

## **RQG – 71 – Secrets and Smithies**

### **Content Warnings**

- X
- X

### **BEN**

Hi everyone, Ben here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our patrons. C, Prince Julian, Phoebe Ciders, Aidan King, Francisco Pargana, Victoriana Velo. Thank you all. We really appreciate your support. If you'd like to join them, go to [www.patreon.com/rustyquill](http://www.patreon.com/rustyquill) and take a look at our rewards.

### **[Show Theme - Intro]**

### **ALEX**

Hello and welcome to episode 71 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

### **JAMES**

James “Uncomfortably Warm” Ross

### **BRYN**

Bryn “Melting Slightly” Monroe

**LYDIA**

Lydia “It’s Too Hot Whatshername”....Nicholas

**(laughing)**

**BEN**

Who am I? I’ve forgotten. I don’t know.

**BRYN**

Bryn Monroe

**ALEX**

And who are you playing?

**JAMES**

Sir Bertrand Macguffingham

**BRYN**

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

**LYDIA**

Sasha Racket

**BEN**

Grizzop drik acht Amsterdam

**ALEX**

Because it may be 60 degrees in here but your characters are nice, comfortable temperatures...

**JAMES**

Centigrade not Fahrenheit!

**(laughing)**

Send help! Send, icy help!

**(laughing)**

I feel like I'm in a shipping container in Romania about to be questioned about what I know by people with diplomatic deniability.

**ALEX**

And yes so picking up where we left off. We are in Prague. You have discovered a minor zombie problem which you dealt with quite effectively actually which was popping up from beneath the city as you're continuing your investigation into the Simulacrum, specifically trying to track down who made it and things like that...

**BEN**

The Simulo-cr-what-rum?

**ALEX**

Yeah it's been a while. You all head into the university and after a brief spate where Bertie just managed to push a couple of students to break down territory...

**BRYN**

It's cool. Hamid put them back together.

**ALEX**

...via the study of Franz Kafka while you were with Einstein you ended up having to go to...I say having, going to a meeting with basically the...

**BRYN**

University council.

**ALEX**

University council. Whereupon they started this conversation and then it became pretty apparent to you guys that they were probably Harlequins given the whole ring reveal thing.

**JAMES**

They did say we're definitely Harlequins

**ALEX**

So with that in mind they have just thrown their rings into the table. Everyone give me a perception check

**JAMES**

Ooh natural 20 from Bertie

**BEN**

Natural 1 from Grizzop

**BRYN**

That's the wrong way around guys. Switch dice

**BEN**

Alright, there you go.

**ALEX**

And Bryn?

**BEN**

Oh I got a natural 20!

**JAMES**

I got a 1!

**BRYN**

Adding furiously. 18

**ALEX**

18. Ok

**LYDIA**

Wait mine...25 which is still above Bertie's.

**JAMES**

Yeah

**ALEX**

However because natural 20s matter for once Bertie you're quickest on the uptake. Your experience of people trying to stop you leaving a room when massive debts are involved leads you to suspect that perhaps the way they're moving around the table etc. might have a little bit more to do with starting to cover exits now rather than merely standing and stretching their legs. Sasha, you are close behind in that summary. They haven't made any threats or movements or anything like that but whilst they're curious stood over the rings and Einstein is still asleep, Sigmund definitely has sort and is stood and is gently making his way to the entrance doors that you guys came in.

**JAMES**

Bertie stands up [yawns] – well I don't know about the rest of you but I'm certainly very sleepy. I've had a very long day. I think an early night would definitely be on the cards. I'll just be popping off...

**LYDIA**

Right I think we should all...I think Bertie's got a good idea for once.

**JAMES**

Yeah! Sleeping, sleepy times. You...I'm going to be climbing the wooden stairs.

**ALEX**

At this point Freud is now between you and the door and has made no aggressive moves whatsoever. It was definitely a nonchalant walk. Definitely a nonchalant walk but nonetheless he's now between you and the door.

**LYDIA**

Sasha shoots up her spring loaded wrist sheathes

**BEN**

Wait, hang on a minute. We're just about to get...

**BRYN**

Madam Curie would you please tell us what's going on?

**ALEX**

I would as soon as people would let me get a word in. You all finished?

Freud gives a lazy little hand gesture.

**JAMES**

Bertie is attempting to out nonchalant Freud, just steps towards...

**ALEX**

I'm not sure what roll that would be. To out nonchalant.

**BEN**

Perform

**ALEX**

Yeah. Can I get perform nonchalance.

**JAMES**

Alright. 9.

**ALEX**

Ooh. Ooh goodness me. I think...I fear that Freud may have the edge on you on perform nonchalance.

**JAMES**

What's Sigmund Freud going to perform? Like perform psychoanalysis perhaps but apart from that...

**BRYN**

That's profession

**JAMES**

Oh yeah good point. Well I mean, you know, he's it really. If Freud's doing it.

**ALEX**

I'm afraid that Freud out nonchalance's you.

**JAMES**

Well I don't think you're taking this very seriously.

**ALEX**

Anyway...

**LYDIA**

Well you're...so Bertie's now standing up..

**JAMES**

Bertie's standing up, pretty close to...so Bertie is now at this point, he's been out nonchalant-ed by Freud.

**LYDIA**

So Sasha is trying to be nonchalant and is standing with her back to Bertie but I'm not even gonna roll that because that would be a crit...character wise she can't do that.

**ALEX**

I'm going to go ahead and say that the time this discussion has taken is the length of kind of awkwardness as Curie's waiting to start, hesitating – are we good?

**JAMES**

Everyone keeps looking over to Bertie and...

**ALEX**

Yeah it's just a bit of an awkward moment.

**BEN**

Grizzop's just kind of standing up vibrating slightly looking at...

