

RQG – 107 – Questions and Answers

Content Warnings

- X
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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 107 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

HELEN

Helen Gould

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

BEN

And Ben Meredith

Rusty Quill Gaming – 107 – Questions and Answers

ALEX

And who are you playing?

HELEN

Azu

LYDIA

Sasha Racket

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

BEN

Grizzop drik acht Amsterdam

ALEX

And how are all feeling? How are you all feeling about how things are going?

Everything going good? Going bad?

BEN

It's all a bit weird

ALEX

It's all gone a bit weird.

HELEN

I really like it actually. It's good

(laughing)

BEN

Wait so that means you like torture?

LYDIA

So much drama!

HELEN

I like getting answers from people

BEN

By means of torture. You're like the American government!

(laughing)

HELEN

We're not torturing anyone. We're just threatening someone which is fine.

ALEX

So as a very quick recap because things took a weird turn you managed to infiltrate and discover a bunch of, let's call them chassis for the Simulacrum

dotted around the warehouses and then you blew up some people. Blew them up again

BRYN

Oh yeah we blew them up good

ALEX

Blew them up again

(laughing)

Shot a bunch of...made some dogs sleep. They'll be waking up soon

LYDIA

Aw puppies

ALEX

And then basically a person turned up. So you shot them and they disappeared and then a body turned up. You didn't shoot them and it was Barret. That's pretty much where we're at right now.

BEN

Yeah and he keeps talking about "them" and they apparently have some sort of necromantic ability to make his lot...

HELEN

And Hades

BEN

Oh and the Cult of Hades

BRYN

The Cult of Hades, that was the stinger at the end of the last episodes

ALEX

So we'll pick up exactly where we left off.

LYDIA

Which is with a knife right under Barret's jawline

ALEX

Exactly where he should be

LYDIA

Cold steel

ALEX

Cold steel. Oh that sounds nice

BEN

So what do we know about the Cult of Hades?

ALEX

Everyone give me either knowledge history of knowledge religion, whichever you have higher. If you have neither still roll. The maximum you can get is a 10.

LYDIA

Knowledge...

BEN

Critical fail

BRYN

Oh no!

ALEX

Critical fail from Grizzop

BEN

So a 6

ALEX

It wasn't killing things so...

BEN

God of life and the sun and...

(laughing)

LYDIA

Knowledge local. That's the only knowledge I've got.

ALEX

Give me knowledge local

BEN

Only if you're in the underworld

LYDIA

13

ALEX

13 on knowledge local

HELEN

I got 25 on knowledge religion

ALEX

Oh look at you Azu. See you listen to the sexy bits. You listen to the cool bits, that's what it is.

LYDIA

That's one of the lectures that wasn't being given by Eren Farihands

ALEX

Exactly.

LYDIA

So she was able to concentrate

ALEX

Hamid do you have anything?

BRYN

Nope. I didn't even roll.

ALEX

Ok. So Azu...

BRYN

I don't have any appropriate knowledges.

ALEX

...it's known widely...it's known that oh Romans summoned things and made deals with things and horrible monsters. You know from your teachings that as far as the story that you have been told goes, it was specifically the Cult of Hades came to Caesar and offered him a chance to conquer all of his enemies and they were the ones who brought all of the monsters and so on and there hasn't been a Cult of Hades since. None of you have any references of like a Cult of Hades. As far as you were concerned the Cult of Hades effectively pushed Rome over the edge...

BRYN

Ceased to exist

ALEX

...into iniquity let's call it. True...like true evil and then when the meritocrats came they were abolished. They ceased to exist. There is no formal order of Hades.

BEN

The cult of what on the who now? Hades?

HELEN

God of death. Also the cult was bad and was the ruin of Rome

BRYN

Ooh. Oh. That's bad.

HELEN

They brought all the monsters and things

BEN

Wait...oh right, so...

HELEN

They were meant to have been disbanded and put away and things

BEN

And they're not – I say, looking at Barret

HELEN

Apparently not

ALEX

Apparently not?

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

Yeah

HELEN

Don't just repeat what I say

ALEX

He goes very quiet.

(laughing)

ALEX

That was Alex fighting...

(laughing)

An annoying NPC

ALEX

It was. It was. Well in fairness Barret's the original annoying NPC

BEN

Ooh he's no Carter

ALEX

He predates Wilde though

BRYN

Yeah but he wasn't annoying. He was actually quite...

BEN

He was threatening

BRYN

...threatening and sinister.

ALEX

Oh how the mighty fall

HELEN

This is very dangerous

BEN

Right, ok. So do you think they're with the whole...

BRYN

So tell us more. Don't just leave a vague implication about a barely heard of cult. What are you actually saying?

ALEX

I don't really follow the question. As in they're the ones. You asked me who...

