

RQG – 76 – Hello Prague

Content Warnings

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BEN

Hi everyone, Ben here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of patrons. Patrick Monroe, Erica Kavisdad, Tessa Wright, Rebecca Clayton, Ellen Farouh-Markerson. Thank you all. We really appreciate your support. If you'd like to join them go to www.patreon.com/rustyquill and take a look at our rewards.

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 76 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

JAMES

James Ross

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

Rusty Quill Gaming – 76 – Hello Prague

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

BEN

Ben Meredith

ALEX

And who are you playing?

JAMES

Sir Bertrand Macguffingham

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun Al-Tahan

LYDIA

Sasha Rackett

ALEX

There you go!

BEN

Grizop drik acht Amsterdam.

ALEX

And we're all still in Prague.

LYDIA

I didn't forget her name, she was just coming out of the shadows.

(laughing)

ALEX

That's fair. That's fair. Makes sense. We're all at the opera. Sort of.

LYDIA

Against our will! You didn't even offer the clothes.

BRYN

No, bit of a backup plan.

ALEX

So whilst hunting down a rogue necromancer in the lower city of Prague beneath the sprawling university, you have all found yourself at the opera house. Basically interrupting some massive ritual and stuck with unhelpful managers who require definitive proof before they'll evacuate the opera and so on.

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

I think that's a pretty succinct explanation. Also zombies. Right with that in mind we will pick up exactly where we left off which is you have all reconvened in the foyer. All of the patrons have just gone in. You could still go into the auditorium if you want but it is literally your last chance.

BEN

Congratulations you got backstage passes, let's go.

JAMES

Ooh backstage. And I'm just going to go backstage.

ALEX

Does anyone else have knowledge local apart from Sasha?

LYDIA

It would feel really inappropriate her way to know her way around.

ALEX

Sasha if you could give me knowledge local but I'm going to give heinous penalties.

BEN

If this is to find my way around the opera can I in fact use a perception check to look for, you know, the signs.

ALEX

One thing at a time. One thing at a time.

LYDIA

I would like to propose that rather than looking around as a customer she is casing the joint.

ALEX

That's kind of what I was going with. You're still taking the penalty because it's a completely alien one, never come up before.

LYDIA

Fine!

ALEX

Opera doesn't actually tend to have that much real shiny stuff.

LYDIA

3 + 10. 13.

ALEX

You know it as well as anyone else.

LYDIA

-10

ALEX

Yeah

JAMES

Given that this is a high cultured environment would knowledge nobility be an appropriate thing?

ALEX

I'll also allow knowledge nobility.

JAMES

Cool. Oh dear. 9.

ALEX

9. See the problem is you can find your way to the bar, you can find your way to your seat and you can find your way to the changing rooms. That's about it. Why would you need anywhere else?

LYDIA

You're actually standing right next to a door that says backstage.

BRYN

Just so...

LYDIA

Because you're in front of it Sasha can't see it but you're looking around, just going I can't see any door that...

JAMES

No points of interest.

LYDIA

There's nothing that my eyes. Can't see what a person of lower status...

JAMES

There's a rasping echo in this helmet. This is very strange.

BRYN

Just so you know if you want to blend in with the crowd a bit more, I have alternative clothing for you just so you won't stick out.

BEN

No.

LYDIA

Will that make us stand out or stick out when we're downstairs in the basement?

BEN

What a massive waste of time!

LYDIA

Yeah, right...

BRYN

I go into the auditorium.

BEN

Where are you going? We need to go backstage to look.

LYDIA

I think it's just you and me Grizzop. I think these guys aren't interested.

BEN

People are going to die!

LYDIA

Yeah they...

ALEX

Time to split the parties!

BEN

What is wrong with these people? What is wrong with you?!

LYDIA

They've got a disease called posh.

BEN

Do you not care?! Do you not care about the potential humanitarian...fine whatever!

BRYN

I've already gone. I didn't hear any of that! I would've had a very succinct and convincing reply if I had heard it.

JAMES

Bertie's genuinely torn. Like he sort of knows that he should go down to the adventure into the backstage...

BEN

These people aren't even heroes!

JAMES

And then he's thinking about going into the auditorium because he wants to watch the opera and he also...he sort of thinks that if there is going to be a grand confrontation obviously it's going to be on stage in the opera house.

ALEX

If I might make a suggestion.

JAMES

What? Yes. Bertie takes the sword out and taps it to his helmet so that the sound conducts straight through. Yes?

BRYN

That's not how it works!

JAMES

He's decided that's how it works.

ALEX

Your problem you see is that it's never really been that you're nasty or anything, it's just that you always pick low profile heroics. Go with the highest profile.

