

RQG – 90 – Family Matters

Content Warnings

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BEN

Hi everyone, Ben here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of patrons. Eric Wagner, Scott Campbell, Simone Delaney, Emily L, Kyle Bury, Bridge, Mike Geary, Jordan Carter, Angela Stefansky, Anelise Hours. 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 90 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me for another exciting adventure, I have

BEN

Ben Meredith

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

Rusty Quill Gaming – 90 – Family Matters

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

HELEN

And Helen Gould

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Grizzop drik acht Amsterdam

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Sasha Racket

HELEN

And Azu

ALEX

And I've decided I'm going to punish *all* of you! Because you did it again, didn't you?!

BRYN

Did what?

ALEX

Yeah...

BEN

I don't understand.

BRYN

I did my job!

BEN

Yeah exactly. Kill a monster. Awful.

ALEX

So I'm just going to say it's not right and there will be consequences.

LYDIA

Saw a figment of a thing from my past and I stabbed it because that's how Sasha feels about her past. It's there, it's materialised and it's a literal materialised shadow of her past. She's going to stab it before it says anything.

BRYN

I feel like in many ways you spend the last several episodes punishing my character with emotional difficulties in various stripes and in many ways this was the cathartic release at the end of that.

LYDIA

Stab it!

BRYN

That's what I said.

ALEX

Stab your feelings, yes. So to oversimplify you're all in Cairo, kind of researching the Simulacrum, let's leave it at that.

BRYN

Oh yeah that thing!

ALEX

There were few...

BRYN

Is that still a thing?

ALEX

Oh I don't know. Find out. In fact, don't find out. Just wait and see what happens. There was the funeral that went ok. There was a sinister hooded figure that was at the funeral. Your brother's been acting weird presumably because of the whole Barret thing.

BRYN

Yeah I'm supposed to give him a ring. Probably not going to give him that.

ALEX

Probably not going to do that are you?

BRYN

No.

HELEN

Do not.

ALEX

And the last thing that happened is a sinister hooded figure was looking at your brother's room and then you all absolutely totalled it without it so much as doing a single thing.

BEN

A job well done.

BRYN

Didn't we see its weird tentacle-y face as well?

ALEX

You didn't dehood it. You basically saw that it definitely was not humanoid or if it was it was a very bad approximation.

LYDIA

Squid in a wizard's robe. Quite reminiscent of a game that we're all aware of.

BRYN

I think I guessed it was an illithid or something like that.

BEN

It's definitely a "squizard"!

ALEX

So we will pick up...

LYDIA

Canon!

ALEX

We will pick up where you left off ok. So to remind you all the squizard was stood in the party...like the party grounds and it was looking up at Hamid's brother's room and it was by some crates and so on and Azu successfully made it through the party without trashing the entire party so kudos.

HELEN

Not all of it yeah. Just a large portion.

BRYN

Oh yeah I'd forgotten that we would've drawn a lot of attention.

ALEX

And you've just charged through and annihilated presumably a guest at the wake. So we're going to pick up where we left off which is...

BRYN

I was in my brother's room leaning out the window.

ALEX

Pew, pew, pew I believe.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Yeah so we're going to pick up where we left off which is there is now a body 'pon the ground with extra pon and its cloak and so on is spread out. You can't see much of it yet and everyone is currently in that moment of stillness before everyone freaks the heck out.

LYDIA

Sasha is still stabbing...

(laughing)

No!

BEN

Job well done.

HELEN

I would like to just pull the cloak off it and see what was underneath.

ALEX

Ok so you do so.

LYDIA

It's actually quite difficult to do because Sasha is still frantically stabbing it.

HELEN

I just tug the cloak away.

BRYN

Does someone want to give Sasha some emotional support.

LYDIA

And she may burst into tears at this point.

HELEN

Aw.

BEN

Sasha, Sasha, it's ok. It's dead. It's gone.

ALEX

At which point you pull the cloak off with no pre-empting. The thing beneath, what knowledges do people have? Let's see what we've got.

BRYN

Arcana

LYDIA

Local

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ALEX

Arcana. Local.

HELEN

Religion.

ALEX

Religion.

BEN

Nature, religion and geography but I don't think geography's going to help.

HELEN

Ooh and nobility.

ALEX

I don't think nobility's going to help. It's a very noble squizard.

LYDIA

This is from an oxbow lake

(laughing)

ALEX

Can I get from...

LYDIA

It's made of igneous rock.

ALEX

Can I get a nature check from Grizzop and can I get a...what were the ones that Azu...

HELEN

I've got nobility and religion.

ALEX

Can I get a religion check from Azu. It's a...stretch but maybe.

HELEN

Ok that's 14 and I've got a 6 in this box.

ALEX

Ok.

BEN

I started well. I got a natural 1.

ALEX

You tried to use my dice didn't you Ben?

BEN

Ok they're lumps of plastic...

BRYN

I mean can you tell it's a 1 though. I mean you can't really read that dice.