BEN

Right so they're the squizards

BRYN

So the Cult of Hades was working for you?

ALEX

What is a squizard?

BEN

You know the squid thing with the robe

HELEN

Yeah the tentacle beast

BEN

We killed it. Your lot.

BRYN

It's a portmanteau of squid and wizard.

HELEN

It's a very clever joke actually

BEN

Calamagis

ALEX

Right

LYDIA

That one was my one.

BEN

It was

ALEX

Kind of looks at Sasha

BEN

He can't. He can't turn his head

ALEX

Oh yeah he can't turn his head. He tries to turn to Sasha. Stabs himself a little bit and stops. So I don't know what...

LYDIA

What do they want?

ALEX

Ah there we go. Pretty certain they want what they've always wanted

BRYN

Which is?

HELEN

Which is?

ALEX

I mean the whole domination thing. I mean old habits

HELEN

End of the world.

ALEX

I don't know, presumably. They don't tell me these things

BEN

Hang on a minute

BRYN

So Hades was working for you, what was the arrangement you had with him?

It. Them

ALEX

Yeah. So you were asking who it was that incapacitated me

LYDIA

Don't mess us around.

ALEX

I'm not. You asked who incapacitated me. The person who incapacitated was, yes, that aide.

BRYN

Right so...when...

ALEX

Their position was less

BRYN

When you kidnapped us in London...

ALEX

Less helpful than I was led to believe...

BRYN

Just shut up! When you kidnapped us in London and threatened us...

ALEX

I didn't threaten you

BRYN

You...I am this close Barret! My hand turns back into a claw

HELEN

Don't antagonise him

BRYN

And it turns back into a hand

ALEX

I'm just saying I didn't threaten him.

BRYN

This person was working for you or with you? What was the basis of that arrangement?

ALEX

A long time ago I made the acquaintance of one of the older crime lords, shall we say. Certainly before Sasha's time. Probably before most of your time actually. And let's say they bequeathed me the aid of this person, for lack of a better word

BRYN

Right and you treated this person as another one of your employees?

ALEX

They were very useful.

BRYN

And did that relationship change? I recall...

ALEX

He looks down through his swollen big eye

BRYN

I ignore him and you.

(laughing)

ALEX

Correct.

BRYN

When you spoke to me recently through the ring you said that you had been keeping the cult from us. I imagine you became more aware of their real level of power more recently. Would you like to expand on how exactly that shift in dynamic happened please?

ALEX

No I wouldn't like to expand the shift

LYDIA

The knife goes deeper...

ALEX

Ah ok

LYDIA

...like it's actually cut his skin now

ALEX

Ok, very simple, they were quite happy to offer me the aid that I believed was coming from an open source right up until you went, shall we say, stab happy. They don't take kindly to actively interfering. Certainly not to limiting what I would expect to be quite small numbers of the cult.

LYDIA

They weren't happy that we took one of them down so easily.

ALEX

Apparently. They don't tell me a lot or anything at all it would seem

BEN

I'd be annoyed if I underestimated somebody and it just turned out that they were very, very competent like us.

ALEX

Well clearly they weren't. You did manage to eliminate them quite quickly...oh you're talking about yourselves. Sure.

BRYN

So what exactly do they want? What is their goal other than some negless ill-defined concept of world domination? What have they actively worked towards while you have been working with them? And let's just be clear, let's just remind you of this situation. You are in our power. You have begged us to keep you protected from these people. We made it very clear that that would depend on exactly how cooperative you are so cut out the attitude.

ALEX

So let's just say it was them that originally suggested I get in touch in the first case. Obviously not with yourself Sasha, that's a longstanding relationship but certainly regarding the matter with the Serpentine, the unpleasantness that was all tied to that. Very, very much I was advised at the time to get involved. Apparently ill advised.

BEN

So do we have anything else we want to ask him or should we just...

BRYN

Well I feel like he should continue. I feel like that's really only the beginning of the story and I'm getting *very, very* impatient Barret

LYDIA

So these are the guys...they were there at the beginning so they...this is after the Simulacrum was demonstrated and then they've been around the whole time.

ALEX

Oh no, much, much earlier than that. They were the ones who were originally proposed the disappearing of all of the children in Other London I suppose. Well not all the children but you know what I mean

LYDIA

No I don't

ALEX

Oh yes you do. There was Rooftop Charlie, I forget all their names. Oh what was his name? Begins with B. Anyway all of the...

BRYN

Brock?

ALEX

Look they've been advising in matters for a long time. I don't know what else to say. I can't give you 30 years of administration

BRYN

Give us the edited highlights from the incident with the Serpentine gang, whatever they were called, until now. I want to know how your relationship with them has changed over the last three to six months.

LYDIA

And you provided them brains and you knew that the brains were going...

ALEX

No I didn't.

LYDIA

...to the...