BEN

That's why he's got a sword next to his head.

LYDIA

I think the sword talks to him.

BEN

Right, can you do it a bit quicker. We've got to go.

ALEX

Alright, while Bertie just has a mental break. Hamid goes into the auditorium. Inside the auditorium everyone is taking their seats and the set is still visible. They've spent an enormous amount of money. It's probably the most expensive production that the opera house has put on to date.

BRYN

Can I see someone on the end of a row who looks to be alone?

ALEX

Yes

BRYN

I would like to go up to them and persuade them to swap their ticket with mine.

ALEX

You don't even need to. The second that they see you have front row stalls, they're like yeah, alright. Great. They just take it and...

BRYN

I don't want to be at the back but I want a seat on the end of a row and I want to be far enough back that I can see a lot of audience. So I'm going to be in there. I'm going to be watching the opera, I'm not going to be paying 100% attention to the opera but I want to watch the audience too.

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

BRYN

Which dice shall I use! Ooh. That's a 19 so 29.

ALEX

29. So there is a good mix in the room insofar as you do actually have a few magic users it looks like, and you do have a few nobles as well. And admittedly you have more of that kind of ilk towards the stalls and the lower and as you look back and up at the higher and higher...

BRYN

The circle and the dress circle.

ALEX

The circle and dress circle and so on.

BRYN

Are the boxes full?

ALEX

All of the boxes are full bar the royal box which is kept perpetually empty and one adjacent to that which currently at least has its curtains closed. How much of a knowing look.

JAMES

Can we cut back to Bertie at this point?

ALEX

I'll cut back to Bertie now.

JAMES

Ok. Bertie is having a think. He's genuinely torn. He looks at his ticket. Front row stalls. That is the sort of thing that Hamid would do. Bertie thinks that he decides a box so Bertie is going to try to persuade his way into a box.

ALEX

Ok, meanwhile Grizzop and Sasha, I realise you'll still there.

BEN

No we've...

ALEX

Have you already gone off?

LYDIA

Yeah! Alright so Sasha attempts to grab someone that's handing out programmes.

ALEX

Yes to let you know you are about to miss the start.

LYDIA

Grabs them and say Grizzop do you think you could maybe ask one of the staff where the door to the...

BEN

Take us backstage and then show us the basement immediately.

ALEX

Right, yeah ok. Ok. He starts heading and leads you around the auditorium. Shocker. It's a really long walk because it's a huge sprawling auditorium.

BEN

Quickly. Quickly. Quickly. Quickly.

ALEX

He's going at his pace. Plod, plod, plod.

BEN

I'm going to put my hands on his bum and push him.

ALEX

Alright calm down.

BEN

Speed up now!

ALEX

Calm down, alright.

JAMES

Before he had a mild head cold and you've accidentally healed it.

(laughing)

ALEX

Eventually he takes you back and it effectively just says “staff only. No further access to the public. Should you need assistance...” He brings out his keys, no, no. Puts the key in. Oh no.

BEN

Get on with it!

LYDIA

Do you want me to deal with this?

BRYN

You hear the sound of the orchestra warming up and tuning.

BEN

Come on! Come on!

ALEX

No...

LYDIA

Do you want me...I can...

ALEX

Oh no it was that first one.

LYDIA

I could just...I could just...

JAMES

In the background the orchestra is tuning up but they're tuning up by playing "I know a song that will get on your nerves"

(laughing)

ALEX

Sasha, if you want give me a disable device check while he's going through it.

LYDIA

19 + 12. So 31

BRYN

You just touch it and it pops.

ALEX

Just as you reach out you go, hang on. Open it. It's not locked.

(laughing)

Oh my bad!

BEN

What is wrong with you?!

ALEX

Alright then cutting back to...

BRYN

That is a roll so good you changed the universe!

JAMES

Bertie's going to attempt to charm his way into a box. So he is up on the first floor.

ALEX

You are at the ground floor but you can head up the stairs and so on. Give me a diplomacy check because presumably you're going to go via the help.

JAMES

Yes and obviously this will be pomp and pageantry.

ALEX

Naturally. Naturally. That will see you into probably the second act I think.

BRYN

Well you might miss the opening bars of the overture.

JAMES

So that is a 17.

ALEX

17. Role play with me. Sorry sir, you really should take your seat. The overture's about to begin. I think you might actually make it if you...

JAMES

Ah but you see no I have an invitation from the Count himself to join him in this box.

ALEX

Which Count?

JAMES

Hmm?

ALEX

Well we have six here today sir, I mean you'll have to narrow it down. If you've got your ticket I will be able to show you to the right seat.

JAMES

The Count...the...the Count of Prague you fool.