BEN

Well apparently I have better sight than Alex because I can read this.

ALEX

Would you like the good news or the bad news?

HELEN

Bad news, then good news.

ALEX

Ok the bad news is none of you have any idea what the thing beneath that cloak is and by any idea I mean *no idea*.

LYDIA

It's not local then.

ALEX

It's not local. Local knowledge does not apply I'm afraid. Sorry. If you can make...I'll make you a deal.

LYDIA

This is a local fight for local people

(laughing)

ALEX

If you can ever make it to where this thing came from I'll let your knowledge local. Until then we'll take it as read that knowledge local does not apply. The good news is that it's definitely dead. Extremely dead and it's not like exploding into flames or teleporting away or pulling all of the other nonsense that enemies tend to do.

BEN

So what does it look like?

ALEX

And there we go. So in terms of shape it is broadly humanoid.

LYDIA

Calamari

(laughing)

ALEX

It is broadly humanoid insofar as it has...

LYDIA

Cala-magi

(cheers)

What happens when you cook a squizard

(laughing)

ALEX

Okay I'm back on board. Ok I quite like that one. Despite myself...despite my rage building I quite like that one. So it is loosely humanoid. It has extremely elongated hands and extremely elongated feet and they are distinctly tentacular in nature. It has a very long and thin body.

BRYN

Are they more like pseudopods or tentacles? Do you know the difference? Because I only know the difference because I once saw a sketched meme on Twitter.

ALEX

You know what, elaborate. Indulge me.

BRYN

Well it's hard to describe without pictures which I'm terrible at drawing.

LYDIA

Tentacles are actually narrow and long and then they have the suckers on the end and the other ones have suckers the whole way up. So an octopus doesn't actually have tentacles. They have pseudopods.

ALEX

Ok, so it's long pseudopods instead of fingers.

LYDIA

Suckers all over the thing.

ALEX

And it has basically hands for feet, similar to an ape insofar as it's two sets of pentadactyl limbs and those also have pseudopod fingers. PseudoPod would love this, I should tell them and in terms of a face...

BRYN

That you've made a really powerful, ugly enemy named after them.

ALEX

Yeah!

BRYN

I'm sure they'll love that.

ALEX

That's human flattery. That's how that works.

BRYN

Networking!

ALEX

And for a face, it has quite a lot of pseudopods, specifically around the...

LYDIA

Suckers for a face.

ALEX

...facial region it has a huge number of them around the mouth area. It has a slightly bulbous membranous head that extends higher than it would on, say a human.

BRYN

What's the name of the squid-y character in SpongeBob Square Pants.

BEN

Oh Squidward.

BRYN

Yeah. Sounds like Squidward to me.

ALEX

In terms of height...

LYDIA

Squidward the Squizard. He's now cala-magi.

ALEX

...it's taller and thinner than you would expect a humanoid...sorry a human to be. It's head is slightly translucent and you can see what's left of the brain squelching its last through the multiple stab wounds that are in there. Its eyes are extremely enlarged but kind of got a weird milky quality already to them and it...yeah squizard is as good as anything I guess. You're stood upon...you're stood upon squizard.

LYDIA

Sasha isn't stood anywhere. As it fell down she was down and was just...she's on the ground and was stabbing and has now collapsed in tears.

ALEX

It's really satisfying to stab insofar as it's super squishy. Super squishy. No armour to speak of. Nothing like that. Just squelch, squelch, squelch.

BEN

So I'm going to hover over Sasha. Bent down like I was going to pick her up, realise how small I am and go Azu could you give me a hand here.

HELEN

Yes. Azu gives two hands.

BEN

To pick Sasha up.

HELEN

Yes

LYDIA

Don't do that. She'll acrobat away. Kick you in the face and acrobat away.

ALEX

The crowd are beginning to cry out in a shock. Maybe a little bit of terror.

BRYN

I turn around in the room that I'm in and turn to my brother and say, Saleh you need to tell me what's been going on with you right now because that thing was here for you.

ALEX

Give me a perception check. Duh! Give me a diplomacy check, I apologise.

BRYN

17.

ALEX

17.

BRYN

Because I rolled a 3!

ALEX

Well yeah, it's really complicated and I don't...he looks like he's been hitting the bottle *again*. I don't...it's all a bit messed up Hamid. It's all a bit wrong. I don't know what to do.

BRYN

Yes well I imagine so. Tell me...does the name Barret Racket mean anything to you Saleh?

ALEX

Give me a sense motive.

BRYN

Oh! 14.

ALEX

He's taking enormous penalties. With a natural 1 he's taking all of the penalties.

LYDIA

He basically says this is a bullet pointed list...

ALEX

Allow me to explain the depths of my character to you!

LYDIA

Here's my motives. My motives are laid out here. There's a Gantt chart of motives.

ALEX

Step the first subsection b. It's my kind of explanation. No. So Saleh's there and he just goes pale. Properly, like it drains from his face and his hands start shaking. Well I mean you hear things don't you. On the...