ALEX

No I didn't

BRYN

You provided them people

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ALEX

Yes I did

LYDIA

Who were made into brain fuel

ALEX

Ok

LYDIA

And you knew that

ALEX

No.

LYDIA

I'm sure you knew

BRYN

Maybe he didn't know

ALEX

I suspect he didn't...

BRYN

But more he didn't care

ALEX

More accurate. More accurate. Yes. Look as it stands...

LYDIA

No, no. No, no, no. She just takes her dagger away from his throat and just walks off.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Just walks out of sight

ALEX

I'm sure everything's rather highly strung right now. Edited highlights it was, yes? They have been advising for a long time. Once the Simulacrum poked their hands up, their advice became more insistent. Less suggestive shall we say however looking back it becomes readily apparent to me that not all of the ideas I had were my own. Suffice it to say when your investigations started I began some of my own and through doing so came to realise I may have been underestimating my aid and then when things escalated and continued to escalate, apparently I was found to be more worth in my current state than my former. Please tell me that's sufficient detail. It's very hot out here.

BRYN

It's the middle of the night.

ALEX

It's very cold out here

(laughing)

It's actually pleasantly cool out here. It's nowhere near cold enough

HELEN

Oh don't taunt us. So they're running London now?

ALEX

I mean...he looks genuinely thrown by that question. Have none of you been watching the...

BRYN

We haven't been able to keep up very well with the news from London. What is the status?

ALEX

Last time I heard I'd lost most of my territories. I know the others had as well.

BRYN

Who were the factions in the war?

ALEX

There's no factions

BEN

Who was taking them back?

ALEX

No one. It was just chaos. I don't know what to tell you

BEN

Well that was quite helpful. So these Hades squizards told you to get in touch with this lot, right?

BRYN

You knew we were investigating the Simulacrum. If the Simulacrum's interesting to them you wanted to keep tabs on our situation

BEN

But you told me that no one knew you were on that mission except for the meritocrats so that means that...

HELEN

There's a leak

BEN

...the Cult of Hades is inside the meritocrats, right?

BRYN

Well no because...

ALEX

Definitely, yes. I mean, not necessarily regarding that but come on.

BRYN

So the initial attack on the Simulacrum, the follow up to that is where we encountered Barret and that's where I had this ring so that was before the secret follow up mission but he would've had inside information on that.

BEN

Ok so that wasn't in the secret bit

BRYN

Not necessarily

HELEN

But you're still saying though people...

BRYN

Well he didn't want to be handed back into meritocratic custody because he thought the...

ALEX

He tries to look at Sasha and can't and be like – well, mean let's put it this way if I can infiltrate the meritocracy I'm pretty certain they can

BRYN

Who were your agents working inside the meritocrats?

ALEX

All of them?

BRYN

Yes. I get out a pen and paper

(laughing)

Literally.

ALEX

I'm trying to think how best to do this.

BRYN

We're still working down this to do list Barret

ALEX

I don't want to just sit and list names for an hour

BRYN

Just say he lists some names and Hamid is going to write them down.

ALEX

He does. He lists a bunch of names. In fairness he lists about six names

BRYN

That all?

ALEX

Well I mean they each have their own cell. That's how these things work

BRYN

I fold up the piece of paper and put it back into the bag of holding

ALEX

Now I can't stress this enough, if you don't have any means of shielding from scrying, they're almost coming for us

BRYN

Seems pretty likely. I put the gag back on him and just gesture to you two to walk a little way away from him. Leaving him tied up and...

ALEX

Hog tied, gagged in the middle of the...yeah

BRYN

So what are we gonna do?

BEN

I think just off him. We can't protect him and he's horrible.

BRYN

I mean he certainly deserves to be punished for his crimes

BEN

He has caused so much suffering that really we should just send him on and let the gods deal with it.

BRYN

You know I'm a big believer in the justice system in this world rather than the next world

BEN

I'm not

BRYN

I understand that

HELEN

Azu looks very conflicted

BRYN

Can we see Sasha?

LYDIA

No

BRYN

I'm going to call out. Sasha. Sasha?

LYDIA

She will probably walk out of the shadow...

ALEX

I love the idea that you're there with one hand up either side and you sidestep out from behind the cactus

LYDIA

I just...I just couldn't be that close to him and not kill him any longer

BRYN

We're deciding what we should do with him

LYDIA

You should give him to Wilde so you can get all the information that he has

ALEX

I should be explicit, Wilde was not one of the six names. Just to be overtly clear, I realise I have a tendency to occasionally skip things without realising. His name was not on the list.

BEN

But he's worried that the meritocrats are going to be infiltrated by the Cult of Hades so I think best to just [killing noise]

LYDIA

Well everything's infiltrated. I mean there might be more information he can give. I don't know if I want to know it.