ALEX

Oh right. Oh ok, that does narrow it down.

JAMES

Lovely.

ALEX

If you just pass me your ticket I'll get you right to him.

JAMES

Now Bertie does so but leans in and takes the young man by the shoulders.

ALEX

You are big.

JAMES

Yes, yes I am. Very, very large and what a pleasing aroma I have

(laughing)

Inhale deeply hmm. Yes. Now. Now this is a really very expensive cologne.

Only the truly wise can smell how expensive it is.

LYDIA

Sorry, have we explained since it was two weeks for the listeners that he just got exploded on by...

BEN

He still smells like zombie bath

ALEX

Oh he still smells a little bit of exploding zombie.

BRYN

Dead fish zombie.

ALEX

Dead fish zombie basically.

LYDIA

Fish zombie, gangrenous, dead, rotting, putridness.

JAMES

Yes. I picked it up. Yes. At the...

ALEX

The overture begins.

JAMES

I picked it up at the seaside yes. It's called Channel Number 5. Now I can hear the orchestra starting up in the distance young man. I wouldn't want to miss it. The Count of Prague would not wish to miss my company.

ALEX

The help doesn't pass out. Carry on.

JAMES

I wouldn't want to miss it for the world and I'm sure that you would not wish me to miss it either.

ALEX

Yeah sure, let's go.

JAMES

Thank you. Thank you young man. Bertie tips him.

BRYN

Tips him where?

JAMES

Gives him a gold piece and then deliberately trips him over.

ALEX

He reaches out and you see him go, no sir I couldn't. I couldn't possibly. It's clear that he thinks your money smells and he's terrified of letting that anywhere near him. He shows you up...

BRYN

Your money's no good here.

ALEX

No really please keep it. He takes you up to the boxes and he takes you past the royal box and past what you don't know was the box with the curtains closed, through the far side of the royal box. Knock, knock, knock, knock, knock. Eventually an extremely portly woman comes and answers the door. Excuse me, do you mind, we're about to miss the overture.

JAMES

Knowledge nobility to work out who she is.

ALEX

Go for it.

LYDIA

Countess I'm going to put money on.

JAMES

That is 13.

ALEX

It's probably the countess. You kind of forget. She looks very countess-y. Do you mind? Or is it my husband? Has he finally turned up?

JAMES

Ah your husband I'm afraid has been delayed. He has sent me in his place to accompany you to an evening of the opera.

ALEX

Of course he has. Of course he has. And who are you?

JAMES

I, madam am Sir Bertrand Macguffingham.

ALEX

Oh you'll do. She opens the door and just gestures for you into the box.

JAMES

Thank you madam, thank you. No, no after you and Bertie just polishes the seat.

ALEX

She heads over to the seat and sits down. You realise that whilst she might be slightly heavy, 90% of the box is filled with dress. It is a huge, massive crinoline abomination.

BRYN

She looks almost appropriate next to your ridiculous armour.

ALEX

Her hat alone is hung up on the wall because one does not wear the hat whilst the performance is ongoing and its feather is obstructing...like it is almost all clothing. You have to sort of shuffle past in order to see.

BRYN

Can I see Bertie enter this box?

ALEX

I'll allow from the earlier perception check. Yes you see Bertie sit down next to some rich person unless you have the knowledge nobility. Jumping to Grizzop and Sasha backstage. The second that you leave the glitz and glamour behind, 1) it is very, very functional in the way that you've come to recognise is characteristic of Prague. Number 2) it's actually really clean and efficient, it's not the kind of chaos you would expect. Clearly whoever's running this place has it down like a well oiled machine. There's a couple of people in the corridors. They're in. They're out. No one's really faffing. You could

genuinely do a complete scan of the premises quite quickly. There's not really much chaos.

BEN

Do that then.

LYDIA

Right let's just wander through. Finding the basement is priority I'm guessing.

ALEX

Basement....yeah I could...

BEN

You're too slow, let's find someone else. I'm going to find somebody that looks like a stage manager and just leave him.

JAMES

Or find someone with a black t-shirt who looks unhelpful.

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

LYDIA

I like stage managers, they make things work.

ALEX

I've been one.

LYDIA

Yeah

BEN

Oh. Oh.

ALEX

Go on

BEN

I don't want to find one then. 25.

ALEX

Ok so yeah you wander around and your logic is, right I'll just follow the orders. One person gives an order to someone, I'll follow the person who gave the order. Keep going and you'll get to someone who actually knows what they're doing. It's a solid thing. Eventually it leads you to backstage relatively near to the stage itself so you haven't been going down but you are clearly meeting the stage manager. Whilst it's not chaos they are on it. There's about six people at any one time always coming, it's just like we need to cue setting. Three, two, one. Right set is cue. Where's Terence? Terence what have you done with the lighting? Get up with the sandbag and they're just on. On, on, on, go, go, go, go. They are a...