**BRYN**

Hamid is waiting patiently and politely.

**JAMES**

Freud is looking too relaxed in front of Bertie who looks less relaxed but he looks slightly less relaxed because he's got his hand on his sword.

**ALEX**

Curie just goes ahead and takes the lead at this point. So it's clear that you all know what those are, I presume?

**JAMES**

They're bedtime rings. And when they arrive on the table they indicate that it's time for us to all go sleepy byes.

**BEN**

No I've got no idea.

**ALEX**

Ok that I believe. She's looking mainly now at Hamid and Sasha

**LYDIA**

I've got no interest in them.

**BRYN**

I don't think I am sure what they represent. From my memory – Bryn says out of character – I don't think Hamid was present for all of the conversation about Harlequism.

**LYDIA**

You went to sleep

**BRYN**

On the sky ship. So he may have picked up a bit of it afterwards but he doesn't know as much as say, Zolf and Sasha did

**BEN**

He was just at the captain's dinner, wasn't he.

**LYDIA**

Yeah

**ALEX**

Curie then looks around, engages you all. Doesn't critically fail her sense motive which is good. And then effectively goes – right. Suffice it to say things have gotten quite out of hand here. Now Grizzop you were brought in obviously to track this person down not knowing who they were. The reason for this was we didn't want to start a panic as we've mentioned and effectively that still stands. We need someone to go find these people and as far as I'm aware you're still the persons we've hired to do this job.

**BEN**

Yeah well Church of Artemis ain't really gossips traditionally so wouldn't have said anything even if we did know it was Franz Kafka which I do now. So, brilliant, thanks for wasting that time.

**BRYN**

Mercenaries are perfectly capable of being discrete but they're not perfectly capable of doing their jobs well if they don't know the full situation.

**BEN**

I mean I'm literally under a sacred oath. Literally. That's not a metaphor. Just sacred oath to Artemis to do my job. Sacred oath! Actual oath! Sacred one with a god.

**BRYN**

Hamid nods vigorously.

**JAMES**

I think he's under a sacred oath of some kind

**(laughing)**

**BEN**

With a god! Not an idea. Actually a god. Big lady. Likes bows and arrows.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

So as it stands Kafka basically went rogue and we still need that dealing with. The fact that you know it's Kafka, how is that going to change how you track this person down?

**BEN**

Well I know it's Franz Kafka. Likes and dislikes. Appearance. Habits. Weaknesses.

**LYDIA**

Whether anyone's seen him around.

**ALEX**

If people had seen him around we'd have already have chased him down wouldn't we?

**LYDIA**

Well do you talk to everyone?

**ALEX**

She kind of gives a gesture to Freud who leans in and goes – from your perceptive, sort of yes. Are you aware of the School of Divination, specifically the ability to converse with people over great distances

**BRYN**

Obviously.

**ALEX**

Well that's basically why we brought someone in. Because when Kafka left – Freud gestures to two empty chairs which had the black cloth draped on them – he also eliminated two of our number. One of the people that were sadly killed during Kafka's departure from reality was unfortunately Codswallop, the head of divination which has made finding them significantly more difficult which is why we brought yourself in. We hadn't banked on random elements – Curie kind of gestures to the rest of you – getting involved here.

**LYDIA**

[Whispers] Is that a compliment?

**JAMES**

I'm going to interpret it that way, yes

**ALEX**

We know that you're trustworthy Grizzop for better or worse but I can't speak for the rest.

**BRYN**

If you knew the things we'd accomplished over the last few months you'd know that we definitely are. Unfortunately I can't tell you the details. They're classified.

**BEN**

They seem alright.

**ALEX**

True but we do know that you arrived here very shortly after Paris met with its untimely fate and just when we had to begin emergency measures in order to ensure our own city did not begin to starve so you'll forgive us if we are more than cautious regarding yourselves.

**JAMES**

It surprises me that a university institution this auguste has not heard of the difference between correlation and causation but maybe that's just me thinking aloud. I don't know, hm. Says Bertie. Pretty thick if you are ask me.

**LYDIA**

Blaming people that have fled a warzone...

**JAMES**

I know

**LYDIA**

...for violence that erupts in your own streets with homegrown elements. Sort of strange that. What civilisation would do...

**JAMES**

Do such a thing.

**LYDIA**

How terrible

**BEN**

Coming out of Paris with all of this armour I mean you're obviously very well to do and you're not in need are you.

**JAMES**

There we go

**LYDIA**

An ex pat, not an immigrant

**JAMES**

Yes I see. Yes well of course I'm English so I'm ex pat wherever I go. Yeah

**ALEX**

Curie just takes a moment and you see the little tic of the temple has...

**JAMES**

You should get that seen to

**ALEX**

...has started bouncing again

**BEN**

What do you want? What have you got so that we can get on with my job.

**ALEX**

Again Curie kind of shares a look with Freud. Einstein's still out of it at this point. Look do you know what he took? If you've learned this much you...

**BEN**

Scary book.

**ALEX**

Suffice it to say yes, scary book. He wasn't originally a scary man. The study of necromancy is not actually a forbidden art here. There's not actually a problem with the study of it. The execution of it is a different matter.

**JAMES**

Bah puns

**ALEX**

The tick is slowly working its way down her face

**LYDIA**

I just got that Bertie, that was alright.

**JAMES**

Yeah it was very good. You should really get that seen to. An aunt of mine had one of those, she snapped, killed hundreds.

**ALEX**

Curie looks at you Bertie. And the tic stops. She looks at you, gives a quick gesture. Give me a fortitude save

**JAMES**

18

**ALEX**

18?