BEN

Also, no, not everything is gonna be infiltrated. Probably not the cults because if any clerical paladin of a particular god pledged to another god they'd lose their powers. Really obvious.

BRYN

And infiltration has different meanings. There's a difference between having control and having agents inside an organisation. If we turned him over the meritocrats they might still...you know the people who were working for the right things might still be able to get some useful information but it doesn't mean we're necessarily handing him into the control of the cult. The cult might be...it's gonna be complicated.

BEN

If we can find someone who can cast zone of truth we can try this again but really, we're in the middle of a desert, we've got a tied up man

LYDIA

Just leave him

BEN

Throw him to a manticore. No that's probably too much. I'll just shoot him in the head.

BRYN

Azu you look a bit conflicted

HELEN

I am conflicted

BRYN

What do you think we should do?

HELEN

I think that maybe we should give him over to Wilde, I think

BEN

He'll just get eaten up by the justice system and spat back out like Carter was. They can't be trusted. The only actual law is the divine law, right? We can hand him into the one of the cults but...

HELEN

Give me a moment. Can I cast detect evil on Barret

ALEX

Oh yeah

HELEN

I'm gonna do that.

ALEX

Ok so I have a bit of a weird relationship with this. Just to give a bit of context, yes you can detect good and detect evil just to detect if someone's good or evil but I always thought you ought to be able, to a degree, detect if something's like the ultimate evil, it should probably show up more than...

BRYN

You said if they see their aura

ALEX

So that's my point. As a GM this is a bit of a house rule that I need to remind listeners for is that I tend to play with a little bit more so you can detect more than just good or bad. It's a spectrum

HELEN

Helpful, thank you

ALEX

You detect evil and you detect evil however you don't detect, let's call it, other worldly evil. You know like a literal devil and stuff like that

BRYN

Like the manticores?

ALEX

So like the manticores, I think they're aberration if I remember correctly

BRYN

So pure evil

ALEX

So they're quite literally like embodiments of types of evil and stuff. He isn't registering as that. He's a long way from neutral though never mind good.

HELEN

Am I able to detect possibility for changing...

BRYN

No! Definitely not.

ALEX

That is not how anything works I'm afraid. You know what, yeah, you sense a small glimmer of...

HELEN

No!

BEN

So his aura is basically I'm a really reprehensibly horrible human being but not like corrupted by something beyond...

ALEX

You know what I'll give you a scale of...he registers less than serial killer. You know the people who are like...

BRYN

Really?

LYDIA

But he's killed so many...

ALEX

Yes. He registers less than someone who goes on a massive killing spree.

BRYN

He thought he was doing it for good reasons rather than just personal pleasure

BEN

Compartmentalises it

LYDIA

To be fair that's neutralness isn't it. Just doing it for power.

BRYN

Well no that's evilness but it's not the worst kind of evil. I mean we're trying to grey...

BEN

Lawful evil. Lawful evil

ALEX

I'd say neutral is often when good people fail to do nothing rather than...

LYDIA

Yeah

HELEN

I do not wish to kill him but we can leave him here.

BEN

Oh well that...

BRYN

That's worse

BEN

That really is definitely worse

(laughing)

Give him a quick death. Don't hand him back over to the Cult of Hades or let him die of thirst in the desert.

ALEX

I'm going to take a break as, never mind Azu, Helen has to negotiate this moral quandary.

And welcome back. Have we made any progress on the Barret problem?

BRYN

Well during the break, Ben what did you suggest?

BEN

So I suggested that Azu gets in a tram. We put Barret on one track and

(laughing)

HELEN

And Azu gets a stomach ache. Then kill him. Kill him

BEN

Alright. Sasha? You've got the most history. You've got the best judge of him.

HELEN

Do you want to kill him Sasha? Not personally. I mean do you think we should

LYDIA

She walks over to Barret so that he can actually see her for the first time and breathes in and out and just says – I forgive you Barret

ALEX

Ooh he looks shocked at that.

LYDIA

You didn't care. All this time you didn't...and I think that's because no one cared about you. It didn't...you didn't care about Brock. It wasn't to punish me you took him away. You just didn't care. You didn't think there was anything worth caring about. I think you should be locked up. I don't think you're as important as you thought you were. You should be locked up and not know what's gonna happen next and know that you are not important for what happens to the world or to me because you're not. You're not important. Just a man on the floor.

ALEX

Give me a sense motive.

LYDIA

I mean she's very bad at that.

ALEX

That's true

LYDIA

This is gonna be...oh no actually. That's $8 + 7$. That's 15. For those working along at home, pause and do your arithmetic

ALEX

So he's not trying to hide anything. You reckon you might have actually found the one way you could've possibly actually reached to him in any way. As in got through rather than redeemed but you know what I mean. He actually shows what might be an emotional response to what you've said which you're pretty certain you've never seen. I mean god knows what emotion...