LYDIA

It's quite intimidating. Sasha asks...

ALEX

They are no gnome but they are busy.

LYDIA

That looks quite scary so Sasha asks someone quieter and less important where the basement is.

BEN

And I'm just going to straight for the stage manager.

BRYN

Do you speak the right languages? Have we established that?

LYDIA

No! She only speaks French and lip reading.

ALEX

So the stage manager is swapping flawlessly between English, French, Czech and German depending on who she's talking to. Grizzop, you were heading straight to them. Sasha, you were looking for...

LYDIA

Anyone that was quiet and in a corner.

ALEX

Every so often she turns and says something in Czech to a very scared looking, very young looking person holding a clipboard who, nods scared, and then writes it down and is clearly some kind of PA but we'll jump to Grizzop first. Ok yes, yes, yeah ok, right yeah.

BEN

Excuse me?

ALEX

What? What?

BEN

I've got a...

ALEX

Where's the set? Come on!

BEN

Oi. Right there is a possibility that this show could go completely south if I'm not helped out in my work.

ALEX

Right where are sandbags...get that set over.

BEN

This is more important than that! There is potentially a necromancer on the premises who's going to do a large ritual which will kill...

ALEX

Sarah? Sarah? Where are you Sarah – Sarah just deal with this person. The scared looking...

BEN

I'm going to sway check to just not be fobbed off.

ALEX

Yeah go for it.

BEN

That is 16.

ALEX

16. It is not enough. She has...it's almost, it's like post previews night on the biggest, shiniest opera they've ever done. She has no time for you. Maybe in any other context but that said, the Sarah person overhears you just trying to

talk into what has become the noise of her just giving orders and comes in and goes, I can probably...

BEN

Are you important enough to deal with this if people die?

ALEX

Yes

BEN

Right, brilliant!

ALEX

What?

BEN

There's a necromancer who might be doing a ritual on this opera house which will kill everybody in the building.

ALEX

No it's Don Giovanni. It's fiction. I don't understand.

BEN

Real! Necromancer from the University of Prague. I've been sent here. I'm a Paladin of Artemis. He's got a bounty on his head.

ALEX

She glances at the ID. Right, ok, please come with me. She hurries off and hurries for a change. For once! Leads you to basically a little nook.

BEN

Ok

LYDIA

So Sasha notices and the relief on her face at not having to start a conversation with a stranger is just like...it's like a light appeared in the sky and then was...wonderfully and happily blocked out by the moon.

(laughing)

Creating a shadow that she could sneak through comfortably.

ALEX

As of course the actual stage moon starts arcing through the...

BEN

So are you saying you have a Social Eclipse of the Heart

(laughing and clapping)

JAMES

Not an edit guys, that's a lot of appreciation. That's really good.

ALEX

That one stays. Ok so yeah basically Sarah leads you into a little nook and goes, right, ok so what's going on?

LYDIA

There's this guy that keeps...zombies keep appearing suddenly every time that...

BRYN

You are near!

(laughing)

LYDIA

But it is actually when we're near. Right Grizzop, so it's bad and he's Kafka and he's deadly. He's got a book and it's bad.

BEN

This might be the...

LYDIA

Her charisma is not high.

BEN

This might be the central point of a ritual that he's trying to destroy Prague with so we need to access to all areas. We need a map of the area so that we can expect anywhere that might have zombies. Do you know if this was built on a playing pit. Now! Now! Now! Now.

ALEX

She just freezes...

BEN

Should I be talking to the stage manager right now.

ALEX

That gets through. Like what has been that sort of obsequiousness and so on that has been up there just goes. She drops. She looks at you incredibly cold and goes, I'm pretty certain that I can deal with this.

BEN

Then get on with it!

ALEX

Right, pulls up some sleeves. Right so you need maps. Ok fine, let's get them and she just goes off on one. Cut to...

BEN

Like really viciously?

ALEX

Really viciously. She's incredibly efficient and vicious with it because that stage manager is standing between her and the job she should've had, she is muttering whilst she's giving it out. So Hamid, you are watching the show and it begins and you have seen Don Giovanni before. Of course, you're not a...you're not a fool but it's an excellent production. It's genuinely fantastic. And your sister steps forward for her aria and begins to sing. And it is fantastic.

BRYN

I fail to keep my watch on all the other important points in the audience. I am...I try. I really do, I really try. I want to keep an eye on the other magic users. I want to keep an eye on the suspicious box.