BRYN

Saleh, cut it out! I am wearing a ring given to me by that man. It is cursed.

ALEX

Give it to me. Give it to me. You've got to give it to me right now.

BRYN

No! I will not. You stay back.

ALEX

You've got to...he's kind of standing poorly and...

BRYN

He can't beat my AC.

ALEX

Even like sober I don't think he can. You've out levelled your brother.

Congratulations. You've got to give it to me. You've got to give it to me right now. Ok.

BRYN

Tell me what is going on.

ALEX

I don't know everything ok. I...before I dive into that, I'm going to jump back to the rest of the group because I need to know what you're doing because this conversation will probably last longer than the five seconds it takes for everyone at the party to completely lose their minds over how weird this is.

HELEN

Should we calm the crowd?

BEN

Yeah maybe you should deal with Sasha and I'll see if I can deal with the crowd.

HELEN

There, there.

(laughing)

BEN

I thought you were supposed to be of Aphrodite. Where's your bedside manner?

HELEN

I've never seen something like this and I think she's still stabbing.

ALEX

Meanwhile...

HELEN

I'm going to...can I roll to attempt to comfort Sasha. At least make her stop...

BRYN

Diplomacy?

ALEX

Here's what you can do. Because...here's a rule that you won't have run into before. We tend to steer clear of using D20s against one another whether for good or for bad. However what I tend to do in this kind of situation is I'll say you can roll the diplomacy check and that determines how well a job you are doing but I'm not going to tell Lydia, your character is now comforted because that kind of, it can feel a bit weird when people are telling you what your character is feeling. But I can say how good a job you do.

HELEN

I have a tick in diplomacy.

ALEX

That's a good tick.

(laughing)

LYDIA

Ooohhh!

HELEN

I rolled a 1.

LYDIA

This could be pivotal.

ALEX

So could you please comfort Sasha the worst you possibly could whilst not actively trying to make her terrible.

LYDIA

This is when therapists go bad.

ALEX

This is why these rolls happen.

LYDIA

This is like oh it wasn't all your fault kind of...

(laughing)

ALEX

Yeah just make it terrible.

HELEN

I'm sure this thing wasn't following you specifically. It just would be bad luck I suppose. Perhaps if we were to...perhaps you should confront your fear.

ALEX

Stab, stab, stab, stab.

HELEN

Look it is dead!

LYDIA

Really?! So you say that it's dead...you say that. But the lines of what's dead and what isn't haven't really been...haven't really been that clear for me for a while

ALEX

Stab, stab, stab.

LYDIA

Yeah it's great. It's dead. I should stop stabbing. Just twitchy now. Ok. I thought I'd escaped. I thought I'd escaped. I thought...I thought that I'd beaten him. I thought all I needed to do...I left the country. I left the country!

I left everything. I got teleported here. Went to a pocket dimension. Went everywhere and yet here we are...

HELEN

Shhhh, shhhh.

LYDIA

No, you know what, no. No! None of this has helped.

ALEX

You keep that natural 1 going!

LYDIA

None of this has helped.

HELEN

Shhh, it will be ok.

LYDIA

I joined this...I worked...they said we'd be travelling so we'll be going far away. I thought this would take me away but yet he's still here.

BRYN

Do you start nervous laughing?

HELEN

[nervous laughing] I'm sure it's not all that bad!

LYDIA

You have no idea!

HELEN

I really don't. I don't know what this thing is. I am sure there is a way out.

LYDIA

You know what, there is. There is, isn't there. There is a way out I'm sure. I'm sure.

HELEN

There you go!

(laughing)

LYDIA

I mean I...

HELEN

Look on the bright side.

LYDIA

The bright side is that I have maybe a month to live and that...

HELEN

We're going to solve that.

LYDIA

And no matter how far I travel he's always there. He's always there and it's always part of his plan. Everything that I've done. Everything I've done has probably been part of his plan. Right, all the fighting, all the winning has actually been part of his plan. I'm just going to stop. If I stop he can't control me anymore. If I...ok, that's...that's something I can...

HELEN

Grizzop what do I do?

BEN

During this time I'm trying to calm the crowd so I've got my back to you.

ALEX

Like lots of quiet, it's fine.

BEN

I'm going to take a diplomacy check to try and...

ALEX

Yeah could you try and do...so that people don't completely freak.

BEN

Ah good, that's a 26.

ALEX

A 26. You successfully, immediately see the guards who are running over trying to catch hold of the situation and they know that you know what you're talking about. Hamid's already briefed the guard that you're good at what you do and they should listen to you.

BEN

No need to panic. There was an assassin against Saleh al-Tahan. We've dealt with that. As you can see it's obviously some kind of weird other worldly creature sent by parties unknown.

ALEX

A squid wizard innit. Yeah like a squizard.

BEN

Yes a squizard. Well now it's cala-magi!

LYDIA

Yay!

BEN

Aren't I funny?

