

RQG – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

Content Warnings

- Discussions of real-world racism
- Discussions of prejudice against fantasy races (halflings)
- Discussions of past childhood bullying
- Discussions of mass death

ALEX

Rusty Quill presents...

BEN

Hi everyone, Ben here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our Patrons: Michael Roho, Heath Carter, Katherine Arthur, Christophe Anjal, Kay Moore, Kirin Sang, Sarah Spielvogel, Pam Winkler, Chris Lawson, Chris Simms. 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 95 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

BEN

Ben Meredith.

BRYN

Bryn Monroe.

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

I got a plan, guys.

HELEN

Ooooh!

ALEX

You ready for the plan?

HELEN

No!

ALEX

The plan is, no abject misery in this episode.

HELEN

You've said that for like the past 10 episodes.

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

But...

LYDIA

Yeah, basically the entire time...

[0:02:20 talking over one another]

ALEX

Well, it's because, the problem is that I've trained you all so well that...

BRYN

I'm still holding my breath here... !!

ALEX

... it's fine, it's fine! Erm, he's going blue!

[Bryn gasps for air]

... we have our trademark social awkwardness of the party – like, that doesn't narrow it down anymore...

LYDIA

Pain, abstract concepts...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

ALEX

Pain, abstract concepts, er, no type of conflict or...

LYDIA

So have you come over from the Magnus Archives?

(Group laughter)

We had a great time, guys!

(Laughter)

ALEX

We are going to pick up where we left off! Specifically, within and upon and around breakfast!

(Laughter)

I believe it's time to carry on, here.

LYDIA

From a position of absolute breakfast...

(Group laughter)

Absolute position! Not relative – absolute!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

BRYN/HAMID

‘You guys met Gideon...’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Oh, what? Like, wait...’

HELEN

No...

(Laughter)

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Oh, he was this really forgettable guy that brought Einstein’s tea!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yeah, that one.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Huh!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Gideon... was like Bertie...’

LYDIA/SASHA [quietly]

‘He seemed a lot quieter...’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

‘... but worse. He took active pleasure in being mean to people. But, he was much, much better at making it seem like he wasn’t.

LYDIA/SASHA

‘I’m still on, like, Bertie but worse, sorry.’

HELEN/AZU

‘A bad person.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘He was my best friend.

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh dear... !’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I... arrived in England at the age of fifteen, at a new school. I was the only Halfling there. I was the only brown-skinned person there. I didn’t speak English very well back then. It was full of incredibly rich British people, so you can imagine how well that went! I figured out after a little while that... the best way not to be their target was to be their friend. So, I did everything I could to make myself one of them. I became a bully too, and from that moment on, me and Gideon were... and then I went to Cambridge. And I thought, maybe I could leave him behind, but he was there too. And I tried to make friends with new people, and for a little while it worked, I met Liliana. I switched to studying magic. It didn’t go so well.’

LYDIA/SASHA [quietly]

‘You seem pretty good at magic now!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I could never have been a wizard. I didn’t know that at the time. I couldn’t do even the simplest spells... and then suddenly I could, except it was easy when they’d always said it would be hard, and so I stopped listening to them altogether. I started hanging out with Gideon a lot more. And by this point he... well, he was like Bertie – he went wherever he wanted, did whatever he wanted, and tried to make people suffer. There was this one professor that he really hated, and we were playing a prank... I mean, you call it a prank at the time, it doesn’t seem funny in retrospect. He made me work up the formula for this... it was like an alchemist’s thing, it was supposed to just pop, and sizzle, and stink. It was supposed to be just the professor alone in the... in the classroom. I... wrote down the formula wrong. And then Gideon doubled all the quantities. And the classroom wasn’t empty. The professor was a powerful wizard and managed to get most of the class out, but not all of them. And he... couldn’t save himself either. *[Hamid takes a breath]*. I still... see their faces sometimes. I got kicked out. Liliana dumped me. I left Cambridge behind. I hoped I’d left Gideon behind forever. Sometimes I worried that with Bertie I was getting back into the bad habits, but I tried to be better. I’m gonna keep trying to be better. And I just... I know how easy it is to think what you’re doing is okay when the people around you are telling you that it’s okay, and you feel like you don’t have a choice, and you feel like just one more thing and maybe you’ll be able to escape. And I... I felt like the same thing happened to Saleh, and I thought I could give him the chance I had. And I see... that I shouldn’t have. And I’m sorry I let you guys down. And if you don’t want to

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

work with me anymore, if you don't want to be part of an adventuring group with me... I'll understand.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Sounds like you're learning. And wallowing in self-pity isn't gonna get you anywhere.'

HELEN/AZU

'How long ago was this?'

BRYN/HAMID

'Nearly a year.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Oh wait, so that would be only a short while before...'

BRYN/HAMID

'A few months, I got kicked out of Cambridge, moved down to London, wasted a few months, and then decided to try and join an adventuring group.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Ah, so nice coincidence that you walked into me getting attacked.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Sort of, yeah.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Why did you decide to do this? You know, join an adventuring group.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘It sounds stupid, it sounds childish, I wanted to... make up for what I did. I thought that... my parents wanted me to become a merchant, I just thought, I’m not improving anyone’s life if I become a merchant.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘That is the best answer you could have given.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I haven’t really made anyone’s life better have I, Grizzop?’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Have you tried?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Just keep making mistakes, don’t I?’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Have you tried? Have you genuinely, truly tried?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Of course! Every single moment, that’s all...’

HELEN/AZU

‘You’ve saved the world, so you’ve improved everyone’s...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Have I? Have I though? ‘Cos what we did in Paris, I thought it was necessary, but Zolf disagreed, and clearly the world is not better. And when we got to Prague, I got... I was useless, what did I do? I didn’t do anything.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘That sort of self-doubt won’t get you anywhere.’