**JAMES**

Yep

**ALEX**

There is a brief flash of light. In Bertie's seat is a small newt. No armour is there. Nothing else is there but there is now a newt where Bertie was sat.

**LYDIA**

Well he was standing for a start.

**ALEX**

Well stood. He's still a newt.

**BRYN**

Do I roll spell craft or knowledge arcana?

**ALEX**

It would be spell craft

**BRYN**

Yeah loads.

**(laughing)**

26

**ALEX**

Not that we're getting laissez faire with our checks here or anything. That was a...

**BRYN**

Well Bryn knows what happened so I presume Hamid does.

**ALEX**

That was a baleful polymorph. What's more, that was possibly the most masterful execution of baleful polymorph you have *ever* encountered. It was beyond textbook. It was textbook...

**BRYN**

Level 20 guys.

**ALEX**

At which point Curie...

**BEN**

Did he just into a newt?

**ALEX**

It's fine. It's temporary.

**BRYN**

28

**ALEX**

Yeah you're good. You're good.

**LYDIA**

Sasha of course had her back to Bertie in a defensive position and now has her back to a newt and is standing around

**BEN**

Don't walk backwards. Don't walk backwards! Walk forwards. Be careful. Don't tread on him.

**BRYN**

Ah are you...I know he can be slightly irritating sometimes but you're gonna put him back in a minute, right?

**ALEX**

Am I fine to continue?

**LYDIA**

Sasha picks up the newt

**BRYN**

Yes

**ALEX**

So as it stands we still need to find Franz Kafka. He is down in the city of Prague and he currently has one of the tomes from ancient Rome.

**LYDIA**

The newt is running over her hands.

**ALEX**

Specifically as far as we can tell intends to enact some kind of ritual using it which we had hoped to avoid.

**BEN**

I mean he's definitely turning all the plane bits into zombies. We found out that much.

**LYDIA**

Oh look dropped him. Oh no, there you go.

**ALEX**

That will mostly be a minor side effect. The reason we haven't given you any more information is frankly there's nothing more that we can give you. There's not much point giving you a physical description of a man who can probably change his shape at will. I've never really looked into it. It's a fairly common ability. So, with that in mind, I'm curious a) how knowing it was Franz Kafka would really make a difference when you're looking for a rogue mage, probably surrounded by the undead at this point.

**BEN**

I mean if I'd known he was a necromancer instead of going, ooh zombies have turned up, what a terrible accident. I would've gone, oh that man that I'm

looking for who is a necromancer. Isn't it useful that I know he's a necromancer now.

**BRYN**

I'm sure my colleague here doesn't mean to criticise your methods.

**BEN**

Oh please

**BRYN**

But it is very useful to know the capabilities of one's target on a mission to find them.

**LYDIA**

Please do not turn him back while he is in my shirtsleeve.

**JAMES**

The newt is still very much in Sasha's shirtsleeves.

**ALEX**

Freud's still stood where he was, gives a look to Curie who puts her hands up as a fine, fine, whatever. Freud picks up the conversation.

So what information can we actually give you that would help?

**BEN**

Any of his specific weaknesses. Likes. Plans that you might guess that he has. Anything that you know about his personality that we can use. Enemies

**LYDIA**

Friends

**BEN**

Any artifacts that you might have to track him because if I'm trying to hunt down somebody who can change his look and shape and everything at will it's going to be really quite hard isn't it!

**ALEX**

That's why we got the Artemis lot in. So as it's standing here's what I can probably tell you. 1) he seemed to be possessed by the item that he stole so most of his personality seems to have been mostly subsumed by that. You have been to his study and will have seen he was quite a particular man. He was quite clean. He didn't particularly enjoy getting dirty, I'd say that much. Most likely the kind of ritual that he'd be wanting to commit would be huge. City spanning. What that means is that he's probably going to be moving around the lower city. We can't tell you more than that. Similarly I doubt he'd go underground by choice given that he doesn't particularly like it. Other things to bear in mind, he's completely and utterly insane by this point. He wasn't beforehand but sadly it would appear that his research went quite awry and as it stands my best bet would be that if he's going to do some kind of

ritual that involves the entire city, the majority of that kind of ritual would be culminated in the centre of the city. Does any of that help you at all?

**BEN**

Yeah that's quite helpful. Thank you. If only I'd known that a couple of days ago.

**JAMES**

The newt has scurried up onto Sasha's shoulder by this point.

**BRYN**

Also now that we know who it is, we know that we are probably not capable of taking him on alone and we would therefore really appreciate some sort of way to contact you when we do find him. Thank you. Please.

**BEN**

Yeah and as an aside, don't you dare try and intimidate the Church of Artemis, alright. Or intimidate me as a representative of the Church of Artemis. You might have your spells and you might have your magic but I'm dealing with something much bigger than that, ok. So don't...

**ALEX**

Are you talking to Freud or Curie?

**BEN**

Both of them.

**ALEX**

Freud looks genuinely hurt – I'd never do anything like that. Curie's kind of like – eh.

Freud's still continuing it because Curie's lost her patience a little bit – if you were able to track this person down we'd probably be able to offer you some assistance. In terms of getting in contact with us, are you able to cast anything yourself that would be able to serve the purpose.

**BRYN**

No I don't think I am I'm afraid.

**ALEX**

Hm, right – patronising. Ooh the patronising look.

**BEN**

Haven't you got some kind of rock you can talk through or something?

**ALEX**

Pretty much

**BEN**

Brilliant. I'll have two of those please

**ALEX**

Einstein – he gives Einstein a gentle shake. He teleports away instantly. He then teleports back – sorry. Sorry. Right so what's happening?

Can you just hook them up with some kind of communication and then we can go about our business.

Right, yes. Ok. In my study yes. We will...ok, cool, yes. We can do that now. Teleports again.