BRYN

The best dagger of all is emotional

LYDIA

We're gonna tie you up, strap you to a camel like luggage and gonna take you to a boring place. Probably Grizzop's lot. They're a bit more functional. And you're gonna get locked up in a boring room. I mean their architecture is so dull it's hard even to hide and then you'll stay there and you won't know what's happening next and it won't...it won't matter.

BEN

So we're all just, I think standing

BRYN

Yeah I look to the two of you and be like, shrug slightly, and be like – is that ok?

BEN

I'm not going over there

(laughing)

This is definitely a Barret and Sasha thing. I'm not getting involved

LYDIA

Can we...can you get Topaz?

BRYN

Right so I think Grizzop should stay here and Azu you should go down to the city because we need Topaz. Do you want to go with them to the city or do you want to stay here Sasha?

LYDIA

You can take him...do you think the Aphrodite lot would take him Grizzop?

BRYN

We should take him...the people who arrest people are the meritocratic police force, not the temples necessarily

ALEX

Grizzop you know that stuff like this happens with Artemis all the time

BEN

They'll take him. I probably trust them better than the meritocrats right now

LYDIA

You can tell the meritocrats that we know they're infiltrated. You can tell Wilde that

BRYN

We've got the list of names now.

LYDIA

Yeah. Do you think he knows all of them

ALEX

Also there is something worth mentioning. It's something I mentioned before but is just objectively known by all of you which is that within the temples themselves, they have their own jurisdiction. There is an ancient treaty with the meritocrats which is you stay on condition that you help but that means that within their temples it is their jurisdiction. If you...rules like, you know the old medieval thing of like sanctuary and stuff, those are still in affect but you'd better hope that whoever you yell sanctuary at is gonna listen because no one can come in and get you if they don't, if you see what I mean.

BEN

Sure

LYDIA

Lock him up and the meritocrats...maybe they can come in and ask him questions but we need to...we need to tell them that they can't trust anyone and you think that list is everyone...

BRYN

No but it's a good place to start

LYDIA

She leans over Barret and says – you think that you know all their agents? You think that they tell you everything? He doesn't know enough

ALEX

He looks concerned. Looks actively concerned

LYDIA

Take him to the temple. Lock him up and leave him there

BEN

Yeah give me a sec – I'll pull a letter out of my bag, scribble a note and hand it over.

BRYN

Ok so we'll go down to...and you want to stay here Sasha? I mean we're a few hours of dawn, it's possible a change of guard will turn up at some point

BEN

I mean then they'll just get arrows in the neck

BRYN

Yeah I'm just saying...

LYDIA

We'll take them

BRYN

Ok

BEN

There you go

BRYN

Looks like it's you and me then Azu and the luggage

HELEN

High ho Topaz

ALEX

So I think it's worth me accelerating time unless anyone has something that they want to do imminently

LYDIA

No. Oh! The dogs. Sasha plays with the dogs

ALEX

The dogs wake up. They are not interested in you unless you actively do things to provoke them

LYDIA

She's gonna and go some of the meat that was in a pile

ALEX

They're more scared than anything else

LYDIA

Throw the meat to some of the dogs

ALEX

I swear if you...

LYDIA

I want a dog! I want my own dog

BEN

Brutor 2

ALEX

Both of the sleeping dogs are not interested

BEN

Should've let them lie

(laughing)

ALEX

So I'm going to accelerate time. First things first...

BRYN

They'll have their day.

ALEX

Let's deal with who is heading into town

BRYN

Hamid and Azu

LYDIA

Split the party

ALEX

Hamid, Azu and Barret. Yes

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

So Hamid and Azu, I'm going to deal with first and then I'll jump back to Grizzop and Sasha. So Hamid and Azu you head off. It's easier travelling at night. It's cooler. You head down and you see that the lights of the city, whilst on, are subdued.

BRYN

Oh Damascus is on a coast right?

ALEX

No. It is near a coast. Let me dig up something to check one thing for you.

BRYN

I want to take these two rings.

ALEX

It is exactly 80km inland from the Mediterranean which is...and sheltered by mountains and supplied water by the Baroda River.

BRYN

There's...the two rings I've put in a bag of holding because extra dimensional space is the safest place for them

ALEX

Correct. So heading down towards the city. It's quiet. There doesn't appear to me much afoot

BRYN

We're in the wee small hours

ALEX

Yeah it's not even...I mean let's be perfectly explicit. There are not the sounds of a mobilising marshal force powering towards the warehouses as far as you can tell. You see the odd drunk. You see the odd furtive person in an alleyway and so on but nothing that particularly grabs your attention. Are you heading to...where are you heading to specifically? I need to know

HELEN

The local Temple of Artemis

BRYN

Yeah we'd like to find the Temple of Artemis first I think

ALEX

Ok Temple of Artemis is locked up tight. It doesn't mean there's no one there. It just shuts down for the night and you know what the Artemis lot of like. Shutters, barricades. It's all there. It looks a little more like a fortification and a little castle than anything else.