HELEN/AZU

‘And the world is still here.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘The point is you tried. Genuinely tried. That’s all you can do.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘And you hit a few zombies with your lights. Like, that was useful. And you’re very rarely sick!’

(Group laughter)

BEN

I’m just gonna give Sasha a look.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

LYDIA/SASHA

‘What? He’s getting better!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Thank you, Sasha, that actually...’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘You didn’t see how much he was sick earlier on. He’s trying!’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Alright, I guess that’s fair enough!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I haven’t! You’re right, it’s been a while.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘It’s great!’

BEN

Grizzop looks at Azu, like, ‘what?!’

(Group laughter)

LYDIA/SASHA

‘He didn’t used to like fights very much.’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

‘Violence was a real problem when we first started.

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Okay.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘But, I’ve gotten better.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘But the point is...’

LYDIA

Sasha grins and nods, like, ‘yes, I have helped this person become more psychotically violent’!

(Group laughter)

Good job! Well mentored!

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘The point is, you’re trying and you’re learning.’

HELEN/AZU

‘None of us are perfect.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘And if you genuinely want to do good, then, let’s get on with it instead of feeling sad for ourselves.’

HELEN/AZU

‘And we’re here to help you.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Thank you.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Your sausages are getting cold.’

ALEX

You hear from the corridor outside...

BRYN

I swallow them whole!

(Group laughter)

Like a duck... *[gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp...]*.

[0:10.40 Lydia and Helen talking over one another]

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

You hear from the corridor outside, 'All better then, are we? Feeling great?'

BEN

Is that Wilde?

ALEX (as Wilde)

'Lots of, lots of team, team...'

BEN

Yeah, that's Wilde.

BRYN/HAMID

'How long have you been there?'

ALEX (also as Wilde)

He steps out and adopts the most dramatic pose possible. 'Long enough, Hamid. Long enough.'

HELEN

Azu is impressed.

BRYN

I pause as I consider casting Fireball...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

(Group laughter)

... really, really hard.

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘The important thing though, everyone’s getting along nicely?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Hello, new friend.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Hell...ooo.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Oscar, Azu. Azu, Oscar.’

(Helen laughs)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘You’re... something!’ as a pink glow bathes his face!

(Helen laughs harder)

HELEN/AZU

‘I am an Ork Paladin.’

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

(Group laughter)

BRYN

It says so on my character sheet!

(Gales of laughter)

LYDIA

What kind of a thing are you?!!

(Group laughter)

HELEN/AZU

'I am no [0:11:49]!'

(Hysterical laughter from everyone)

ALEX

For the clarification of the listeners, also a part of Helen's character.

BEN

It's the biggest thing on Helen's character!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Underlined. Capital letters!

LYDIA

In caps!

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘So, if you’ll forgive me one moment, Azu...’ He turns to Sasha and Hamid,
‘You’re getting through a lot of people at the moment. Just checking...’

LYDIA/SASHA

It’s quite a different mission

BRYN/HAMID

‘Risks of the job, the profession, really.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Is she signed on?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Er, we haven’t actually done the paperwork yet, but she seems keen to and
we’ve certainly offered her the job, if she wants to sign...’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘Well, it just so happens...’ He literally pulls out from a pocket, another
contract for all of the Mercenary Guilds.

LYDIA/SASHA

‘No, don’t sign it!’ I’m in the wrong world!

(Group laughter)

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Azu, would you be so kind? If we’re going to be discussing things of great importance, it would really help if you could just sign that document.’

HELEN

Azu scrutinises this document.

ALEX

Do you have Linguistics as a skill?

HELEN

I do not!

ALEX

Er, roll me a D20.

HELEN

Okay.

(Laughter)

Two!

ALEX

Two?

BRYN

Seems fine!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Seems like it!

ALEX

Your takeaway from this is it's really long.

HELEN

Yeah, so, I think Azu is trying to impress so she pretends to read it and then, like, her eyes just go halfway through, and is, like, 'yep, mmm'...

BEN

I will also, I'll read over her shoulder a bit and just check it's the same one that we all signed, yeah.

ALEX

It is, yeah. In fairness, it is, it's just, the Meritocrats, they *LOVE* paperwork! It's not even, like, manipulative or exploitative, it's just comprehensive. You know, in the event of a zombie apocalypse what would you do...?

BEN

Wait, there was a clause about that?!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Yeah, you all follow through flawlessly!

BEN

Oh, fine!

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Look, I said comprehensive. I didn't say poorly thought out!

(Helen laughs)

'Fantastic. And Azu, have you been brought up to speed with the whole thing?'

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

HELEN/AZU

‘I think so.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Fantastic. Oh, you’re still here, too!’ **[to Grizzop]** ‘You know what, back up to full-strength. I love it!’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Well, I mean, I’m dead.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, we need to save Sasha.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Oh, right then.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Can you help?’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘So, I’ve only spoken to Saira briefly. Apparently, you’re after a meeting with Apophis?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yep.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Aiming low, are we? Thought we’d start with something easy and work our way up, yeah?’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘I’m on a bit of a time-limit, Wilde.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘You know what, fair. Um, well anyway, if you’re heading to Apophis I’m going to have to go in anyway. I’ve got to report now that I’m here. Also, how did you get here so quickly?’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘We got friends, Wilde.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘We discussed this. We got teleported. We said we would get teleported.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘But who did you find to teleport you, it took me days. It’s been a nightmare.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Didn’t seem that hard to us.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Yeah, we have... people like talking to us.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Yeah. It’s our little secret really.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Being not awful.’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘I mean, I’m just saying, you know...’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘I’m dead and I still find it easier to have friends than you do.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘We might tell our good friends, people that we don’t find incredibly irritating and unprofessional. So, shall we carry on and you can take us to see Apophis?’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘I like you better, Azu. Just saying. You’re polite.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I like you too.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Wait until he makes a joke about your death.’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

'I wouldn't be so callous.'