They both look at each other and go – yeah, you'll get used to it.

At which point, Sigmund again – is there anything else I can do for you before you all head off?

**BRYN**

Could you turn our friend back into...

**LYDIA**

Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait...

**BRYN**

Once we put him on the floor.

**LYDIA**

Reaches for the newt, puts him on the table. Wait there. She doesn't want to be squashed by Bertie again. Steps back quite a lot. Unnecessarily far.

**ALEX**

At which point Curie again in a better than textbook execution dispels the spell upon Bertie. You return exactly as was. You have full memory of everything that happened. You were a newt with newt-y kind of desires for a little while but nonetheless you are now post newt.

**JAMES**

Is Bertie wearing his armour or is he...

**ALEX**

Yeah everything would of sort of been transformed with you and then has been transformed back. As far as it's concerned you now just have some memories of being a newt.

**JAMES**

Bertie...

**LYDIA**

Transforms back with his tongue still out.

**JAMES**

Yeah exactly. Tongue is literally out lolling and he...it's slightly longer than it was before and he uses it to clean his eyebrows

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Some residual effects.

**JAMES**

Some residual effects. Can I genuinely...can Bertie have that as a thing? His tongue is now slightly too long

**ALEX**

See the problem is that would require to have fluffed the polymorph and she did not

**JAMES**

I don't think she'd have fluffed it. I think she might've left that as a reminder.

**ALEX**

We'll have to wait and see. See how that pans out.

**JAMES**

Ok so has he had a residual slightly long tongue...

**ALEX**

I'll allow it for that moment certainly.

**BEN**

I hope you're a were-newt now.

**JAMES**

Oooh

**(laughing)**

It's pretty cool.

**ALEX**

Curie stands. Gestures for the door. Freud steps aside. He looks almost apologetic to you Bertie. Curie does not. Curie does not look particularly phased in any way but they both gesture to the door for you both.

**BEN**

Yeah let's go.

**BRYN**

Turn around and be like – one more thing

**(laughing)**

**JAMES**

Bertie draws himself up to his full height and looks dignified and walks out imperiously.

**LYDIA**

Yeah walks out, follows him looking around nervously.

**BRYN**

Actually there might be one other thing that's useful. Do you have a map of the lay lines of the city. If...is there...you said any culmination to a ritual is likely to take place in the centre. What's in the centre? It's not the opera house by any chance is it?

**ALEX**

Curie has already forgotten you. Freud goes – ooh I'll tell you what, I'll have that sent to you...

**BRYN**

I really hope it's the opera house

**ALEX**

...at Einstein's study.

**JAMES**

Same question, masquerades?

**ALEX**

Again I'll get the information sent to Einstein's study

**JAMES**

Ooh, also another question. Now you mentioned that the item that he took may have possessed him...

**ALEX**

Freud has closed the door at this point so the conversation is from him because Curie's not interested.

**JAMES**

No that's fair enough. I wonder do you have a forge around, within walking distance at the university?

**ALEX**

Forge? For magical purposes I presume

**JAMES**

Magical purposes

**ALEX**

Yes sure

**JAMES**

Excellent, excellent. Can I have directions to it and use of it please?

**ALEX**

Yes, feel free. He gives you directions to a nearby magical forge. It's mostly used for apprentice work but it is the nearest.

**BRYN**

Bertie communicates to his colleagues – my thinking is perhaps, hm, that if a book is capable of possessing a man, hm, is it not possible that another object in possession of a personality might have some light to shed on the matter of possession, hm.

**BRYN**

No. They don't really work the same

**JAMES**

Oh. Well I'm going to the forge anyway

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

You're just going to beat up a sword.

**JAMES**

Well...not quite.

**ALEX**

And we'll take a break there.

And welcome back. So where were we heading first, Einstein's study or a magical forge? I think it might be the forge...

**BEN**

I think both at the same time

**ALEX**

Or are you *splitting* the party?

**JAMES**

You, I mean you don't want us to split the party as the tone voice says Alex.

**ALEX**

So splitting the party

**JAMES**

There we go. Splitting the party. Bertie's not really going to have very much to contribute when it comes to the investigative side of things so he's gonna go off and do a little bit of private questioning of his own.

**ALEX**

Fair enough. In which case I will stick with the majority first and then jump to Bertie. So sticking with the majority, it wasn't a massive leap of logic and if you need to ask people you can. Einstein's study, shocker, was where Kafka's study and where all of the other private residences are in a large, connected people which messes around with extra dimensional space so that they all basically have their own wings. You head back to it and manage to pass, again, the university is still seeming to mobilise itself a little bit. Not massively so but word probably has spread at this point that some kind of magical shenanigans happened down in Prague and they're starting to get their stuff together. You continue heading through and head towards the premises and again you are looking at the list of offices in that building. Can all of you give me another perception check now that you're actually not in a rush and so on

**BEN**

19

**LYDIA**

23

**BRYN**

16

**ALEX**

All of you are also noticing that there is another office which is at the bottom of the list which has a small amount of black tape put over the top of it and it's at the bottom of the list of you have all the heads of the departments and then one that's blacked out at the bottom.

**BEN**

Is the list alphabetical or is it random?

**ALEX**

Random order

**BEN**

Ok

**ALEX**

And you also see that Einstein's study is at the very top of the building.

**BRYN**

We head up to...

**LYDIA**

Do...do I see the name of the teacher?

**ALEX**

Yes yours is on there as well. So you are referencing specifically Eldarion.

**LYDIA**

And she is the head of...

**ALEX**

Eldarion is head of illusion. And you see next to Eldarion's name is, you know those little slot in things that you can have and it just says "in absentia"

**LYDIA**

Ah

**ALEX**

But the offices again, easily accessible should you wish to go there as well.