ALEX

She's...and this isn't just because it's your family. She's genuinely spellbinding. The entire room...

LYDIA

Mechanically spellbinding?

EVERYONE

Oooh

BRYN

Well saved!

ALEX

The entire room is just agog. They're honestly, they're just 100% honed in on her. Bertie.

BRYN

I am starting to cry.

ALEX

Bertie.

BRYN

Not necessarily at the content. I don't know if this is a sad song at not but just at the beauty of her performance.

ALEX

For the first time the dire tribe of hate and visceral, anger from the Countess about her husband has died down while she listens to it and her face, kind of, slackens and she's quite on board with it. Give me a will save

JAMES

14.

ALEX

It's very, very good. The rest of the world seems to drop away while she's singing. It is absolutely fantastic. And we'll take a break there and be back in a couple of minutes.

And welcome back. So with Hamid and Bertie having a wonderful time, it's brilliant.

BRYN

I haven't made my will save yet. I can attempt to do one at any point.

ALEX

You don't get one.

BRYN

That's not how the mechanics work!

ALEX

But that is what you get when you make all of those bowling puns one episode ago!

BRYN

I don't remember that.

ALEX

It's all coming home to roost.

BRYN

You must be thinking of someone else.

BRYN

Bowling puns? I don't remember any bowling puns. Would you like me to start making some bowling puns Alex?

BEN

There's a really good alley called Super Bowl in Croydon that I've heard of. Do you want to start talking about that?

LYDIA

Yeah

ALEX

It's weird. Sarah who's been really helpful up to this point suddenly twitches momentarily.

(laughing)

She carries on but you get the sense that you're on borrowed time.

BEN

Wait, has she just had an aneurism?

ALEX

Apparently so. It's a meta aneurism. They're rare but deadly. So she basically brings up everything that you need. Maps, she can tell you where everyone is and so on and she's got all riled up. She's pulled up her sleeves. You hear the stage manager just once going Sarah? Sarah? And she just goes pfft.

BEN

So looking at the look on her face, if you were to do a dark ritual trying to kill everyone in this building where would you do it?

ALEX

Flooded basement.

BEN

Ok, right!

(laughing)

LYDIA

Let's go there then!

BEN

Good to know! And I'll give her a look, being like I am a Paladin.

ALEX

She immediately starts leading you. You would never have found this on your own. Even though it's efficient and well made the place is massive and it does that theatre thing, where like from the public facing side it's cavernous but simple but it's deeper than you could possibly guess. They have staging from 70 shows ago kept just in case.

LYDIA

If it's a theatre of any age it's been extended and bits have been knocked off and bits have been moved around so sometimes there's just a ladder that's held on by duct tape and you don't think...you try really hard not to think about it Old Fire Station Oxford...you go back again and again to put on different shows and just...every time you climb down and you see the bit of duct tape, you think, not thinking about it. Not thinking about it.

ALEX

At one point you walk past an open doorway and see there's actually another theatre in there. It's small. It's kind of pokey but there is a genuine another theatre in there.

JAMES

You mean the theatre's pregnant!

ALEX

But she keeps going, keeps going and then she leads you down to a final basement and she's like, right so this is the lowest room. This was in the original opera house but it started to flood and eventually they decided to build up because it was easier than trying to dampproof it. This is as low as you're going to get in the room.

LYDIA

Right so look...

ALEX

After you.

LYDIA

Since you seem to have a bit of a hobby of it, have you noticed anything deadly or spooky or anyone sneaking around painting evil symbols on the floor. I don't really know how necromancy works.

ALEX

She just looks at you, gives you a pitying look, not insulting but it's an opera house, full of creative divas. Of course I've seen spooky things. Of course, people just dress up in masks to go and have romantic trysts. Someone else is probably planning to assassinate the lead oboist. It's theatre. That's just how it is.

(laughing)

Just imagine a den of thieves, now dress it up nice. That's what this place is.

LYDIA

That's not what a den of thieves is like!

ALEX

Sure! Like you'd know.

(laughing)

LYDIA

Well ok.

BRYN

There's honour amongst thieves!

LYDIA

We're just less socially adept. I've never had a mask!

(laughing)

ALEX

So mean this is what you needed right? Is there anything else I can...

BEN

No, no that's fine.

LYDIA

That's good unless there might be anywhere else that might be deadly.

BEN

Just prep for an evacuation at short notice.

ALEX

You see that bell pull? You've gone past a few of them. There is one there. There are two bell pulls. One of them very clearly marked just says "assistance". Look this place is massive, sprawling. If you get lost, find one of these, give it a pull, we'll know where you are and someone will eventually be along. Next to that is another one that just says "emergency" next to it. Do. Not. Pull this one. Unless you are...there is genuine...people are going to die right here, right now.