You can see him visibly restraining about three different puns.

(Helen laughs)

'Erm, well, er... if everyone's alright, I'll just go and see her, and we head off?'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Or just go. We don't want to be late, do we?'

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

If you're going to jump the gun on every single one, what do you want from me?! Okay?

LYDIA

Let's headstone off!

ALEX

Okay, that was terrible! That was terrible!

HELEN [laughing]

Take that back!

LYDIA

I'm mortified!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Please stop. Please!

BEN

You brought it back!

ALEX

No, no, you didn't. It's the kind of joke that works, but if you bury the lead...

(Group laughter)

[everyone groans]

So...

LYDIA

No morgue of that!

[Everyone groans]

(Laughter)

ALEX

How many saves are you making per morning? How many more do you want?!

LYDIA

Er, wait, gimme a sec...

(Laughter)

BRYN

If you're saving as Death is it a literal Will Save?

LYDIA

Ohhhh...

BRYN

No? Alright, fine. I tried.

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde heads, grabs Saira, and she comes back and you are all in the breakfast room. 'So, you know, time's wasting, um...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'I'm wasting away, eh?' That's in character, because it's bad enough that Sasha would pick it up!

(Laughter)

That's a charisma minus one pun! 'I'm wasting away. 'Cos I've got a wasting illness, yeah?'

ALEX (also as Wilde)

'The trick's not explaining them.' Saira's just there. She looks like she hasn't slept at all.

ALEX (as Saira)

'Right so, heading off. A couple of things to be aware – you're not going to be allowed to take any weapons inside with the Meritocrat, I mean, that's not a big surprise, and don't go using magic when you're in there. I mean, it's technically not illegal, but it is a bad idea. Apart from that, you might be asked to be seen individually, like, I don't speak for Apophis, I just, you know, I act on their behalf so please don't make me regret this, but I feel like we do have to have this meeting, okay? Right, erm...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'I mean, we were going to do it without you so we can do that...'

ALEX

Saira looks a little bit puzzled and is clearly not with it this morning, and heads out to a carriage. The door opens. Outside, if you all head out, sand everywhere, everyone's cleaning up again. It's a little bit worse than it was last time because you can only clean up so much before the next one hits. But,

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

yeah, everyone's cleaning away and she heads down to the carriage. Wilde gestures for you all to come with him to the carriage as well.

HELEN [laughing]

It's going to be one of those things where you open the door and it's, like, with the snow and it's all...

[whummmppfff...]

(Group laughter)

... you all, like, muscle through!

ALEX

Yep, yep. Cannon. Job done! You are all snowed in with sand! Does anyone have an issue with me jumping ahead to getting to Apophis?

LYDIA

I think that would be very good idea...

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

Okay. So, the carriage heads off and, rather than heading into the city, heads in the opposite direction – heads further out and starts heading out towards...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

you know, Hamid, I should say, and Azu maybe, do you have Knowledge Geography?

HELEN

Nope.

LYDIA

I have Knowledge Local and I spent a lot of time on a roof!

ALEX

Yeah, Sasha would know as well. Azu, flip a coin, I dunno! Erm, you know that if you stick on this road long enough, you're just going to end up in the desert – it heads due desert – and you are not heading that far. You keep going for a while. You do leave the city behind. It takes about an hour and a half, or so, maybe two if it's going slow because of the sand, and you head out until eventually you see there's something, sort of, shining in the distance. It is a golden shine and it is getting a bit more dune-y. It's not full desert or anything like that, but you have left the river far behind...

LYDIA

A full desert!

HELEN

Never go full desert!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Let's put it this way, you've left the river far behind, and increasingly arid and increasingly open in an unsettling way, Sasha. But at the very, very distance there is this, sort of, gleam, and you head over a couple of rises and so on, and then you see this massive, enormous sprawling shape which, I mean, it's a pyramid insofar as that's the basic shape, but it doesn't look like it's based on anything Egyptian or anything like that. It's just massive. An absolutely massive structure, which is so large that it's probably that shape just so it doesn't fall down, unless there's magic going on. It's huge! It makes, like, the Great Pyramid of Giza look tiny by comparison.

HELEN and LYDIA

Ohhh!

ALEX

It's massive and it is magically reinforced. In terms of decoration and so on, it isn't gilded, like, the shine comes from the very, very top where there appears to be – in the heat haze it's hard to tell – some kind of artwork on the top which is golden, but mostly it is covered in Draconic designs and basically stone renditions of a massive dragon, which are sort of draped upon this vaguely pyramidal... pyramidal?

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

... pyramid shape.

BRYN

A tetrahedroid.

ALEX

Yes! But, again, it's not gilded, there's no cornicing, it's not gothic. It is just massive – that's the takeaway! And, as you head towards it, it is mostly empty insofar as you don't approach and have loads of people in the surrounding area or anything like that, it's quite isolated, and you draw up to... there are some smaller buildings out front of the larger building which are a lot more humanoid scale. A bit more functional. They still look, kind of, like a town hall, but they are not the vast monolithic structure which is the Meritocratic home, let's call it.

BRYN/HAMID

'What's the proper form of address for a Meritocrat, if we are actually ushered into their presence?'

ALEX (as Saira)

Well, technically, there are a lot of rules and so on. Apophis doesn't really go for that kind of thing. Just be respectful. 'Sir' is fine. Bowing your head, etc., but in terms of, like, your grand majesty, Apophis doesn't really go for that kind of thing. In fact, he finds it quite annoying.

BRYN/HAMID

‘Okay.’

ALEX

So, yeah, heading up... let’s put it this way, the Meritocrats have always gone in for security. They’ve been big fans of fences and paperwork and proper procedure. This doesn’t really have much of that. It’s mostly standalone. There are some people, again, towards the left hand side, sort of, town hall-y style building which are, effectively entering into the building and coming out, and then filing paperwork. There are some carriages. A couple of riders will come and go, and so on, but it doesn’t have that mark of officiousness that you would necessarily expect. It’s far more self-contained. You head up, and the carriage stops. Saira steps out with Wilde and they gesture for you to follow. Unless anyone has anything they want to do, they will just head straight to the front doors. Okay.