**BEN**

We didn't get the name of the second person who was killed by Kafka.

**ALEX**

Would you like the list of all of the offices that are there then?

**BEN**

I...

**ALEX**

I've given them once. It doesn't take a massive leap therefore that you have abjuration...the head of abjuration, dead. The only name there's Elizabeth, no surname. Just Elizabeth. The head of divination, dead, is Henrietta Codswallop and then obviously you have necromancy who's Franz Kafka. They haven't put anything...

**BRYN**

I see, so you're killing off the female professors. Patriarchal.

**JAMES**

No wonder Curie's so angry

**ALEX**

So heading up to Einstein's study

**BRYN**

Yep

**ALEX**

So you start heading up some stairs. You carry on heading up some stairs. You keep heading up some stairs. You come to the conclusion that you probably

walked out the top of the building at this point. Still heading up some stairs. Maybe you head up some stairs for a bit, round some circular stairs until eventually you find yourself at the top of what feels like a tower.

**BEN**

Ah no more stairs!

**ALEX**

Circular and there is a door at the top, shocker.

**BEN**

Open said door.

**LYDIA**

Check for traps.

**BEN**

I just open said door. You can do it around me.

**LYDIA**

Just look...step back to see if anything explodes

**BRYN**

Check by sending someone else through

**JAMES**

The Macguffingham way

**ALEX**

I'm afraid that Grizzop disappears. Do you check for traps?

**LYDIA**

Yes

**ALEX**

It would appear that...

**BRYN**

When you say disappears?

**ALEX**

Disappears

**BRYN**

Just winks out of existence.

**ALEX**

Just winks out of existence.

**LYDIA**

As he reaches out...

**ALEX**

He reaches out, touches the door handle. Woop. Disappears. Give me a check

**BRYN**

Hamid grabs the door handle.

**ALEX**

Disappears.

**LYDIA**

31

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

So you rolled a 19 giving a total of...

**LYDIA**

31

**ALEX**

31 yep. So you find a device...well specifically there is an arcane symbol which is on the underside of the door knob. You've been warned about these before. It's some kind of teleportation device. You touch the door knob you get teleported somewhere.

**LYDIA**

Touches the door knob

**ALEX**

Disappears. All of you are in the study. Literally on the other side of the door. It was the most arbitrary and unnecessary use of a door knob teleportation ever. There was no reason for it to be there whatsoever.

**BEN**

That scans with everything we've seen from Einstein.

**ALEX**

He is there and he appears to be stood over a desk. The desk is covered in crystals and it...some are glowing, some are fizzing, some are just floating and bouncing around. His hands, he has one on either side of the desk and he appears to be brooding heavily. His shoulders are hunched and he seems to be breathing slowly and very, very...

**BRYN**

Professor? Professor?

**ALEX**

[snoring sound]

**BEN**

I'm going to walk up to him and just poke him in the back.

**ALEX**

What? Yes? What?

**BEN**

We need the stone for talking.

**ALEX**

Right, yes, ok.

**BRYN**

And Professor Freud said he was going to send up a couple of maps.

**ALEX**

Right, yes, ok. Ok. Sit, sit, sit.

There's nowhere to sit.

Ok if you sit bear with me. He starts messing around with some crystals.

**BEN**

Sit on the floor.

**ALEX**

Einstein's there, he's messing around. He picks up some seemingly random crystal and just yells into it – Gideon. Gideon, get up here now. Dumps it down. There's a delay. He carries on faffing with things. Turns around, realises you're still there, pretends to be faffing things. Finally there's a knock at the door.

Yes come on, come on.

The door, there's a pop and...

**BRYN**

Hamid casts invisibility on himself.

**ALEX**

Someone appears and they are tall, they are human looking. They are good looking in a kind of rar, rar kind of way.

**BEN**

Ah probably captain of the rowing club.

**ALEX**

Yes, in fact that's a pretty solid guess.

**JAMES**

Is it Bertie?

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Certainly has the physical build of a rower. Is carrying a crystal. It's quite sizable. Comes in and then hands it to Einstein.

There you go sir, sorry about that.

Yes of course, right. Why are you here?

Professor you told me to come here. You told me to deliver the crystal.

Yes ok, right, so...take this.

He hands him an empty glass and Gideon, whoever it is again – ok Professor.

He turns to the rest of you – [whispers] is everything ok?

**BEN**

Yeah we just want some stones that we can talk through from Einstein and oh a map.

**BRYN**

Hamid is invisible.

**BEN**

I point to where Hamid was – a map of...where'd that...where'd he go? Has he...where's Hamid?

**LYDIA**

He just...I don't know.

**ALEX**

Give me perception checks.

**BEN**

I mean we're on like -40 aren't we.

**BRYN**

I'm at +40

**BEN**

That's it. 13

**LYDIA**

**ALEX**

13. 19. Sasha. Gideon knows that name. Gideon definitely knows that name and immediately passes it off like he doesn't know that name.

**BEN**

Anyway we need maps. He said lay lines for Prague.

**ALEX**

Right I'll go get those for you. He's now looking around quizzically. He just looks a bit weird.

**BEN**

Brilliant thanks.

**ALEX**

And heads off and then touches the doorknob. Einstein's just there and he just go – ah, cannot get the help. Ok, right so, this really simple. It's a sending stone, very simple. Ok you have this one. I have this one. Go stand over there.

**BEN**

Alright. I go and do that.

**ALEX**

Ok, ok, right hold it to your face

**BEN**

Ok

**ALEX**

He says to you loudly and clearly despite the fact that you're in the same room – you're an idiot. There's a brief half lag and then it comes out of the crystal loud and clear. You even see a ghost of his face in the crystal – you're an idiot.