LYDIA

Little castle

ALEX

You arrive outside the Temple of Artemis. There is no one around.

HELEN

I knock on the door.

ALEX

There's a scrape as the lower of the two which is aimed at, sort of, halfling height, opens and you just see a pair of eyes looking out.

BRYN

Hello, really sorry to bother you in the middle of the night

ALEX

They look up and see Azu.

HELEN

Hello

BRYN

We've been working with one of your colleagues. He wrote a note for you guys.

ALEX

Gestures

BRYN

Yeah I had the note through the slit

ALEX

Before they take it they go, in Arabic – you read it first.

(laughing)

BRYN

Oh ok. I read it.

BEN

Er hello

LYDIA

It's actually written like that!

BEN

These guys have got a bad'un. Let 'em keep it. Thanks. Grizzop.

ALEX

And then presumably like a number

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah alright, one sec. A few minutes past. There's a gentle breeze, maybe a little dust devil blows down the street. Barret shifts a bit. Alright. And then, I've said it before, I want to say sally door, I just like the word. A smaller door in the bigger door opens and you see an incredibly rugged looking elderly woman. Full leather armour, like full bow...it looks that they're about to go out hunting in the forest.

BEN

So dressed for bed then?

ALEX

Yeah exactly. Real linens. Go on then

BRYN

Which way?

ALEX

Go on.

BRYN

I let Azu carry the body because obviously

HELEN

Yeah I sling him over my shoulder like a sack of potatoes

ALEX

Yep. Gesture you in. They close the door and bar it before anything else, bar it again. So yeah – she starts walking down. It is stone. Even if that isn't the building material for a lot of around here. This one is. You go past what is clearly a large banqueting hall, let's call it. Big, long tables, obviously all of the lighting's quite dim at the moment. You notice it's all candles and old style. It isn't the newer gas and electrical lights that you've seen around and they lead you through, right to the back and then they lead you down to the basements. Don't...don't touch anyone

BRYN

Oh of course not

ALEX

Not a good idea

HELEN

What do you mean don't...why would I touch anyone?

ALEX

Good!

(laughing)

They head down the stairs and you find yourself in what is effectively a cellblock. Heading past you see there's a couple of clearly people, who are in what is effectively a drunk tank. You see is, what appears to someone in similar leathers to the person who let you in, sat cross legged on the floor, head bowed. They appear to be meditating or something. There's a few others and then right at the end they open one. Chuck them in then.

HELEN

I do

ALEX

Clang. We'll untie him at some point. Tell Grizzop, was it?

BRYN

Yes

ALEX

Tell him he's got a week to claim him and do the paperwork

BRYN

Ok. I'd like to tell you just a bit more about the situation but could we do it somewhere out of earshot of the prisoner.

ALEX

Pfft. Does it matter?

HELEN

Yes

BRYN

Well I think there's some relevant information

ALEX

Alright. I'm going to jump to Sasha and Grizzop. The night wears on.

LYDIA

I would prep to have a view over the road coming up to the thing so that if a change of guard comes we see them in advance and I dunno, shoot them or just...well they are evil but then they're evil shift work. In this economy

(laughing)

ALEX

Well then maybe you should just temp kill them

BRYN

I mean there's no ethical work under capitalism

ALEX

Anyway! So you're basically taking an overwatch position

BEN

And I'm going to patrol and make sure the manticores aren't playing up.

ALEX

They seem to be...they seem to be calming. You notice they do tend to get a bit more active when you're near. Lots of snuffling sounds and scraping but...

BEN

Ok

LYDIA

Should we feed them?

BEN

No, if they starve to death then great

LYDIA

Ok they won't go crazy?

BEN

Dunno. Never dealt with one before

(laughing)

ALEX

You didn't even do well on your knowledge nature did you so you know they're not a good creature. In terms of timewise, dawn breaks and then a little bit more time passes. Both of you give me a perception check

LYDIA

Oh dear. Only 17

BEN

ALEX

Grizzop you hear the sound of an approaching carriage

BEN

Oh we've got one. Something coming here.

LYDIA

Hiding the outside the gates but like...

BRYN

Gates, I mean...

ALEX

Twisted metal puddle

LYDIA

Yeah but like somewhere near...

ALEX

Carriage draws near

LYDIA

...above. The sort of place that we were watching from when we were scouting out before

ALEX

The shattered remnants of the watch boxes...

LYDIA

Yes. Well no because you want to be outside so they don't see you. You want to be in the landscape.

ALEX

Ohh so you're up near the overwatching ridge?

