha. How high is the table? Can I reach the table? Can I get to the...

**ALEX**

You see that there's apparatus at the base of the table for the raising and lowering of the table.

**BEN**

I'll lower the table and the glass things come down with it?

**ALEX**

It's very simple. You see that there's both a manual crank and an electric lever. All of the apparatus by the way is connected to the ceiling.

**BEN**

Comes down, fantastic. Right. Working as quickly as I can, what I'm going to be doing it lowering it to ground level, I'm going to be trying to see how the glass things are contained. Are they unscrew or catches or...

**ALEX**

I realise I'm getting you to make a lot of these but given the context it makes sense. Tell me what your destination aim is, is it basically put Sasha put together.

**BEN**

It's chuck the organs in and then magic it

**(laughing)**

Because at that point, like, I know where everything goes, I'm not just going to throw it in. But it's put the organ back in and then let magic sort it out.

**ALEX**

Yeah, give me the heal check to basically begin the process correctly.

**BEN**

That is 23.

**ALEX**

23. Yeah. So what you see is that it's clear that the glass apparatus has been done in such a way that nothing can be touching the organs directly. It's very easily accessible. You notice that actually all of the essential fluids are entering and leaving Sasha's body. It's almost like an enormous, elaborate dialysis machine if anyone can think of that as a comparison. However you do notice that there are extra fluids being brought in.

**BEN**

From where?

**ALEX**

From the ceiling apparatus. It looks like you are perfectly capable with your healing ability to take the time to...

**BEN**

Quickly

**LYDIA**

Please no! Lots of time. Lungs the right way around.

**BEN**

I would rather the person with legs is awake whenever who has this turns up.

**LYDIA**

Hamid is right there!

**BEN**

You can fight!

**ALEX**

You are able to return the items to the body and it looks like you are able to do so, actually comparatively easily because...

**BEN**

It's been carefully taken out.

**ALEX**

The surgery, again to your professional eye, is like world calibre surgery.

**BRYN**

Oh this person is a monster and a sociopath but I've got to respect his craftsmanship.

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

Like Alex!

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

Zing!

**ALEX**

I wish it was the first time I'd heard that as a GM.

**BEN**

Right so I'm going to do that.

**BRYN**

It's funny because it's true.

**BEN**

And if nothing else happens I will finish that.

**ALEX**

That's fine. I'm going to use that previous heal check you did. It takes a few minutes but honestly it's really quick because of the quality of the surgery used to remove it...

**LYDIA**

They made it a little emergency stone for the heart to run down...

**ALEX**

You manage to do so and are able to now cast a heal spell.

**BEN**

Cool. I'll convert zone of truth into a cure moderate wounds.

**ALEX**

Roll it.

**LYDIA**

Moderate wounds.

**BEN**

I heal 13 points of damage.

**ALEX**

Sasha you become conscious. And you are on 5 hit points. So you feel quite bad however there is no superficial damage at all. So there's no minor cuts or anything...

**BEN**

And you'll come to with my hand over your mouth.

**LYDIA**

I mean I could see why you would do that but Sasha doesn't scream as she wakes up.

**BEN**

Good!

**BRYN**

Let's wait till Hamid wakes up shall we.

**ALEX**

You actually don't feel atrocious so much as, you know when you've got over an awful like flu or something and you just feel drained. Like really tired but it's not like there is a sharp pain anywhere or anything like that. Give me a perception check both of you.

**LYDIA**

I did just roll a 20.

**ALEX**

A natural 20?

**LYDIA**

Yes a natural 20.

**BEN**

I got a 17.

**ALEX**

Both of you hear heavy metallic footsteps approaching.

**LYDIA**

That's great. Great 20 then Sasha. Great 20 then when there were heavy metallic footsteps...like not when you could've grabbed...

**ALEX**

They're getting closer.

**LYDIA**

Right

**BEN**

I've got no legs so I'm going to wait.

**ALEX**

Sasha?

**LYDIA**

Sasha doesn't really know what's been going on so she's going to try and sit up.

**ALEX**

Footsteps come closer.

**BEN**

Hide

**ALEX**

They come closer

**BEN**

Hide

**LYDIA**

Ok I lie down again. Immediately the way I was before.

**BEN**

Actually I'll raise the table. There is an important difference.

**BRYN**

Not quite the exact same way!

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

I quickly remove all of my organs and hang them delicately!

**BEN**

I will raise the table and hide behind it hoping that...

**ALEX**

Sure. The doors open. Stood in the doorway is an enormous edaphus in metal. It's like a man but huge. Bertie, you're stood in the doorway.

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

What!

**BEN**

How is that!!

**LYDIA**

Ah!

**JAMES**

Ah Mr Smith I see you've lost weight.

**ALEX**

And we'll end the episode there.

**BRYN**

You...words I cannot say on this podcast. I have no words to express what you are but you are one and a total, total one.

**LYDIA**

He's a sociopath and a monster but we do respect his craft.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

So yeah, you're all alive!

**BEN**

I haven't looked at Hamid yet!

**LYDIA**

Why did you do that to my organs?! Her organs!

**ALEX**

Hey! As far as she's aware, she's fine. But yeah that was a bit of intense one. Are you glad to be back James? It's been a while.

**JAMES**

Let's say yes!

**(laughing)**

I've always been told if you have nothing nice to say you shouldn't say anything at all.

**ALEX**

No wonder you've been so quiet!

**JAMES**

For the three preceding ones.

**ALEX**

I think we'll wrap up the episode there but I suspect a lot of people are going to be eager to tune in next week to see what happens.

**BRYN**

I will.

**JAMES**

Duh, duh, duh.



**ALEX**

Bye guys!

**EVERYONE**

Bye!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**ALEX**

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