**BEN**

I didn't get all of that.

**ALEX**

Right, ok, good. Bring it back. There's a weird speech jamming delay as the two – right ok, so we keep one. You keep one. It's very simple.

**BEN**

No, no, no that wasn't good enough. We lost half of the message. I only got the last word.

**ALEX**

Well you need to give it a second to warm up, uhh. He kind of goes around and starts jiggling around with it. He says – right everyone close your eyes. Give me a reflex save

**LYDIA**

Natural 20

**BEN**

15

**BRYN**

18

**ALEX**

None of you are blinded! There is a massive flash of white light which dazzles your eyes despite your eyelids being closed. Ok try it again

**BEN**

Alright. I walk over – you're an idiot.

**ALEX**

It's loud, clear with a crystal clear image at the front.

**BEN**

It seems to work.

**ALEX**

Cut to Bertie. So there's all of these youths running around, doing things and you make your way to, what would to anyone else's eye in a modern era look like an engineering department. It is a bit more functional. It takes a bit of a while to get to because it seems to be moving quicker than the other islands of university but you manage eventually. It coordinates with the one that you're on and you can step on and keep going. It has a lot more steel to it and a lot more wrought iron than the other redbrick things however this one has a clearly, utterly impossible architecture to it where one section is held up entirely by a single beam that's as thick as your finger and things like that. It seems more like people decided to do experiments in architecture whilst building an experimental architecture like area and so on. And there's signs leading to the forge around the back of the building

**JAMES**

There's a big hole down there. I wonder how deep it is. Carry on.

**ALEX**

Heading around to the back you come upon, yeah effectively a forge which is tacked on to the back of that building. It has a decent actually view of the outskirts of Prague from there and it seems to consistently orbit around the outside of the university.

**JAMES**

Facing outwards

**ALEX**

Facing outwards, yep. It's almost like occasionally people have accidents. Who knows.

**JAMES**

Whoops

**ALEX**

But nonetheless there is a heavysset and, for the university, very no nonsense kind of person hammering away at, what looks to be, a golden glowing anvil.

**JAMES**

Glowing anvil, lovely. What do they look like?

**ALEX**

They are about 50. They have a big, bushy beard. Massive forearms but are really, really quite short. As in like the anvil's far too large for them so they're having to kind of reach their arms up to hammer properly.

**JAMES**

A dwarf

**ALEX**

Yes

**JAMES**

Ok

**ALEX**

They are dwarven in stature. Probably a dwarf given how hefty they are.

**JAMES**

Looks like a dwarf, sounds like a dwarf, shaped like a dwarf.

**ALEX**

Yeah but who are we to...

**JAMES**

Don't want to draw conclusions because he's doing a dwarf's job. That's not a very modern way of looking at it.

**ALEX**

They're dwarf presenting.

**(laughing)**

**JAMES**

Right cool. Bertie sees no reason why not, he's just going to approach this person and ask nicely because he's on official business.

**ALEX**

They look up at you. Put some glasses on.

**JAMES**

Good afternoon, I am...

**ALEX**

You alright?

**JAMES**

Hello, I am Sir Bertrand Macguffingham and who do I have the pleasure of addressing?

**ALEX**

Stormskull

**JAMES**

Stormskull. Pleasure to meet you Mr Stormskull

**ALEX**

And yourself

**JAMES**

Offers a hand for a handshake.

**ALEX**

Big sturdy man handshake.

**JAMES**

That is a good handshake.

**ALEX**

If you've ever seen Predator that bit where they just arbitrarily show biceps for an extended period.

**JAMES**

There's a moment where Bertie and Stormskull...

**ALEX**

Oh yes

**JAMES**

...do that. They lock hands and it's not like a sort of macho trump off. There's not the sort of...

**ALEX**

Oh no

**JAMES**

It's a two firm handshakes well met. It's a handshakes that say we respect each other.

**LYDIA**

We could arm wrestle but we're not going to...

**JAMES**

We're not gonna

**LYDIA**

...that would be a good show and we both...

**BRYN**

Come on guys, sun's out, guns out.

**(laughing)**

**JAMES**

But we're both packing howitzers so let's calm it in the interests of avoiding fire.

**ALEX**

So to wrap it up you shake hands

**JAMES**

We shake hands. I think a moment of understanding passes between us that transcends mere words.

**ALEX**

Thank goodness we didn't spend lots of words transcending that...

**JAMES**

Discussing that transcendence

**ALEX**

Moving on from the handshake!

**JAMES**

Stormskull understands perfectly well that Bertie is on official business and just lets him pass and use the forge

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Does he?

**BEN**

Looks like James is GM'ing now so...

**JAMES**

He wants to wrap this up. The quicker we get this bit done, the quicker I get back to the party.

**ALEX**

So anyhoo – what can I do for you?

**JAMES**

Well I'm on official university business, hm, I have a sword here that I need to have examined perhaps

**ALEX**

May I?

**JAMES**

You certainly may. Passes to him.

**ALEX**

He holds it up. You hear...I say hear, you see him kind of cock an ear and he then kind of winces a bit. Winces a bit more. Puts it down.

**JAMES**

That's what I thought.

**ALEX**

Yeah I can see the problem there.

**JAMES**

So...

**BRYN**

He clearly knows the problem is Bertie

**(laughing)**

**JAMES**

Does he clearly know the problem is Bertie?

**ALEX**

You can give me a sense motive

**JAMES**

15

**ALEX**

15. You can't gauge it. You can't gauge it. You don't think he's deliberately like putting one over you but you can't really get a read on him. He seems quite a reserved character.

**JAMES**

Inscrutable

**ALEX**

Inscrutable, yes.