LYDIA

Not even shiny enough to appraise!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Heading in, you head in through the main entrance which is, I forget what the word is, what is it when you have your massive, massive door and then you have a smaller door built into the side of it, a sally-port or something?

LYDIA

Tiny inside door.

ALEX

I'm going to say sally-port, even though I think it's wrong. I can't remember what it is.

[Typist: Note to Rusty Quill – it is a Wicket Gate!]

But yeah, they have these huge gilded doors, etc. which are, you know... it looks, actually, Sasha, to your passive appraisal quite similar to the Tahan doors, but larger, maybe less in the way of gems, more in the ways of metals, and it's obviously all Draconic-based. But yeah, there's this small door that you head in and you head into this huge hall, and the first thing is that there's a lot of wasted space. It is a large, pillared hall which stretches off in all directions, and there are a lot more people in here. Think of it almost as a medieval court insofar as everyone's standing and talking to one another. One group will move into the other and so on, and upon the walls at the far right, far left, and so on, are large mosaics which are basically depicting images of Apophis again. They are magicked insofar as, like, the mosaic moves, and so on, but it's...

BRYN

Like a Harry Potter picture?

ALEX (also as Saira)

Yeah, but it is strictly aesthetic, like, even without any training you can see that it's not got any huge thing – it's not got a huge glow to it or anything, it's just doing its thing. Everyone notices you enter and then carries on in hushed

tones. Wilde is striding up like he owns the place, sort of, giving two-finger salutes at people, most of them seem to not like him at a glance.

(Bryn laughs)

Saira is... you know, some of them run up to Saira and have a hushed conversation, she'll have a quick word and then carry on and, basically, you are all shown straight through to the far end... is another set of double doors. You open them, head in, and you find yourself in a much smaller, humanoid-style room insofar as no dragons are going to be fitting in here! It has a set of cushioned couches on the corners and, again, it is lit magically – there are no torches and so on – and Saira stops here and turns to you all. 'So, beyond this point we are entering the realm of Apophis, we call it. It's his rules beyond this door. He is kind, he's magnanimous, don't worry about that, but just really don't make a scene, and I'm not asking this, I'm not asking this from a place of trying to hide anything, or anything like that, but it is Apophis so...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Hmmm, no scenes! Gotcha!'

HELEN/AZU

'Mmmm.'

ALEX (as Saira)

'... so let's just try and do this as best we can, okay?'

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Uh huh. Very well.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t foresee any problems.’

ALEX

She opens the door...

[sound of door opening]

... and we’ll take a break there and be back in a couple of minutes.

And, welcome back! So, you head in and immediately the first thing that is apparent is scale. Like, the hall that you came in, the main hall, was big. This is phenomenally massive and it’s very obvious that this one is built for the holding of a potentially colossal dragon. Not the entrance hall which was meant to be grand. This is just, it’s a weird one to describe because it’s not a thing that you see often in, like, the real world because that much empty space is kind of a waste normally. People put stuff in...

LYDIA

A bit like the ExCel Centre...

ALEX

Yeah. Honestly, like, arenas are, sort of, the best way of describing it, and right up at this end, sort of cwtched in almost to the entrance is basically a person behind a desk, and it’s a small, normal, human-sized desk...

LYDIA

With the airport scanner...

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Basically, yes! You do see to your left there are a bunch of racks for the holding of weapons and the other side is racks for the holding of armour and so on, and there are some free-standing racks which hold, basically, ceremonial gowns that people can wear. Saira, without mentioning, sort of, gives a nod to the person behind the desk and takes off her overcoat-type thing and dons one of the gowns. She gestures for the rest of you, 'You don't have to, I mean, it's a sign of respect, but this is as far as we go with weapons/armour, etc.' I can't stress enough how weird it is, though, that this person is behind this desk basically ignoring the enormous, vast cavern that disappears into the dim and distance behind, and he seems to be quite elderly, wearing this ornate purple robe, and he's just there, sort of, nodding meekly, Yeah!

BRYN

I take off my crossbow and put it on the rack. I take of my Bag of Holding and hang that on the rack, but er, yeah, that's all I need to do. I'll put on a robe, but I'll do it, kind of, hesitantly to make sure it's okay.

ALEX [laughing]

Sure! Erm, it magically resizes itself to fit you.

LYDIA

Oooh!

ALEX (also as the Clerk)

... and is, if I am correct, it's white, but it has a, sort of, brassy inlay shocker, and it also has panels depicting agriculture, trees, farmland, that kind of thing. It's very much a, sort of, look what this person's responsible for, you know? It's just very clearly iconographical. But yeah, the person behind the desk is, sort of, gesturing to the rest of you, 'It's quite alright if you leave your things here. I should be quite able to protect them.'

BEN

Yeah, take [0:29:31] off, hang them on the rack.

ALEX (as the Clerk)

'My thanks, and my regards to, er, to, to, to Artemis and so on. It's been a while since I ran into your sect.'

HELEN

After seeing Grizzop do it, then Azu will do it as well. So that leaves her in just her Priestess robes.

BEN

Oh, I hadn't taken armour off, just my weapons.

ALEX (also as the Clerk)

Again, the person behind the desk, he's going, 'Erm, that's fine, we understand. All we ask is that if you cannot approach too close whilst wearing the armour. That merely is a sign of courtesy.'

HELEN/AZU

'Okay.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Okay.'

HELEN

I'm alright, though!

ALEX (as the Clerk)

'My thanks.'

LYDIA

Sasha, er... how many have we got?

(Group laughter)

So, clank, clank, clank, clank... looks at people, begins to move toward the...