LYDIA

Yeah

ALEX

Ok yeah

BEN

And I will wait in the gate

ALEX

So the carriage enters **bowrain** and you see it approach. You recognise it as the cabby. He seems to be kind of bobbing along. He sees the annihilation and kind of pulls short.

BEN

What do you want?

ALEX

Oh. Er...I figured that you'd all probably still be here. Thought I might get a second fare. I didn't see anything.

BEN

No you didn't

ALEX

Nope. Didn't see it. Turns the carriage around

BEN

Bye

(laughing)

ALEX

He sets off and heads back down the mountain.

BEN

Got to respect that opportunism

LYDIA

Sasha comes down and checks...was that the...

BEN

It was the cabby, yeah

LYDIA

Ah ok

ALEX

Jumping back to Hamid and Azu. Rather than playing out the whole RP conversation because you're going to be repeating a lot of stuff we've heard, just give me a cliff note of what you pass on.

BRYN

I explain that he's a crime boss, that meritocrats will definitely want to interview him but it's possible that in his role as a crime boss, he has agents working inside meritocratic forces so don't let them do it alone.

ALEX

The woman who let you in seems completely unphased by this

BRYN

Yeah, yeah I'm not expecting her to phased.

ALEX

Just alright, yeah.

HELEN

I also tell her about the scrying possibility and...

BRYN

The Cult of Hades

ALEX

The scrying, they're like – I wouldn't worry. Yeah Cult of Hades...at which point it's a – pardon?

HELEN

He said the Cult of Hades were after him.

ALEX

Right.

BRYN

We have reason to believe he's actually telling the truth. It's possible we may have encountered some of their members.

ALEX

Right

BRYN

I know it makes us seem like crazy people. I don't expect you to necessarily believe us but just be aware

ALEX

Hope they don't botch their sense motive. They don't. Ok. Might have to tell the higher ups about...

BRYN

Oh yes

HELEN

Absolutely

BRYN

That seems fair

ALEX

Great

BRYN

We'll also be starting to spread the word that they seem to still exist.

ALEX

They stand there a little bit like...

BRYN

Thanks for your help

(laughing)

LYDIA

That's just such a...the Cult of Nonplus...what's the opposite of nonplus?

BEN

Unplussed

LYDIA

Yeah the Cult of Unphased-ness

BRYN

Unminussed.

ALEX

By the way they introduce themselves as Elana

HELEN

Aw

ALEX

And Elana...

LYDIA

Not overwhelmed or underwhelmed. The Artemis lot are just whelmed

ALEX

Just whelmed. Elana shows you out. Remember, one week. Closes the door.

BRYN

We should go find...

ALEX

Metagame you're getting bonus XP for picking the right religious group for handing prisoners to.

(laughing)

BEN

We're the best! Yeah!

ALEX

Well it'd be more like does he need tea? Aphrodite please. Please.

BRYN

We should go tell the meritocratic forces as well and ask them to get in touch with Wilde and work out what we're going to do about the army of robots up the hill.

HELEN

Yes let's get back up

LYDIA

That's something that...it's a word that Hamid knows because he's spent quite a lot of time in the Czech Republic where of course they use the word robot. It means servant and...because they wouldn't have robots otherwise.

ALEX

No. They're autometer we've already established that.

LYDIA

Exactly. He's been learning...he knows a bit of Czech because...

ALEX

So are you heading to the meritocratic offices as a pair or are you heading up, collecting and going back down.

BRYN

Oh no as a pair.

HELEN

Yeah it'll be quicker that way.

ALEX

Ok

LYDIA

Split the party three ways!

HELEN

No!

ALEX

I'm going to accelerate time...

BRYN

Yeah I'd like to just take a quick detour by the river so I can take these two rings and chuck them onto a random passing boat.

HELEN

Are you sure about that Bryn?

ALEX

Highs or lows?

BRYN

One that's going somewhere far away

ALEX

Highs or lows

BRYN

Low

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah. You manage to catch a trader that's clearly full of local goods and that means that they're heading far away. They're heading due Mediterranean. There was a moment where it was like up...no down river. So you manage that. Head to the meritocratic offices and you are readily shown through. There is an issue of like it takes a little while for a guard to come around because it's all locked up for the night but they show you in and then explain that it is important, but because of the timing, it's not even worth trying to raise people early because it's 4am-ish. They're like by the time I've raised them they're all going to be here. Can you just wait for a bit?

HELEN

Alright

BRYN

We probably can't to be honest. We need to get a message to Oscar Wilde.
He was last at the meritocratic offices in Cairo.

ALEX

Oh Wilde?

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Oh I can go wake him

HELEN

Oh he's here?

BRYN

Yeah get him. Get him...

HELEN

Right now. Immediately. Tout suite

BRYN

Sharpish

ALEX

So the...