**JAMES**

Right, ok. Well you see this recently came into my hands. A family heirloom and I note that there is a certain disturbance to it. There's a sort of irritating high pitched sound that comes with the handling and I'm wondering if there's anything that can be done about it.

**ALEX**

Not really. Again he takes a moment, puts a big leather glove on that he was using, touches the sword, takes the glove back off and just doesn't engage with the sword and just turns to you. Honestly it doesn't really work like that. For what it's worth, I mean, it's...if you're looking to sell it we'd be more than happy to buy that. I mean it's an incredibly valuable and well made item. I'm not entirely sure...a lot of people consider an ego in a weapon of this to be a bonus.

**JAMES**

I don't fancy the competition frankly.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Well I mean you do have to sort of work with it, not against it. There is a knack to it.

**JAMES**

Not really my style.

**ALEX**

Fair, fair. Well I can see about the university purchasing it off you for training purposes for the rest of the apprentices if you want?

**JAMES**

How much might we be considering as the value for this item? For insurance purposes of course - and Bertie puts his hand directly on it when he says for insurance purposes...directly on the pommel and then takes it off again at the end of that sentence.

**ALEX**

Let's roll and appraise check. Ooh he's very good. He's very good at appraising. As he should be admittedly. Kind of looks at you – I'll tell you what

it's worth but I'll also tell you what we'll offer. If you met a mug you'd pay that market value, I reckon you'd get 18k for that. We'll give you 12.

**JAMES**

And what would you do with this sword for training purposes? Would you be – and at this point Bertie gets down and touches the pommel of the sword again – would you be smashing it around against planks of wood? Would you be ineptly handled by ill experienced trainees who had no conception of the quality of weapon they were wielding who might perhaps chop fruit with it, hm. Who would drop it around in sewers, treat it with all sorts of disrespect? Or – and Bertie takes his hand off it again.

**ALEX**

There were no words that time.

**JAMES**

Right, ok.

**ALEX**

Honestly it's mostly going to be used as a showpiece. We'll show them how they do it but we wouldn't destroy something like this, that would be a bit of a waste.

**JAMES**

Bertie rolls his eyes

**LYDIA**

Thinking about how much sewage you've encountered in the adventures so far...

**(laughing)**

...how much the sewage might encounter as a university showpiece and weighing the two up.

**JAMES**

He's trying to show the sword who's boss essentially and lay out an alternative path that might happen if...

**ALEX**

So far I think you may have established that it may spend the rest of its days on a velvet cushion being care for by experts.

**JAMES**

Now if I were to pay some money could you torture this sword for as long as the university exists.

**ALEX**

He kind of takes a moment, looks left, looks right. There's no one there. Yeah.

**(laughing)**

**JAMES**

How much money?

**ALEX**

Tell you what 5k and you won't be able to use that as a sword again.

**JAMES**

Bertie touches the sword. 5k. Looking back through what I have, you know that seems like quite a fair deal. Bertie removes his finger once again.

**ALEX**

Still no words from the sword.

What do you say? I mean I shouldn't really be doing this but – again he's looking left, looking right. One time offer.

**JAMES**

Could this one time offer be picked up again in about half an hour or so? And Bertie's eyes look to the forge

**ALEX**

Takes a moment. 6k in ten minutes.

**JAMES**

Bertie touches the pommel of the sword again. 6k. 6k.

**ALEX**

I'm going to cut back to Einstein's study at this point. So...

**LYDIA**

Has Hamid reappeared yet?

**ALEX**

Hamid...how long's the duration of your invisibility?

**BRYN**

Five minutes.

**ALEX**

Yes. Hamid will have reappeared. There's another knock, knock, knock at the door.

**BRYN**

Hamid casts invisibility on himself

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Gideon, again immediately reappears.

**LYDIA**

Is he...is he maybe teleporting somewhere.

**ALEX**

Gideon is there holding two big old parchments. They look particularly large as well. These aren't intended for carrying around.

**BRYN**

Hamid will quickly whisper – I'm still here, just don't say anything

**LYDIA**

What?

**ALEX**

Gideon comes over and he's...

**BEN**

Did you hear anything?

**LYDIA**

No

**BEN**

Alright

**ALEX**

Gideon comes over and then dumps the parchments on one of the tables in the room which I haven't actually described yet. I'll do so now. The room itself is a large, it has an almost observatory quality, a large glass ceiling. It has bay windows on a lot of sides and it is significantly larger in terms of width than it should be. Given how high up it is, given how precarious it should be, it feels quite spacious. It's like someone took a lighthouse top and kind of stretched it.

**BEN**

I'm just thinking of the room they kept Tom Baker in for Fort Boyard which is a very niche reference

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

You know what, as far as these references go, that was actually the source I was using

**(laughing)**

I'm not actually joking either.

**BEN**

What have you got there? We've got a crazy old man who does riddles at us. Occasionally we give him some food, have a chat.

**ALEX**

It's basically that! That's such a niche reference, it'll never make it to the main cut but you're right! You're absolutely right and I want everyone who's a patreon to know that you're right.

**BEN**

Nailed it.

**ALEX**

Anyhoo Gideon starts stretching them up and keeps looking around surreptitiously but again there's no one there. Right so Professor?

What? Why are you here? What do you want?

The maps.

We'll skip the whole rigmarole of explaining why he's again

**LYDIA**

Does it take more than five minutes?

**ALEX**

It does not.

**BEN**

How many minutes does it take because we could draw this out longer.

**ALEX**

So the two maps are stretched out on the table. They are held down basically with random lumps of crystal around the outside to stop them rolling in on themselves. Einstein starts having a look and now that he's actually got a job he does seem to start be focusing in. Gideon meanwhile starts casting his eyes around and not really paying attention. Einstein starts – ok so you're asking about the lay lines yes?