(laughing)

LYDIA

Just have to be nice to Alex for the rest of the day so that he doesn't edit my jokes out.

HELEN

From behind you, you just hear, good one.

(laughing)

LYDIA

What!? They take everything from me.

ALEX

The guards immediately begin discussing with you the logistics. Can they move the body? Where should they move it etc.

BEN

So that's what happening as...

ALEX

That's what's happening as you're going it'll be fine. Maybe you should try harder, that kind of thing.

(laughing)

Meanwhile I'm going to cut to Hamid's own living nightmare involving his parents...his family sorry. Look if I just take the ring and do what he says then basically it'll all be ok again.

BRYN

No. I am not letting you do that. You tell me what happened.

ALEX

Look just give it me alright. If you give it me it'll all be fine.

BRYN

I step up to him and just shove him back onto his bed. I'm not very good at that but I'm figuring, you know, I'm still a level 5 and he's not.

ALEX

Rather than an attack roll, I'm going to give him a reflex save which he can fail spectacularly. He immediately falls back. You can't...what...what is wrong with you? I'm just trying to make everything alright. Just stop it.

BRYN

You're in no state to do so.

ALEX

I am your big brother and you will do what I tell you and I'm telling you to give me that ring.

BRYN

I am not a little kid anymore Saleh! I will...I have dealt with much bigger problems with this and I will deal with this one too since you are clearly incapable. Now tell me what is going on! What have you done?

ALEX

He said that if I took the ring then no one would have to find out. I didn't mean anyone to die Hamid. Like...I know...I know I'm not...

BRYN

Hamid's lip starts quivering.

LYDIA

Is he going to vomit?

(laughing)

ALEX

So basically, like you know it's been trouble with me and money before and I sorted out myself out. It's all good but well...it started getting bad again and then one thing led to another and I kind of robbed the bank Hamid. I kind of robbed the bank and then someone caught me at it and I didn't want anyone to know...

BRYN

Who caught you Saleh?

ALEX

I don't even know her name but I didn't mean to and then...and then I was shocked and then...and then I just sort of panicked and then she was on the floor and I was outside and the rest of Barret's lot were there and we just legged it. And the debt was paid off but then...well, you know.

BRYN

I pull him up to his feet again and just hug him. He's about an inch taller than me.

ALEX

He's weeping and I won't dive into it because it'll just run on and on. It's just like I didn't mean anything, I really, really didn't. It was an accident. I don't know how it happened and he's just on and on and on and he's just gushing. Most of it's non sensical.

BRYN

I'm just going to try and calm him down. Once he's in a state to listen to me again I'm going to say some stuff too but that might be a while.

ALEX

Sure. I'm going to cut back to the rest of the group. What is the plan with the body basically? I need to know that and then we can go from there.

BEN

Usually with this kind of thing, burn it.

ALEX

Right yeah ok.

BEN

Just burn it.

ALEX

Yep, yep no worries. Right, give me a second. The guards run off.

HELEN

We will burn it. It will disappear.

ALEX

Come back with a blanket. Can we move it or do we just do it here?

BEN

No move it!

ALEX

Right, right, yeah.

BRYN

You don't want to search it first for messages or...

ALEX

They immediately wrap it in a blanket and start lifting it and pulling it away.

BEN

Well I was kind of...sorry, yes I made the assumption that it was basically naked under the cloak.

ALEX

It was.

HELEN

Yeah. Also Azu...

BRYN

Are there any pockets in the cloak?

HELEN

...has only lived on a mountain and doesn't really like sea things.

(laughing)

ALEX

The guards pull him off to one side and, would you like us to do it? Would you...

BEN

Just get rid of it!

ALEX

Right, right, right.

BEN

Put it in a fireplace.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah. They start trying to light it on fire.

BEN

Alright. Don't worry everyone. It's all fine. Get back to what you were doing.

LYDIA

Sasha walked off.

BEN

Wait Azu, where's Sasha gone?

HELEN

If Sasha's walked off, Azu is like hustling after her like, wait! Come back!

ALEX

It's a stealth check to see...this is the only time this kind of situation where it's like...yeah if she's really good at stealthing you won't...

LYDIA

11 + 13 + 5. What's that 5 for?

BRYN

The cloak of elven kind.

LYDIA

Oh right, yeah. Which I am wearing. So...

ALEX

Give me a phenomenally high perception check otherwise she's just gone.
She's just long gone.

HELEN

Like a fart on the wind

(laughing)

Oh no!

ALEX

So yeah she's gone. So let's pick up exactly where we left off.

BEN

Azu, where's Sasha gone?

HELEN

What?! Oh...oh yeah.

BEN

What!

ALEX

You realise you've been there, there-ing a cabbage that was put there for a while now.

(laughing)

She just slipped away, put that there and you did not notice. You are so bad at it. You are *so bad* at this.

LYDIA

It's a pillow with a smiley face.

BEN

I immediately try and look for her.

ALEX

Give me a perception check that's phenomenally high.