LYDIA

Do not give him time to prestidigitate. I want that hair crazy

ALEX

The guard jogs off and then you hear the sound of approaching footsteps. You hear approaching footsteps stop. You hear a mutter. The sound of prestidigitation and then you hear them finish walking down the stairs.

BRYN

Gotta respect that.

ALEX

Wilde sees you both, looks livid. He is staring daggers at both of you.

BRYN

Morning!

ALEX

Why do I have thousands of reams of goblin paperwork from Ratchet? Why is my office...well someone's office filled with what must take 20 years' worth of administration to even begin to understand. What did you do?

HELEN

We're uncovering a conspiracy.

BRYN

We thought you'd had employees to deal with it for you

ALEX

Yeah but not...

BRYN

We've got more

HELEN

Yes

ALEX

Great.

BRYN

Got like a whole bag of holding full of more paperwork. This one's cyphered.

ALEX

Oh for god's sake

(laughing)

I'd invite you to my office but I can't fit. He opens a side door. Step in.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

He closes the door. He sort of tries to flick on one of the lights, realises that the gas hasn't been working for ages. Lights a candle.

BRYN

Also up the hill there's an army of probably 1,000 robots but ready built Simulacra

ALEX

Robots...oh my god

BRYN

Guarded by a dozen manticore or similar creatures of pure evil

ALEX

He sits down

BRYN

They were in a guarded complex. We've taken out the guards but currently there's just two people up there watching this entire thing

HELEN

It's a bad place

BRYN

We're gonna go back up and help them out. Maybe send some help and a demolitions team or something.

HELEN

Yeah

BRYN

Thanks Oscar.

HELEN

Very helpful

BRYN

You're right we are doing good work. Nice of you to say so.

ALEX

He's genuinely just...honestly speechless for the first time

BRYN

Oh and also here's a list of agents that Barret Racket had inside meritocratic forces. It may or may not be complete

ALEX

Excuse me? Just holds that

HELEN

Oh yes and the Cult of Hades may have infiltrated the meritocrats

BRYN

Oh yeah turns out Cult of Hades exists after all. They're the squid wizard things that we've been dealing with for a while. They've been in our reports.

HELEN

And they want to take over the world.

ALEX

He loosens his impeccable tie – ok.

BRYN

We've been up all night. It's been a long day if I'm honest. But we're gonna get back to it. Thanks for your help. I don't actually leave but I really want to.

ALEX

I'm going to cut to Grizzop and Sasha

(laughing)

So it's going to be powering on. I realise you're falling a bit out of sync, it's just these things happen. It's powering towards, I'd say, mid-morning. It has not been a suspiciously long time where you're worried but nothing has happened. No one else has turned up. No movement from the manticores.

LYDIA

Gonna look in the admin place for an office kitchen and...

ALEX

You find one

LYDIA

...see if anyone's left any sandwiches

ALEX

You find a completely rotten sandwich in the back of a cupboard because the place has been empty a while

LYDIA

But how did the guards have...

BEN

Brought pack lunches. They all got blown up

(laughing)

If we just stabbed them normally they'd have packed lunches on them but no let's fireball them

LYDIA

I mean that meat's that's been outside has been in the sun for a long time. I wouldn't barbecue that.

ALEX

It begins to smell

BEN

I've got rations

LYDIA

Oh great. Well I've got rations, I just wanted some actual...

BEN

Oh yeah but we can eat in Damascus, right.

LYDIA

...food.

BEN

Oh also well done for all of that, that's...you did...that was good, the whole Barret thing

LYDIA

Just sort of realised that it would be a bit too easy to be like him.

BEN

Yeah

LYDIA

So you've got options, right

BEN

Yeah life's complicated innit.

LYDIA

Got options

BEN

But no, you did...good job, I know you've been through a lot recently so that was probably the last bit of big information just to suddenly literally teleport into your lap so...

LYDIA

I've stopped being surprised by things.

ALEX

Both of you give me a perception check

LYDIA

That's an ironic point

BEN

That's 21

LYDIA

That is 29

ALEX

The same panama clad individual appears. Flanked by two people waving a little white flag going hello.

(laughing)

Hello.

BEN

Who are you?

ALEX

And I'll end the episode there. Woah major character growth

BRYN

That was awesome. I love...Sasha's speech to Barret was incredible

ALEX

See none of the audience get to see Bryn...he does really good silence squee.
His hands sort of come together and you just see him...

BRYN

Anyone who watched me stream To the Moon the other day would've seen
similar reactions on stream

LYDIA

Actually if you lower the tone of the podcast you can hear him squeeing.

ALEX

Oh my god I can't keep it in

LYDIA

It's too high for humans to hear. Bats however think it's adorable

ALEX

So whilst you play around with the audio to try and get that we'll go away and come back next week with yet more adventure.

(cheering)

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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