**BEN**

Yeah

**ALEX**

Ok good, right. So you look at the map. There's Prague. Yada, yada, yada. See this line, shock it's a lay line yes. This line's a lay line, yes. Ok right you'll notice they're slightly off centre. It's because after the burning it all kind of shifted...

**BEN**

We had a...

**LYDIA**

Our colleague was supposed to be here to understand this.

**BEN**

I dunno where Hamid is.

**LYDIA**

Yeah like Hamid teleported or something.

**ALEX**

Ok one second. Erm...er...

**LYDIA**

What is a lay line?

**ALEX**

He then suddenly hesitates, mutters something under his breath...

**BRYN**

Hamid has stepped just outside the room.

**ALEX**

That's fine. Einstein sort of gives a gestures, waves his hands and there's a peculiar dazzle of light around his eyes. He looks around – well he's definitely not in here. Alright.

**BEN**

Ok we'll have to wait for him to come back because I don't...

**LYDIA**

Yeah we can't...I don't know what this is. Show us the plague pits though, that's useful.

**ALEX**

Ok fine.

**BRYN**

I hate you guys! I really hate you guys!

**LYDIA**

Training the knowledge local. Let's look at some maps.

**ALEX**

I'm going to jump back to Bertie. Listen so I mean are we doing this or not because you know I've got a class coming in about 15 minutes.

**JAMES**

Ooh that's all I'll need. One moment.

**ALEX**

Holds his hand out, ok.

**JAMES**

Bertie goes over to the forge and puts on...takes the sword and has it in such a position that he would be able to communicate with the sword. Now can you hear me in there?

**ALEX**

There's no response.

**JAMES**

Bertie taps it against the side of the furnace. Can you hear me?

**ALEX**

Still nothing

**JAMES**

Taps it again harder.

**ALEX**

Still nothing

**JAMES**

Bertie opens the furnace door. Can you hear me?

**ALEX**

I've dealt with worse than you. You're opening such a can of worms.

**JAMES**

If I was opening a can of worms I would use an effectively useful tool like a tin opener

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

I'll take a moment. That was really good!

**LYDIA**

Retroactive intimidate check passed.

**ALEX**

Listen I can be your friend or I can be your enemy. But either way I'm going to help you.

**JAMES**

I don't take instructions from cutlery, hm. Bertie takes the sword and...

**(laughing)**

...puts the tip of the sword into the white hot furnace.

**ALEX**

It proceeds to start glowing.

**JAMES**

Hello?

**ALEX**

There's not really anything. A voice further back goes – not really how it works.

**JAMES**

Right. How can I torture this sword?

**ALEX**

You pay me the money and then I do...we discussed this. You pay me the money and then I...

**JAMES**

Fine, alright. How much for some enhanced interrogation for the next 15 minutes to half an hour. Basically I want this sword broken. I can do it myself, hm, or I can pay you a small amount of money to do it.

**ALEX**

Right ok. Like I said, give me 6k and it can not be a sword. For 3k I'll...what's sword for breaking its legs. I'll tell you what give me 1k and it'll be more compliant.

**JAMES**

There you go. Done. Will it suffer?

**ALEX**

Oh yeah loads

**JAMES**

Good, excellent. 1k it is. Bertie counts that out. Bertie, while he's doing this, counting this out, he's still got his hand on the sword.

**LYDIA**

Does he use the pattern or the fake pattern or the real money? How much real money does he have?

**JAMES**

He's got enough real money to do that.

**LYDIA**

He's not trying to fake it.

**JAMES**

He's not trying to fake it. The fake money has been de-charmed

**ALEX**

So do you pay the man?

**JAMES**

Bertie's in the process of counting this money out to him while he's got the hand on the sword now. One, two hundred...

**ALEX**

And I'm gonna cut back to Einstein's study. Specifically Gideon starts backing away going – so obviously you've got everything – still looking around kind of sketchily – if there's anything I can do for you Professor.

Einstein's like – yes of course, yes, yeah.

And then Gideon just heads out and touches the doorhandle to teleport outside.

Where's Hamid?

**BRYN**

He's just stepped to one side of the door.

**ALEX**

Gideon appears directly in front of you. Isn't looking at you, looks around and is nose to nose with you.

**BRYN**

I, without touching him...he's not nose to nose with me, I'm a halfling. Without touching him...

**ALEX**

True

**BRYN**

...still invisible, I reach behind him and reach the door handle.

**ALEX**

Gideon...the last thing you see is Gideon looking a bit worried and then starting down the stairs. Your invisibility wears off. Back in the study.

**LYDIA**

Ah Hamid we were waiting for you!

**BEN**

Yeah where did you go? We were talking about lay lines.

**BRYN**

Oh good, I had to use the facilities. Shall we resume? I'm terribly sorry.

**BEN**

What's a lay line?

**BRYN**

...stomach trouble.

**ALEX**

Bertie give me a will save?

**JAMES**

Urgh. 5.

**ALEX**

Bertie walks in the top of the tower and sheathes his sword.

**LYDIA**

We've seen this before!

**ALEX**

And I think I'll end the episode there. I'm sure everything's fine.

**JAMES**

Right

**ALEX**

Everything's probably fine. It's all probably fine.

**JAMES**

I'm not particularly attached to this character. I don't like him very much

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

You're the one that's got the writing job if it all goes...

**ALEX**

You think I write this, all I do is basically lay out a bunch of dominoes and keep trying to stop you from knocking the first one over until the last one's down. It never works. Never works. But anyhow we'll come back next time and we'll see...

**BRYN**

I'll continue to avoid my awkward backstory

**(cheering)**

**ALEX**

Bye guys!

**EVERYONE**

Bye!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**ALEX**

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