BEN

Ah, ooh it's a mere 22.

ALEX

A mere 22.

BEN

Not good enough.

ALEX

So it didn't start breaking 40 no...

BRYN

Lyd only rolled 29. You'd need to roll 30 to beat her.

BEN

We've got to find her. We'll spread out. Look, she's not going to be doing well, right.

HELEN

No she did not seem to respond to my attempts to...

LYDIA

I think she really did!

(laughing)

ALEX

This is why she's bad at this!

BEN

Alright, well look we'll spread out. Hamid's got to deal with that but we've killed the, whatever it is and it's being burned so we'll...I'm going to start, Sasha! Sasha!

ALEX

Where is Sasha?

LYDIA

I'm going to be wandering aimlessly. Probably into the city.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Out of the complex. Kicking sand dunes. Sad music is playing.

HELEN

What large feet you have.

LYDIA

Little sand dunes.

(laughing)

BRYN

All the little sand that's built up over the weeks of the sandstorm.

ALEX

We'll take a break while we discuss the nuances of dune size.

And welcome back. So with that in mind I am going to pick up with Hamid, if that is ok with everyone. Saleh's sort of calmed down and is sat on the bed.

BRYN

Saleh I need to tell you something as well. I've made mistakes too and I've done things I've regret.

ALEX

It's not your fault you dropped out Hamid.

BRYN

Saleh, I didn't drop out. I got kicked out because there was an accident and someone died.

ALEX

He starts crying again.

BRYN

I've been where you are Saleh and it's horrible and I can't tell you that it gets easier and I can't tell you that you can move past it but you have to face it. You can't run from it. You have to...you have to be honest and you have to work at it and you have to find ways to be better and if you're still...

ALEX

He said that if I took the ring and did what he said he'd arrange for a resurrection.

BRYN

You can't trust someone like this Saleh. You should tell...

ALEX

Well who else am I going to go to?

BRYN

You should tell mum and dad.

ALEX

Clerics don't do them anymore.

BRYN

You should tell mum and dad. It's not about...you can't just fix everything even if you resurrect this person it doesn't change what you did. You have to understand the consequences of your actions and you have to change who you are and that's not going to happen if you keep running around with the people who put you in this mess. That's...

ALEX

I've just been trying to clean it up.

BRYN

That's not...

ALEX

That's the only reason I was there. I'm just trying to clean it up Hamid.

BRYN

You can't clean something up in the darkness. You have to bring it into the light. You have to face it. You have to tell someone. You have to...

ALEX

I've told you.

BRYN

...let people help you.

ALEX

He's got a distinctly sort of petulant vibe now that the...now that the back of the story has broken as it were. He's kind of reverting a little bit.

BRYN

And I'm going to help you Saleh but I'm not going to help you by making your situation worse.

ALEX

So what do I do then hm?! This isn't a debt. I can't pay and make this go away. I can't get dad to pay it.

BRYN

Not everything can be solved with money. Some things you solve by working at them.

ALEX

How?

BRYN

I don't know what the right thing for you to do is.

ALEX

Well look, if you don't give me that ring he made it very clear that things are going to get a lot worse. Very quickly.

BRYN

I am not scared of him and what he...and I'm half looking at the ring as I say this...or what he can do to you or do to me. If he comes for us we will fight it. You have to find a way to make up for what you did and that means balancing your actions. That means doing good to make up.

ALEX

Just tell me what to do.

BRYN

Who was this person who died?

ALEX

I dunno. A guard.

BRYN

You need to find out if the guard had a family. You need to make sure they're taken care of. You need to work at being better. You can't sink into alcoholism. You can't stick around with this group of people who are bringing you down to this level. I've been there...when I had to face it, I wallowed to but it got better when I found a group of people who helped me be better, who helped me do good things.

ALEX

Sure. I'm going to cut to Grizzop and Azu first. What are you guys doing? So Sasha's long gone and her stealth check will have seen her out of the complex basically.

BEN

Yeah, yeah. So I am going to split up from Azu. Go around shouting Sasha, looking under bushes and things.

HELEN

So if you're outside, then I'm probably inside looking in corners.

ALEX

Clank, clank, clank.

BEN

So yeah once I find she's not inside I'm going to try and find...not outside, I'm going to try and find Azu.

ALEX

I'm going to skip ahead to, you both reconvene. Sasha's clearly not there. Hamid's busy presumably.

BEN

Have you found her?

HELEN

No she wasn't in any of the cupboards

(laughing)

BEN

Did you check under the beds?

HELEN

Yes

BEN

Did you check on the roof?

HELEN

I thought you were doing the roof?

BEN

Oh was I sorry. I'll check the roofs.

(laughing)

ALEX

You reconvene.

BEN

Alright I checked the roofs, there was nothing there. She must've left, right.

HELEN

She must be in the city.

BEN

We need to go find her. In the frame of mind she's in, with the knives she's got

(laughing)

Given her profession.

HELEN

Havoc!

BEN

Yes!