BRYN

Hamid gives the slightest cough.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

... clank, clank, clank, clank, clank, clank... then looks very hesitant clanking her favourite ice dagger down, looks at Hamid like he's ruined her Sunday walk in the park...

(Laughter)

... clank... while maintaining eye contact – now you've knocked over her ice cream!

BRYN

Hamid raises an eyebrow.

LYDIA

'Clank. That's the fire one. Then...

ALEX

So I need to know outside of the game, have you deposited all of your weapons?

LYDIA

Then, wait, no...

(Laughter)

... she gets out, like... then reaches behind inside her leather jacket and then, like, three bombs...

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Again, person behind the desk basically is just, 'oh, thank you'...

LYDIA

That's the thing, is that, like, because they're an alchemist...

ALEX

Yeah, yeah...

LYDIA

... she's supposed to actually, sort of, make them...

ALEX

... well, the idea is that you sort of carry reagents and mix them on the fly and chuck 'em...

LYDIA

Yeah, so it's kind of like... and then begins to sort of maybe just bring the bag of sulphur that she carries...

(Group laughter)

... and then is like, 'ehhh,' that goes back in the pocket.

ALEX

Does thermite count as a weapon?

LYDIA

So, that is, I think, all of her...wait, wait...

ALEX

Because it would be too easy for her to say, 'yes, I deposit all my weapons!'

(Laughter)

HELEN

Every single clank!

BRYN

Gotta do it with style!

LYDIA

... then, clank, I think, 'cos she had a tanglefoot bag.

ALEX

Are you done? Have you got any other weapons?

LYDIA

I mean...

BRYN

Hamid turns to go, he's pretty sure she's given them all up.

LYDIA

Yeah, that is all of them. Um, she doesn't take her leather jacket off, and that isn't even about not wanting to not have her armour on, it's the fact that she doesn't want everyone to see that she's got massively scarred shoulders under her shirt.

ALEX (also as the Clerk)

That's fine. So, as you, erm, start heading in, the man at the desk, sort of, gives an encouraging double thumbs up, 'and, er, do try to avoid using magic – not, not because it's illegal or anything, but we have quite a lot of wards and protections in here that will go off, and it might just cause a bit of a fuss. So, do try to avoid it.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Will any of them damage my daggers?'

ALEX (as the Clerk)

'No, no, no.'

LYDIA/SASHA

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

‘That one’s my favourite. So, if anyone comes along, just shout and I’ll come back for them.’

ALEX (as the Clerk)

‘Oh, it’s fine, if anyone comes in unannounced, they’ll get a maximized fireball to the face. It’s all good. That’s sort of what I’m here for.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Right. Will that damage the daggers?’

ALEX (as the Clerk)

‘No, no, you’re absolutely fine, I’m rather good at this. there’s a reason you come through the smaller room, I can just send that right in there...’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Oh, great, great, great.’

ALEX (as the Clerk)

‘Don’t be alarmed if you see some other people like myself in the hall – they’re just keeping an eye on things.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Right. okay.’

ALEX (as the Clerk)

‘Yes, well – best of luck!’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Okay.’ Sasha, like, puts her hands, pats everything, and, like, there’s one sneaky one that’s been sewn into the collar...

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Like, the size of your thumb!

LYDIA/SASHA

Yeah! ‘Ahhh, sorry. Clank...’

(Bryn laughs)

‘Yeah.’

ALEX

Saira starts heading down the middle of the hall and gestures for you all to follow. You start walking and, yeah, it’s an echoing space, and it is supported by the odd pillar here and there, but they are spaced as far as, let’s be honest, it’s a space further than is architecturally possible – magic is probably helping support this space...

HELEN and LYDIA

‘Mmmm... !’

ALEX (also as Saira)

... and, as you're heading in, eventually you start seeing intermittently there are other elderly robed men and women stood by columns and so on, and just mooching around, I guess! I don't know how else to describe it! You continue heading through the space, which is at a much lower light, and then Saira gestures for you all to stop. 'So, we're basically as close as we can go before we enter Apophis' presence. Before I do so, I am going to need to announce you privately. Are there any titles or anything you would like me to mention? Again, Apophis doesn't really go for this kind of thing, but some people prefer it.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Nope.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Er, no, that's fine.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Er, no.'

HELEN/AZU

'No, no, no.'

ALEX (also as Saira)

‘Right. If you just wait here. It’ll be obvious when it’s time!’ She heads off down the hall. It takes a while...’

BEN

I just start impatiently tapping my foot.

ALEX (also as Saira)

Sure. And again, it is just because the gloom is based on it’s a low light area that just stretches for so far, so she disappears into the gloom. There’s a very, very faint **[soft swishing, grating sound]**, like a shuffling, grating sound **[soft swishing, grating sound]**, and then she walks back. It takes a while. She comes back out of the gloom. ‘Right. Have you all braced yourselves, then?’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Yep.’

ALEX (as Saira)

‘Here we go.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Ready!’

[soft swishing, grating sounds]

ALEX

You don't hear the, sort of, boom, boom of footfall, it's very much more, like, if you have ever heard a snake when it's going over sand, that kind of grating sound, that sliding sound, and then coming out of the gloom, you start seeing this enormous and, like, colossal is the right size category, dragon. Like, congratulations, we've made it to dragons!

LYDIA

Yayyyy! What kind of dragon? Like, long and thin...

HELEN

Or, like, a Wyvern-type dragon? Or, like, a big, stout dragon? Or...

LYDIA

Yeah...

ALEX

So, this one is very stout. I don't mean, like, fat, but yeah, it's built, you know?!

LYDIA

It's, like, a Staffordshire Bull Terrier of a dragon!

(Laughter)

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, you know? It's... four legs is the right one, and it does have wings upon its back – they're not part of its arms or anything.

LYDIA

Are they tiny wings?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

They are not. They are correctly sized...