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah, zombies etc.

LYDIA

I've never plotted to plan...I've never plotted to assassinate a soprano either.

BEN

Well there could be a good opera about that.

LYDIA

Yeah

ALEX

She starts heading off. If you're going to assassinate a stage manager let me know and then she heads back up towards the stage.

BEN

Right, well I'll keep that in mind.

LYDIA

I'll let you know my rates.

BEN

Hang on! No. Later. I am lawful good. So we're on like the staircase of a basement that's just like...

ALEX

So you are at a blank corridor of stone. In front of you is a wooden door that just has a bit of tape across it that that says...do either of speak Czech?

LYDIA

Spooky flooded basement?

BEN

No but if it says spooked flooded basement.

ALEX

Funnily enough just “no” as a concept is fairly obvious to make out and it’s just taped across and it’s got a wooden door. The door itself looks slightly warped with damp. Meanwhile the bellpulls are on either side of the door which you’ve noticed in a lot of these rooms is the way it seems to work out. It’s currently closed and it may even be jammed with the damp but it is a rotten looking door.

BEN

Can you see in the dark?

LYDIA

Er, no.

BEN

Right

LYDIA

But I have...nothing of use!

(laughing)

BEN

Ah I haven't got any torches.

LYDIA

Ah well don't worry I hide in the dark as well.

BEN

Right, ok. Try and open the door.

ALEX

Ok, give me...are you just trying to open it normally?

BEN

Well I'm going to try first.

ALEX

Sure, sure. Yeah it's jammed. It's wedged shut. It doesn't even feel particularly locked. It feels like it's warped with damp and...

LYDIA

Sasha will kick it.

ALEX

Give me a strength check.

LYDIA

I got a critical fail and it's -1.

ALEX

Critical fail and it's -1. Ok.

BRYN

She just rolled a 0!

ALEX

Describe what kind of a kick you're going for.

LYDIA

Like one of those cool, you stand up, you lean sideways. Like a kickboxer kick.
Karate kick.

ALEX

Ah so you line it up...

LYDIA

Right at the lock point.

ALEX

Yeah you line it up, you know exactly where to plant it. This isn't your first kick and, you smack it. You smack it square and perfectly. Your foot goes straight through the completely wrong wood. It then just pulls away from the doorway and pulls down and overbalances and pulls you with it down into the darkness.

LYDIA

Argh!

ALEX

I am going to cut to Bertie.

LYDIA

I feel terrible. She'd never scream!

(laughing)

I go quietly into the night.

ALEX

Do go quietly into that good night. People might be watching.

LYDIA

I just really like it in the dark, quiet.

ALEX

So Bertie give me a perception check.

JAMES

2

ALEX

2. Brilliant.

BRYN

The opera's happening.

LYDIA

The music is that way!

ALEX

So the one who's presumably Hamid's sister. I mean it looks like Hamid in a dress finishes singing and everyone just stands and gives a rapturous applause even though the show has barely begun. Everyone's already standing up. She has to wave them down and is thanking and then heads off. Meanwhile the flustered Countess pulls herself back together and looks at you sideways and goes, so which one are you then?

JAMES

I am Sir Bertrand Macguffingham. Yes. Noble knight.

ALEX

She sort of gets her hand and gets a bit of an evil glint in her eye and does that finger walking over the top flirt thing that you see all the time in movies. She sort of walks her fingers over until they find themselves upon your hand and goes, you're a big one aren't you sir. It was sir wasn't it.

JAMES

Indeed yes. Sir Bertrand Macguffingham.

ALEX

A specimen of a man.

JAMES

Rolling with the very low perception check Bertie is not picking up on any of this!

ALEX

Nope. I'm glad you see where I'm going with this.

JAMES

Yes well you see I...

ALEX

Bearing in mind you are in an opera that's going on.

JAMES

Yes well he's doing this...

BRYN

Sotto voce

JAMES

Yes

ALEX

Then be sotto voce.

JAMES

Well yes of course.

LYDIA

We can do that now!

ALEX

Look at the technology!

JAMES

Yes, well it runs in my family you see, all the way back to Sir Everard Macguffingham. Always been six foot...

ALEX

She reaches up and you don't notice as she begins to unclip your armour on the nearest shoulder.

JAMES

Yes of course always...it assists with the heroing you know.

ALEX

Heroage

JAMES

Yes the adventurers. Greater reach with the sword, you know. You can pick things off...

ALEX

Such a big sword.

JAMES

...high shelves as well, you know.