ALEX

Cut to Sasha.

LYDIA

There's nothing interesting happening.

ALEX

So what is Sasha doing, just so that I know.

LYDIA

She's wandering through the city vaguely with the idea that if she wastes enough time she's going to become a weird, evil monster anyway so it's the kind of...I mean her head is like do I throw myself off a building so I don't become an undead lich or is that what was always intended anyway. Is that...you know, there's no...you try and be good and it turns out it's in you the whole way through and there's nothing you can do. You try...I mean...I thought we did good but then I suppose the computer's weren't great. She's never really considered the morality of what they did with Mr Ceiling before.

BEN

Welcome to Zolf's world.

ALEX

It's dark and bleak and only gets worse and then you retire.

LYDIA

I don't really...but I mean whatever I do just seems to...I suppose it's in the blood right. It's just in the blood. He'll always find you.

ALEX

And I am then going to jump back to Hamid. So what's the plan. You're the man with the plan.

BRYN

You've got to tell mum and dad. You've got to let them help you as well.

ALEX

Right! He stands up. Staggered over to the door.

BRYN

I am going to deal with Barret. The best thing is for you to have no more contact with him or any of his people.

ALEX

Hesitates at the door. Yeah, good luck with that. Opens the door...

BRYN

I'm going to follow him.

ALEX

He starts...he seems to be heading down towards the rest of the party.

BRYN

I'm going to support him while he does it.

ALEX

He heads down the stairs and he finds your mum and dad are having a quiet conversation in the hall involving a couple of guards. The clear words "assassin" and "the goblin took care of it" are clearly heard

LYDIA

Hey!

(laughing)

ALEX

Sorry!

LYDIA

That's the problem with being a sneaky character!

HELEN

Well what about me? I'm not sneaky!

LYDIA

Yeah they definitely noticed you!

ALEX

Apparently the goblin sorted it, is all that you managed to make out before Saleh's there and is like...

LYDIA

I suppose little species stick together. Ah definitely the goblin. The goblin is most important.

ALEX

Mum, dad, I've got to talk to you. I've got to talk to you dad. Just turns. Sees Saleh, sees you and says, please stop him from embarrassing himself right now. Turns back to the guards discussing security issues of some kind.

BRYN

You need to hear this father. This needs to be dealt with soon.

ALEX

Everything always does. What is it Saleh?

BRYN

Not here. Private. Shall we step into the study?

ALEX

Again your father's sort of dismissive. Fine. Gestures towards a side door. It's not even the study. It's just a...seems to be some kind of side corridor of some kind. From your...you'd know wouldn't you, it's your own house!

BRYN

Yeah!

ALEX

It's a servant passage. It's the one that the servants that came and looked after Azu, and Grizzop and Sasha came out of. So it's just down into a servants passage. He pulls the door closed. It's hidden behind a bookcase kind of deal. What?

BRYN

Saleh?

ALEX

I think I sort of...I don't...Your father's getting extremely impatient looking at him. You've got about three seconds before.

I think I killed someone. Father goes quiet. I'm going to jump back to Grizzop and Azu.

HELEN

Ok I would like to summon Topaz T Camel to give us a better vantage point.

ALEX

I see no issues with this. You don't have to roll this. This is Topaz. Topaz knows when he is being called. He knows when it is time to appear.

HELEN

Yes. Fantastic.

ALEX

And lo. Where are you summoning a camel? The roof perhaps? The middle of the dining room. Where would you like to summon Topaz T Camel.

HELEN

Well we're going into the city so I thought we were going through the gates.

BEN

A street or something Alex.

ALEX

Fine. Fine.

BEN

The floor.

ALEX

Take my...you're not even going to summon him in the air.

BEN

Terra firma

ALEX

Why summon the...fine! You summon Topaz T Camel.

HELEN

Would you like to get on my shoulders? You can get even higher.

BEN

Er...yeah, no sure. Yes fine.

HELEN

Azu leans down and gives you a hand up and settles you like a child at the fair.

(laughing)

LYDIA

So Grizzop's riding Azu who's riding Topaz

BEN

Topaz T Camel. Yeah it's a little totem pole of Paladins.

ALEX

Have you ever ridden a camel? Do you have any idea how much shaking camels...

BRYN

[singing] this is the way the paladin rides!

(laughing)

BEN

It's very bumpy!

HELEN

Well that's what camels are like. They literally have bumps on them.

BEN

Right. Are they on their feet or just...

HELEN

Can I cast some kind of...or can I...can I roll something to try and figure out...

LYDIA

Roll look for Sasha.

HELEN

Yes! Can I do that?

ALEX

So is Sasha still trying to be stealthy or is Sasha now just having a wander now that she's managed to evade basically everyone who knows her?

LYDIA

Well I would say that she is headed up to...so I'm imagining that Cairo will be those flat roofed...because I'm thinking about ancient Egypt kind of but crossed with Las Vegas

ALEX

Bear in mind, yeah.