BRYN

They'll be folded in, one presumes.

ALEX

... whilst the dragon is stocky, it is also, sort of, elongated. Not, sort of, a Chinese iconography dragon, that's too much, but it does have a long and slender shape to it.

LYDIA

Is it iguana-shaped?

ALEX

Yeah, there you go – better! But it is shining and brass, and suddenly it comes to you that that shine you were seeing from up top wasn't gold, it was

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

probably brass because it has the same colour as this, and it looks like someone has made this out of brass. Each scale is like a huge brass sheet, and it's, sort of, slinking its way up, it's sort of bobs its head...

BRYN

Alex is doing some amazing movements... I wish you could see this!

HELEN

He is practically a dragon!

(Lydia laughs)

ALEX

It does not move like a simple human would be...

HELEN

He's made that very clear through its movements...

ALEX

... it's all about constant movement though...

LYDIA

... yeah – good interpretation, Helen!

ALEX

... so even if the head is still, the rest of the body's moving, the tail, you can't even see – you get a tiny little glimpse at the back, but it approaches...

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA

... bringing sexy back!

ALEX

... and the eyes are narrowed to slits...

LYDIA

Ooooh...

ALEX

... and are, like, even narrowed to slits, bright orange. Like, emitting light, bright orange. And it slinks, kind of, closer until eventually, still quite low to the ground, it starts distorting in a really peculiar way where your depth perceptions starts to feel off as the front of it seems to sort of be compressing into he shoulders, and the shoulders seem to be compressing into the back...

LYDIA

It's concertina-ing!

ALEX

... and it starts, sort of, shrinking as well, and it's still approaching, still slithering with its head bobbing and so on, but as it does so, the arms slowly start to re-form, the shoulders and, long story short, it slowly re-forms itself – it's not an agonising transition – just very peculiar, until, eventually, a humanoid figure is walking towards you, clothed in robes of brass and with eyes this time, still narrowed to slits, but emitting bright orange light. And the figure continues to walk until eventually he is stood, maybe, 20 feet apart from you, and stands there with its hands clasped. You see that the hands are quite reminiscent of Hamid's.

LYDIA

Yeah, it's interesting that he's gone to human size rather than Halfling size.

ALEX

And the figure is there with its slightly dragon-y hands and, yeah, the resemblance to the way Hamid is going is actually quite stark once it's, kind of, apparent, and the figure stands, looks up and opens its eyes and they are a deep, bright orange to the point they are quite difficult to look straight at because it's like looking at a light. And then he speaks. His voice has not shrunk with his size.

HELEN

Oooh...

ALEX (also as Apophis)

So coming from this humanoid figure is a voice that, even speaking quietly, echoes out across the space. ‘Greetings to all of you. I thank you for your presence.’ Again, this is a deep, bass-y rumble – it rolls out through the space.

BRYN

Just do a thumbs up.

ALEX

There’s a faint smirk, and then Apophis raises a thumb. Gives a thumb up!

BRYN/HAMID

Hamid sort of bows his head slightly, ‘It’s an honour.’

HELEN

Azu attempts to curtsy.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

In armour! Yes!!!

LYDIA

Slight awkward bow, while never taking her eyes off him. Like, you know usually if you bow your head goes down, so it’s quite an awkward spine bend!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Both Saira and Wilde have dropped to one knee with, like, heads bowed...

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX (also as Apophis)

... and just stay that way until again, 'You may rise.' And they do so.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Probably fine – they didn't tell us that we should! We did ask!

ALEX (as Apophis)

'Saira tells me we have something to discuss.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Er, yes.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'A lot of things, probably.'

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

‘We would like to request temporary access to the Heart of Aphrodite. Our friend, Sasha...’

LYDIA

Awkward wave!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Hello!

BRYN/HAMID

‘... had an unfortunate affliction put upon her in the course of our duties in your service, and we have been told that this might be the only way to restore her to full health.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Step forward Hamid of the Tahans.’

BRYN

Hamid does so.

ALEX

The creature starts walking towards Hamid specifically. There’s one extra fact which is a little bit disturbing. You can feel actual heat from the light of those eyes – it’s not just bright, there is a warmth coming out.

BRYN

Hamid doesn't seem to be bothered by it, actually. Weirdly.

ALEX (also as Apophis)

Again, Apophis sort of looks and tilts the head. Tilts back. 'You wear your heritage well, Hamid of the Tahans.'

HELEN

Oh my god!

BRYN

Hamid looks genuinely shocked, but also quite pleased!

LYDIA

Yeah!

BRYN/HAMID

'Th... th... thank you.'

HELEN

Compliment from a dragon!

BEN

Thanks, Dad!

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘It’s been many years since I’ve seen anyone with quite the appearance that you seem to be taking to so well.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Erm, yes. It would appear that my heritage is expressed more strongly than anyone in many generations, at least, I’m aware of.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘And the rest of your family – do they share this? I have not heard of it if so.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘No, I appear to be the only one.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Funny how these things work.’

(Helen laughs)

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yes.’

LYDIA [laughing]

Putting it about, lad!

(Helen laughs again)

BRYN/HAMID

‘I’ve only recently become aware of exactly the situation. May I show you something?’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Certainly.’

BRYN

So I’m going to take the robe off and turn round.

ALEX (also as Apophis)

Sure. Mmm hmm. ‘Oh yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I am, of course, keeping it covered up.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘I thank you for your discretion. To the rest of you, I would ask only similar discretion. So, Sasha, I believe it was?’

BRYN

I will turn back round and put the robe back on.

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Please step forward. Hamid, I thank you for your time.’

BRYN

I step back into line with everyone else and try to give Sasha an encouraging nod.

LYDIA

Sasha seems to appear to sneak forward!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

In the huge empty room!

(Laughter)

BEN

Roll the Stealth Check – it would be amazing if we all just lose you for a second!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

You know what, I'll allow that!