ALEX

She then reaches out and around your shoulder unclips the other shoulder pad without you noticing. I am cutting to Hamid. You eventually come to. Give me a knowledge arcana.

BRYN

Is my sister a bard? Do I have to disown her? 14.

ALEX

14 total?

BRYN

Yep because I rolled a 2.

ALEX

Something fishy. Sommat fishy!

BRYN

It's just really good.

ALEX

I mean let's put it this way what you think might've happened, she might've been getting some magical coaching. You've heard of it. I mean sometimes it has to happen. You know the great master or **pun tune** will...

BRYN

That is worse than every single bowling pun put together!

JAMES

I enjoyed that. Carry on.

ALEX

But yeah the show continues and it is excellent but it is very clear everyone is here for one person and it's for your sister because the rest are excellent but she was genuinely on an other level. But beyond that, yeah it's fine. It's fine. Give me a perception check.

BRYN

18

ALEX

18. There are two suspicious points of interest. Number one, the curtains that are closed on the box clearly twitch and you see a pale hand reach out and grab the bannister. Meanwhile you also see Bertie draped in Countess. So far he is missing both his shoulder pauldrons, his helmet has been taken off and he clearly hasn't twigged that anything unusual is happening and she's working on getting that breastplate undone.

JAMES

She's probably just checking me for lice

(laughing)

ALEX

It's what happened with the horses!

BRYN

I am going to slip out of my seat, duck into the shadows on the side. Cast message to Bertie and then begin to sneak up to the box where...the box next door. The boxes.

ALEX

What do you message?

BRYN

I don't. I just cast it.

ALEX

Ah so you're prepped and good to go. Ok I'm going to cut back to the basement.

BRYN

So it won't work whilst I'm out of range but once I get back in range I think it'll still be active.

ALEX

I'll allow it. Cutting to Sasha. You fall. You fall immediately through rotten stairs taking 10 falling damage. It's nails and rotten wood. You land with a

splash. The water's not especially deep. It's not even deep enough to break your fall or anything. You land on your back. Ow! And it's sort of up towards your face. So it's maybe like...

BRYN

A few inches. Half a foot.

ALEX

Yeah. Half a foot. It's clear that they didn't flood insofar as it's underwater. It's more just unusably wet but you have taken out the stairs leading up.

LYDIA

Right well I solved the stairs problem. And the door. So...she stands up. If you could tell me what's down here, that would be great.

BEN

I look through the hole with dark vision because I can see perfectly in the dark.

BRYN

The door's gone.

JAMES

Through the doorway.

ALEX

So there's a bit of light coming in from where you are obviously and yeah, so what you see is, it's a very deep room. So she was actually heading down like a staircase that was built into the wall and has just been rotten through but you do see that it holds what must once have been costumes on mannequins lining each side of the walls.

LYDIA

Spooky!

ALEX

Some of them are in, you know, full regalia. Some are kind of humble but it stretches out beyond the length of your dark vision and the water is splashing around where she is. Give me a perception check.

BEN

That is a 16.

ALEX

Sasha is sort of getting herself up and she stands up and is sorting herself out and you see what is clearly ripples coming from the very far end of the darkness. Just one or two couple small ones just ripple their way across the now still water all the way till they reach Sasha's feet and then stop. Just a couple of ripples. But you notice them and it definitely didn't come from Sasha.

BEN

There's something moving down there. I'm going to throw a rope down.

ALEX

Ok cool. So you're throwing the rope down again.

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

You manage to do so.

BEN

Climb back up. There's something in the water. If you can't see it, it'll get you.

LYDIA

Right, she grabs the rope and begins to climb up. I assume that Grizzop ties it to something rather than just throws...

ALEX

I'll allow you take 10 because it's a bit meta but nothing's just going to go blah!

BEN

And while Sasha's doing that I've tied the rope down so I've got my bow ready.

ALEX

Over time you see another couple of ripples work their way out.

BEN

Can I take 20 on a perception check?

ALEX

You will have to be there for about 10/15 minutes just peering and really listening and so on.

LYDIA

One would assume 20 minutes. I thought that was the...

ALEX

More or less yeah. I'm kind of paraphrasing but yeah. If you want to dedicate that time absolutely you can.

BEN

No. Does nothing come for her?

ALEX

No.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

Cut back to Bertie. So good news that heavy armour. It's gone. It was really weighing you down. It was hot and you're in an opera, why were you wearing armour in an opera. That's just not a thing. She's now sat upon your lap but she's done it so slowly and over so many gradual steps that genuinely you've only just twigged the level of draping that's now happening.

BRYN

You've still got your grieves and your boots on.

ALEX

You have armour from the waist down which she's just about to begin making a move on which is when you go, hang on. Now hang on I've just noticed something here. Yes, no you were saying yeah.