LYDIA

So they're sort of like single storey buildings. She's just...are they cramped enough that she could be wandering along the roofs?

ALEX

It depends. If you head into the residential outskirts you could do that. If you head in towards the actual strip, it's all huge hotels and temples and banks and other ridiculously large buildings.

BRYN

Yeah the area you were in was compounds and mansions. They were not close enough but you could go to another area where it would be.

LYDIA

Yeah she will be looking for turrets and whatever to hide in. She likes climbing up to places and then hiding in roofs.

BEN

Well minarets right?

LYDIA

Yeah could be.

ALEX

Plenty of them on the strip.

LYDIA

Yeah she's going to climb up and be sat between the ornamentation of...

ALEX

Give me a knowledge local.

LYDIA

Yay! That's $12 + 11$ so 23.

ALEX

23. You...

LYDIA

Maths with Lyd!

ALEX

You find yourself atop a casino specifically. This one is rather tastelessly leaned into the sort of Ancient Egypt aesthetics. Some of them were very modern and so on. The reason that this one caught your eye, it seems covered in gargoyle-esque carvings and so on and then you plant yourself down up into the rooftop beside what turns out to be some kind of sphinx or something similar. It's not a full sized monster, rah, it is very much a representation...

LYDIA

It's a baby sphinx. Is it a living one? It's a baby sphinx.

ALEX

It turns to look at you. Hi.

BRYN

What language is it speaking?

ALEX

Arabic.

LYDIA

She makes a general gesture of hello.

ALEX

Kind of gives a knowing nod. It's the nod of a bartender at the end of a night.
It brushes half eaten pigeon over to you.

LYDIA

She sort of makes a two thumbs up gesture of thanks and kind of respectfully
takes it and puts it in a bag of holding.

ALEX

Gives a sage nod. It sits there for a while, silent. Perfectly still. It reaches out with a paw and picks up a loose stone on the rooftop. Hands it out to you. Do you take it?

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

It reaches out and picks up another one. It very slowly turns to look at you. Nudges its head towards the bottom and then chucks it until it pings off of someone's head down there who immediately looks up going, argh. You can't hear anything.

LYDIA

She laughs her head off!

(laughing)

ALEX

It gives another head bob.

LYDIA

So Sasha sees a round of turrets as she stays in the shadow. She's looking up now and then tosses one carefully and ducks back. It's a small enough stone that hopefully it won't do serious damage.

ALEX

So it drops and it looks like it's missed someone. It slams down at their feet and they stop. They look down and then the sphynx next to you chucks another one, it clips them in the back of the head. They fall straight head first into the fountain. They're wearing a suit, really posh and they're completely soaking and then from two turrets down you just hear a, [deep laugh]

(laughing)

Meanwhile, I am going to cut back to...

BEN

Sasha! Sasha!

HELEN

Sasha! Sasha!

ALEX

And then I am going to cut back to Hamid with one of the most important conversations of his life. For the sake of, I can't handle much more sad. I just can't. I'm going to skip a chunk of roleplaying. Also because it's me being sad to myself whilst Hamid...like it breaks down.

BRYN

Not only are you playing two characters, they've got the same name.

ALEX

They have the same name...

BRYN

That's going to get confusing very quickly.

LYDIA

Roughly the same voice.

ALEX

I'm going to skip ahead of this to you are in the study and long story short, Saleh has come clean and I am going to give you the blow by blow of what it was. Saleh was having issues with gambling. Nothing major. Like he wasn't throwing his life away to it but he was spending more time than he should.

BRYN

We've all been there. Guys, we've all...Hamid has certainly been there.

ALEX

Hmmmm

LYDIA

The plot so far has been how many of the murders of his sons can this guy cover up with money.

ALEX

So Saleh is drawing the information out but he seems completely impassive but you've seen this kind of reaction before. It's the reason that he's as successful as he is, is that the worse things get, the more impassive he is and the less he lets out. Saleh Jr explains that he, after your father went completely crazy at him and did everything short of putting him under house arrest, cleaned his act up and then eventually started falling back into old habits but this time did a much better job of keeping it secret from your father. Eventually he got himself so wrapped up in debt that he basically ended up with his debt being bought, shall we say, by nefarious peoples until he found himself beholden to the Rackets, specifically Barret and he had a way to get out of that. Which was he was going to go in, he was going to lift an item from the meritocratic boxes that are held in one of the Tahan branches for Barret.

BRYN

So he was going to rob the central Cairo?

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

Right.

ALEX

He was going to rob that using his connections to try and basically get in and help some others in. Was disturbed by a guard. It gets a bit hazy there. Give me a sense motive.

BRYN

11

ALEX

Again it's a rush. He doesn't really know what was going on but he ended up swinging a bag that was held for the thing at a guard who discovered them but not before the alarm went out. He got away without being discovered with the rest of his nefarious compatriots so nothing was actually stolen but he was given the instruction that you would be arriving with a ring that he would wear and he would do what he was told because it was his fault that it went wrong and that's the last that he'd heard. And it was made very clear that if he didn't do what he was told everyone in his family would suffer etc. etc. Fire and brimstone. All of the standard loveliness that you can expect.