LYDIA

[Rolls dice]

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

Well, that is 16 plus 18...

(Laughter)

BRYN

34.

LYDIA

So that is 34.

ALEX

So the way that you call this one is very simple. There's nowhere that you can hide behind, but you know that if you can angle it right, everyone's going to be looking into these bright eyes and are basically going to lose you in the glare.

LYDIA

She just looks incredibly unnoticeable.

BRYN

We just take our eyes off Sasha for a second and suddenly she's standing three feet further forward.

(Laughter)

LYDIA

Folds into the shadow.

HELEN

Yeah, like in a horror film!

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘You would ask for the Heart of Aphrodite?’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Um, well, I mean, so I’ve been, I’m told that that’s, um... I mean, you know, if I have to die, I have to die, I guess.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘What do you know of the reasons for us withholding this item.’

LYDIA/SASHA [quietly and hesitantly]

‘Nothing really. Look, they said, right, um...

BEN

Sorry, I’ll just nudge Azu in the knees!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA/SASHA [quietly and hesitantly]

‘... Well, yeah, they just said that it might, it might help, but if, if, if it’s too much, uh, trouble, then that’s, then...’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Wilde, stand.’

ALEX

Wilde steps forward. Tell you what, doesn’t seem quite so sarcastic or up himself right now...

(Helen laughs)

... the model of demure obedience.

Lydia mutters under her breath.

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Apophis)

‘I find myself torn. Our reasons for withholding such items are considered and correct. Yet, I hear from your representative...’ again, gesturing to Wilde, ‘... that you have proven yourself beyond irreplaceable.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘What, he actually used those words?’

ALEX

Give me a Sense Motive.

LYDIA

I mean, I will, but I'll deliberately not put anything into...

[Rolls dice]

ALEX

That's all good.

LYDIA

... okay. 12 plus seven. Unfortunately, that's... so that's, er, 19.

ALEX

The rest of the group can't see, but you can because you're stood beside him.

Wilde winces.

ALEX (also as Apophis)

'I believe your words were 'singular talent?'' He winces yet more.

LYDIA/SASHA

'Well, he could mean anything by that.'

(Bryn laughs)

LYDIA/SASHA

'Yeah, right, okay...'

BRYN

Hamid thinks about speaking again from his place, but reconsiders.

LYDIA/SASHA

‘... good, I guess.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘And surrounds herself with honourable and talented individuals who have been serving the Meritocrats almost perfectly, from what I hear.’

LYDIA/SASHA [muttering]

‘Almost? I just, I mean, I don’t know what I could have done better, really. I’ve killed a lot of bad people, probably some good ones...’

BRYN/HAMID

I do think, as I see Sasha starting to stammer a little bit, I will speak up, ‘I have to say, sir, that nothing that we have accomplished would have happened without Sasha. She’s done more than any other person in terms of the accomplishments we’ve made over the last few months. Times when I’ve fallen or started to give up, she’s the one who’s been able to carry on and none of it would have happened without her.’

LYDIA/SASHA [still muttering]

‘I just gotta have more daggers. That’s the trick...’

(Group laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

‘... I just need lots of them.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘Paladins, would you step forward for me.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Yep.’ I step forward.

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘I would ask your counsel...’

(Group laughter)

BEN

Oh! Helen’s face!!

(gales of laughter from everyone!)

BRYN

I’m going to give it a, like, ‘you what, mate?!’

HELEN

Azu's face is almost exactly the face that I just pulled, which is, like, er... like Andy's face in, like, Parks and Recreation!

BRYN

Oh! Be the GIF, yeah!

BEN

Yeah, yeah!

LYDIA

I don't know it. Describe it to me!

BEN

It's a common reaction GIF. It's like super excited and shocked!

BRN

So, mouth agape, and that kind of thing!

LYDIA

Sasha has basically, subtly stepped behind Azu.

ALEX

Sure, sure.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Azu is aware and is very pleased that you have done that.

LYDIA

You're just bigger!

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Yes, but...

BRYN

Hard to hide behind Grizzop, in fact!

LYDIA

She could manage it!

BRYN

I could manage it as well!

LYDIA [quietly]

She could manage it on a high roll!

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘The Meritocratic choice to withhold items and rituals of unparalleled power was not made lightly, and was not popular. The Heart of Aphrodite would allow simple risk-free resurrections. The actual rituals for resurrections have been outlawed for an extremely long time, in your years. These decisions were made in the hopes that it might encourage equality, that it might encourage human development towards such things. To waive this would constitute an act against this decision, which even now we do not necessarily believe was incorrect. As representatives of Aphrodite and Artemis, I find myself curious, in my situation, how would you rule?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Well, it is the Heart of Aphrodite, so...’

(Group laughter)

[Woooooaaaaahhhh!!]

BEN

I mean, it’s fair! It’s fair!

[Group laughter]

It’s not the heart of Apophis...

LYDIA

Yeah!

BEN

... that would be terrible!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

You could just pray and get that answered!

HELEN/AZU

‘... it’s a healing item, so... we would share it as that is our creed.’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘And what would you do when one hundred turn up, and you may resurrect two. Then four hundred turn up, and you may resurrect two. And so on, and so on. It is easy for people to presume that, as a Meritocrat, I consider myself beyond the realm of mundanity. That is not the case. But I have yet to receive a counsel from anyone who could justify this act and make it work. I am more than willing to do so when that counsel is provided.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Well, not really the kind of person to deal with something like this. More of a doer, but...’

APOPHIS

‘This is why I asked your counsel.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘She ain’t dead.’

APOPHIS

‘A fair point.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘So...’

LYDIA

Awkward!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Peek out from behind Azu!

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘... but she’s gonna die. And you can stop it. We’re supposed to help people, so, you know... The decision seems clear to me. But as I said, I’m not, you know, whatever.’