JAMES

I'm terribly sorry madam, I'm afraid....

ALEX

Sotto voce, you're in an opera.

JAMES

I'm terribly sorry madam but I'm afraid...

ALEX

Oh don't be sorry. Not at all.

JAMES

I am a married man

ALEX

Oh! And I am a married woman. That's what makes it so delicious.

JAMES

Yeah but I'm really married.

ALEX

No so am I.

JAMES

No but really, really married.

ALEX

I'm a Countess

JAMES

Like I'm totally married

ALEX

Oh me too.

JAMES

Like really...1,000

ALEX

She's just not stopping.

JAMES

Stop it!

ALEX

Oh go on! Just a little!

JAMES

Bertie, he picks up...he's got a rolled up newspaper in his bag and he just bops her gently on the nose with it.

(laughing)

No.

ALEX

She just kind of stops and goes urgh...

BRYN

It's not a newspaper, it's the programme!

JAMES

Of course! No.

ALEX

Don't you know who I am?

JAMES

Don't make me give you a spritzing

ALEX

Oh please

(laughing)

Cut to Hamid. So you've gone up and you've managed to figure out the three boxes. You are facing the royal box. To your left is, let's call it the Bertie box and to your right is the box with the curtains.

BRYN

I am going to pretty slowly and pretty carefully, so I'm going for maximum stealth here just slide up to the doorway for the spooky box and just gently open the door.

ALEX

Give me a stealth check.

BRYN

They don't have keyholes, they don't lock.

LYDIA

Is that true?

BRYN

11

ALEX

11

LYDIA

Wait, wait, wait, also someone's been in a box at an opera and has had cause to check if the door locks. Bryn!

(laughing)

Oh my!

ALEX

I always suspected!

LYDIA

Dark horse!

BEN

You Countess you!

JAMES

It's really tricky to get a dark horse into the opera! It's even more difficult to persuade it to stay, that's why you need to lock it in. Really disrupts the opera

ALEX

So you open the door and begin to push it open. At the exact same moment Bertie comes bursting out of the other one and the Countess standing formidably in the doorway is throwing pieces of armour at him. If you're not here to keep me company why are you here at all?! Just get out. Honestly what are you doing here?!

JAMES

For the appreciation of opera madam!

ALEX

Appreciation of the female form is an equally solid expression...of course this is rather loud.

JAMES

I politely disagree with that statement.

ALEX

Ding, ding, as armour's flying against the back wall. The door you're opening, you just turn and turn back and a very pallid looking man is standing there. Very intimidating with windswept hair and a bit flowing white gown and a big cloak behind him. He stands, looks at you and says, who are you? You notice he's not wearing any trousers. You also notice there is another woman who is equally scantily clad in the box behind him. The Countess hears the talk, turns and goes Jeffrey? Jeffrey? What are you doing?! His pale demeanour gets even more pale. He turns, looks and then sprints. Just flees the box.

BEN

What with his bum out?

ALEX

Of course. The presumably, Count, bombs off in the direction pushing past you and running, trying to pull his trousers on as he runs down. The Countess starts running and attempts to grab one of your pieces of armour, presumably to beat him with.

JAMES

No, no, no Bertie takes the armour back.

ALEX

Yeah that's fine. She's chasing after him. Meanwhile a very, very creepy voice, a very deep...it sounds like it's in your ears even though it's not comes from, presumably everywhere at once. Grizzop and Sasha even you hear it. Hello Prague.

BEN

Oh no we've screwed it up!

ALEX

And we'll end the episode there. Slightly anticlimactic.

LYDIA

I'm scared now!

ALEX

It's almost like the closed box overseeing things was slightly too obvious a play there.

LYDIA

Yeah

BRYN

This man has no sense of the theatrical and frankly...

BEN

He blooming well does! He had a villainous sex hand that popped out at a mysterious moment.

JAMES

Yeah, yeah

BRYN

The necromancer and the sex hands is the title of my burlesque act!

(laughing)

The necromancer has no sense of the theatrical and frankly should've been in this box. I will not be participating in any more of his evil plans!

JAMES

Hello Prague works much better than Hello Milton Keynes

(laughing)

I'm glad we've had it set here.

ALEX

And as we return to, what I'm sure, is a dramatic appropriate Prague finale, we'll see.

BRYN

It's cool because now me and Bertie are in a box and what's going to happen is, he's going to activate his boots of flying and I'm going to climb on his back and we are going to float down onto the stage...

ALEX

Spoiler! Spoiler! Spoiler!

BRYN

It's only going to get better guys!

ALEX

Right bye guys!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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