LYDIA

Can we for context, since he said that Barret had promised him a resurrection have a bit of an idea of what resurrection means in this...like I've never recapped because I know it's politically sensitive and it doesn't always work and things like that.

ALEX

Uh huh. So it's a good time to address it. It isn't an accident that you kind of got dropped. Who has what knowledges so I know how to specialise?

BEN

Religion, nature, geography.

LYDIA

Unless it's local, I'm out.

HELEN

Religion, nobility.

BRYN

I only have arcana.

ALEX

Can the two characters who have knowledge religion, I realise you're not part of this conversation but I'd like to see how much depth we go into etc.

BEN

15

ALEX

Yep

HELEN

13

ALEX

13. So, resurrection used to be a thing that used to happen. However, shocker, only the rich ever had it because it was really, really expensive and you had to get rare materials and all kinds of things. Long story short...

BRYN

Is it still canonically 50,000 GP worth of diamonds is one of the...

ALEX

Yeah, like it's ridiculous. Shocker, only the rich ever got resurrected. In the height of Rome for instance, resurrection still very much a thing.

BEN

You have to keep the people in power in power.

ALEX

Exactly. Meritocrats took control and it was one of the most controversial actions that they took, is they just flat out said no. There is no way of making resurrection work in a way that doesn't completely destroy any kind of social mobility, any kind of...it messes around with inheritance. It messes around with so much that humanity is just better off without it. As hard as that may be to accept. And as part of that, this is where the two knowledge religions

come in. From a normal person's perspective, meritocrats banned resurrection, everyone decided it was for the best. Job done. You would both be aware that whilst that is the story, it's not the whole story. There was a lot more pushback than the history books would have you believe and the meritocrats came down quite hard and one of the things that they did was anything that was tied to resurrection is permanently under meritocratic guard and is effectively held. So the Heart of Aphrodite is one such item. One of the really powerful ones but basically any of the materials that can only be used for that are kept under lock and key. Again in central meritocratic control and in fact it reached the point where the meritocrats said you get to stay in human lands if you hand over these things because you cannot have them. Categorically either you do not get to exist in human lands and we will make a big thing of this or you hand them over and no one gets this toy. And so it was handed over and so that's what you are aware of. The average joe just knows everyone used to have it and decided it wasn't worth it. There's not really much in the way of like...at the risk of a horrible parallel, there's not much in the way of backstreet resurrections etc. You can't go find someone who can do this. When I say that it's completely locked down, I mean they poured an enormous amount of time and resources and it's so expensive...it's so expensive.

LYDIA

You can't get some of the widgets that you need to do it well.

ALEX

Yeah literally they want you need that specific type of incense, guess what you can only get it in this one place. It now doesn't grow there. We've stopped it

growing there and we have the entire supply. Like they locked that down. So if Barret's offering it, he's either incredibly well connected or he's just lying. But it's a heck of a bald face lie. That is something that's worth knowing. But nonetheless, Hamid the story finishes and your father just goes [sighs], why does this always happen? I thought I was a good father. I'm fairly certain I raised you all right. I gave you every opportunity. I did everything it was possible for a father to do. Clearly I was wrong. And he just walks out the room. He just walks out. Strides out in the manner to which is accustomed which is powerful and with purpose and he just walks out of the room.

BEN

What could he have done wrong?

HELEN

Level 100 parental guilt.

ALEX

Yeah! Yeah!

LYDIA

A fort save for emotional trauma.

HELEN

Yeah!

BRYN

Argh...

ALEX

Families right!

BRYN

I'm going to grab Saleh by the arm and just drag him with him because I'm not letting my father get away. I'm going to go, it's more complicated than that.

Do you want to actually have an answer.

ALEX

He's just walking. He's down the stairs and he's headed for the front doors.

BRYN

I'm still following him, dragging my brother with me. Where are you going?

ALEX

He stops. Turns. I'm going to do what I should do, what I always have done and what I will no doubt continue doing. I'm going to hold this family together and I'm going to make sure that this problem is dealt with. You would do well to let me do it. And I'm going to end the episode there. Ok I need this on the record, I promise it is not all misery forever!

(laughing)

LYDIA

Just enough hope for it to hurt when we lose it again!

ALEX

Things got just real enough to be a bit much and I promise there is light.

BRYN

The message...the message Alex is trying to give with this podcast guys, is that families are painful and what you should do is run away from them...

ALEX

No!

BRYN

Go to other countries, murder the people there and steal their stuff because that's the path to happiness.

ALEX

What I'm saying is...

BRYN

That's the message that I'm getting.

HELEN

A very British message.

ALEX

I'm surprised, as you might be, gargoyles are the most comforting of the sentient races.

BEN

That is something we can all learn.

ALEX

That is something you can all take away!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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