APOPHIS

‘Don’t imply, speak plainly and I will not judge you for doing so.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Yes, I would immediately.’

APOPHTIS

‘And when people find out about it?’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Not my problem, as I said, I’m a doer not a... you know.’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘We’re, we’re good at not talking.’

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘You asked if given the choice I would, and yes, I would. So, there you go. That’s my honest answer.’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde pipes up at this point. Saira has, again, been just respectfully stood aside. This isn’t really her conversation right now, but Wilde does pipe up, ‘I mean, I’m just throwing it out there, but we could actually just, it doesn’t actually have to leave this room. I mean, it doesn’t really become a problem unless anyone finds out. Apophis doesn’t look particularly happy at this.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Er, if I may? I, I do think this is an exceptional circumstance – as Grizzop said, it’s the fact that Sasha is not actually dead yet means that it is a different

situation. If we understand that the Meritocrats made the laws about the natural cycle of life and death to protect humans from the evils of Rome, and that still seems a sensible decision, but Sasha's situation is very different is the first reason it is an exceptional circumstance, and the second is that it was specifically incurred in a situation in service to the Meritocrats in, again, what I hope is a situation never to be repeated so I think there are at least two reasons for this to be an exception to the normal rules.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

Grizzop's eyebrows suddenly raise like he's remembered something, and goes, 'Oh, actually, a question for you, Sir...?'

ALEX (also as Apophis)

An amused raised eyebrow, 'Go on.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Well, you've said all of this, but why didn't you ban magical healing? It's the same thing.'

ALEX (as Apophis)

'The Temples of Aphrodite, Artemis and the rest, all received stipends from the Meritocrats in order to fund the healing of the [0:52:39] in order to pay for items to do so, et cetera. The fact is that the healing magics which are proliferating throughout human lands are so widespread as to be almost unexploitable. The wealthy have not been receiving extra, as it were. However, when it came to resurrection the fact is that it's a narrow margin of

Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

people who are able to do so. It takes a margin of degree sources and it takes a large amount of preparation which unfortunately meant it was easier to be exploited. If we could ensure resurrection was universal for all, we would consider it.'

[someone low whistles]

HELEN/AZU

'But this isn't resurrection. This is prevention and...'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Also, have you been working towards resurrection to everybody or have you just sat on it? Because you haven't destroyed it and you could have, so you kept it around for a reason!'

ALEX (as Apophis)

'It is my hope that one day this will be achieved. It is not my place to develop these things for humanity, merely to ensure the correct enforcement and correct application. Should humanity develop the means for this, I would not stand in its way. Then again, I do not speak for all of the Meritocrats.'

BRYN/HAMID

'I think, Sir, we would certainly argue that this situation is an extension of the healing arts rather than an open doorway to the rituals of resurrection.'

ALEX (also as Apophis)

Apophis sort of gives a smile, 'I regularly find myself stifled by the good intentions of those who have forgotten those that they serve, and the people that they serve is not myself, but the people themselves.'

LYDIA

Sasha's eyes..

[0:54:33 Alex laughs over Lydia]

(Group laughter)

ALEX (as Apophis)

'You give wise counsel and it is much appreciated. You may do so. Will allow this precedent to be set on the understanding that, yes, you are actually neither alive nor dead, this would not be breaking any kind of taboo that we know of. As it stands, please feel free. I thank you for your time.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Sir, thank you. Thank you very, very much.'

HELEN/AZU

'Thank you.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Yeah, ta!'

ALEX

Apophis turns and starts walking away and slowly starts expanding again, and lengthening, and the perspective starts warping, and so on, and then he stops, turns around and moves back and because he's that large, it only takes him moments to suddenly come right back, and the face is right up close to you and it is phenomenally huge! Just massive! It is all teeth and nostrils, and massive burning eyes...

BRYN

Any of us would very much be a single bite!

ALEX

... albeit with a benevolent smile...

LYDIA

A toothpick!

(Group laughter)

BEN

Can't help but whisper a prayer to Artemis at that point!

ALEX (as Apophis)

'I also would ask that Hamid, kin of my kin...'

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yes?’

ALEX (as Apophis)

‘I do not necessarily believe the world is in the best situation to engage with the nature of your heritage. I don’t believe it is a secret that it can be kept, but perhaps it is one that might be [0:56:08]. Something to consider.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Of... of course.’

ALEX

The head pulls away.

BRYN

Hamid bows again.

ALEX

Turns around and that... *[makes sound of a massive dragon walking away, swishing its tail]...*

LYDIA

Great space-work, Alex!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Thanks so much!

LYDIA

Good wiggling! He's doing all the feet...

ALEX

And he heads back out...

LYDIA

Yep – elbows for wings!

ALEX

... into the gloom... And we'll end the episode there!

LYDIA

Oh!

BRYN/HAMID

I turn to the others and go, 'Well, that was pretty cool, guys!'

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Oh my gosh!

ALEX

I try! I try and build you! These greats gave nothing! Nothing!

HELEN

Yeah!

ALEX

Fine! We're going to go now. When we come back everyone's going to have a proper appreciation for drama and scale!

LYDIA [simplering]

I was very appreciative!

(Group laughter)

ALL

Ahhhh! Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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Rusty Quill Gaming – [95] – [Apophis Awaits]

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ALEX

Another thing I have to check – I hate writing things down and I'm really rubbish at finding it!

LYDIA

This is a mistake [0:57:42 talking over one another] Alex, making prep!

HELEN

Mmm.

LYDIA

No use winging it! What would you have to read?. There'd be no resentment!

ALEX

I used to do that, but when I add layer... when I layer misery on top of one another, I start to lose track of the misery...

HELEN

Erm, then...

BEN

Thank you!

LYDIA

Compliment from a dragon!

BEN

Thanks, Dad!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Cheers, grannys!

HELEN

Go, gramps!

BRYN

Helen, keep your...

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I'll wait until he smacks me!

(Group laughter)