

RQG – 120 – Unlikely Allies

Content Warnings

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ALEX

Hi everyone, Alex here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our patrons. Eric Zager, Elle Adams, John C Worsley, Lauren, Katie Nolan, Jonathan Clark, Danielle Goldstein, Patrick Perry, Hillary Meline, Anton and Ken. 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 120 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

Ooh you said the number right, no...close enough. It's Ben.

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

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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

Conscious again Sasha

HELEN

And Azu

BRYN

And...

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ALEX

Ooh hello

BRYN

You're supposed to introduce yourself.

ALEX

Oh, hello.

HELEN

With your name

BRYN

Tell everyone your name

ALEX

It's Ed. Ward. Edward.

BRYN

Great

(laughing)

BEN

Like the film maker.

ALEX

It's not a voice for radio. Very much a face for film. Ed.

BRYN

Silent movie.

ALEX

So anyway...yeah the talkies ruined his career. So as it stands we have Grizzop who has deposited Wilde in an anti-magic box although potentially not the in way he'd always secretly hoped and is facing potentially executing Barret.

BEN

Yes

HELEN

Ooh.

ALEX

Meanwhile in Rome, a sentence that gets worse every time I say it.

LYDIA

How do you keep track of it all?! How? How?

HELEN

We don't even keep track of it and we're doing it.

ALEX

Just watch the film in your head backwards and then forwards again. Like just rewind it and press play

BEN

Wait you have to rew...hmmm

ALEX

Meanwhile...

BEN

Is your brain a VHS?

ALEX

It's the tracking marks in the memory are terrible

BEN

Scene selection.

ALEX

I can't do that. Just watch the whole thing forwards and backwards, it's how you remember stuff. Meanwhile in Rome we have everyone resting having

met someone that none of you know anything about before. Who just appears to be there randomly. Good. I'm going to start with Grizzop. Barret steps out.

BEN

Oh, well, gimme the forms. I'll sign him out and tie him up.

ALEX

Yep. Guard does so. Just says – please don't do it on the grounds because that's still gonna be...

BEN

I'm not gonna do it on the grounds.

(laughing)

ALEX

You probably have to go outside the city as well because this isn't a...

BEN

Fine, I'll kill him out in the woods...oh out in the mountains and dump him in a ditch

ALEX

Oh great. Cheers man

(laughing)

BEN

Oh can I have a wheelbarrow?

ALEX

Ooh...

HELEN

Oh god!

ALEX

Hang on.

BEN

Horse and cart, I'll return it.

ALEX

There's a yelling. Someone out with the barrow? Yeah he's just dumping a body.

BEN

Just give me a horse and cart

ALEX

Oh yeah no worries

BEN

Cool

ALEX

They provide you access to a horse and cart.

BEN

I'm going to gag you but you have until we get to the city limits to reconsider your position. That will be your last chance when I ungag you that time. otherwise I'm going to dump your body in a ditch and no one will ever find you. You'll be forgotten. Lost. Your legacy will mean nothing. You'll be gone. For good.

ALEX

I can't really on audio give a response because he's bound and gagged so...

BEN

Yes, that's fine. Just think about it.

ALEX

So the city is still in better nick. People seem to have accepted a generalised story which is that the river had dried up, the meritocrat Apophis came, he struck the mountain and fresh water sprung forth.

BEN

I mean that's kind of broadly-ish true. If we are seeing extensions of Apophis

ALEX

Aren't the meritocrats great though?

BEN

I mean they're big scary dragons

ALEX

They just came in a fixed the drought. I mean I realise that they're so busy that's why they couldn't have come before this. Generally it's accepted that yes it's terrible what happened to the orcish town but, you know, we'll be helping them rebuild anyway and in a lot of ways isn't this an opportunity for us to work together...it's very, very, kind of...the mayor has seen an opportunity and gone ooh I can spin this. And she is doing a wonderful job. It's becoming very clear how she got her position. But yeah,. the city seems to be sorting itself out and you are able to head out towards the sticks comparatively easily.

BEN

Yeah cool. I will take him out to a remote likely wooded hillside. Find a rural track, go to the end of the track, make sure no one is there.

ALEX

You succeed in all of these things. Nothing is particularly difficult. It's more scrubby than wood but yeah.

BEN

Kick him out of the cart, drag him over to a precipice where there is sort of a ravine or small ditch below and take his gag off.

Right, last chance.

ALEX

Look me in the eye...

BEN

I'm...yes

ALEX

And tell me that you won't kill me if I give you information that could save thousands. Dead in the eye and he's just very calm about it but he's like...

BEN

I promise on my honour as a Paladin of Artemis that I will not kill you now if you give me information that will save thousands.

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ALEX

Within the next six months

(laughing)

I've played this game before

BEN

If that information proves to be correct and helpful.

ALEX

If I fall off the cliff it still counts as you doing it and not the cliff.

BEN

I'm not gonna kick you off the cliff and yes, it does. That's how murder works.

ALEX

I can give you the location of the Japanese manufacturing plant.

BEN

Right. Good. Then we have a deal.

ALEX

Reaches out his hand

BEN

That's bound?

ALEX

Tries to reach out with his hand and fails

BEN

I spit on my hand and slap it onto his forehead

(laughing)

ALEX

Brilliant. I think it's going to be a good idea if I write some things out for you.

It's quite a lot. Are you in a rush? Are you able to go there tomorrow?

BEN

We're doing that back in the cell.

ALEX

I'm not doing it here.

BEN

Gonna gag him again

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ALEX

Good.

BEN

Put him back in the cart

ALEX

Yep

BEN

Take him back down again

ALEX

Ok

(laughing)

BEN

Go into the compound. Signing him in again. He's changed his mind.

ALEX

Ah the Artemis way. It works but sometimes...some people can just waste your time can't they

BEN

Not lots of paperwork though so...

ALEX

I'm going to jump to Rome. So Ed...he says he's Ed anyway, goes and picks up his cloak from the dirt, puts it back on and comes over. Hello

BRYN

Stay quiet. Come inside.

ALEX

Hello. Hand his hand...offers his hand to you, that's the word. Those are human words.

BRYN

I give him a firm handshake.

ALEX

So you alone or...

BRYN

No. Come inside and you can meet us.

ALEX

Oh right yeah. He kind of looks of the building that's rubble

BRYN

Down there.

ALEX

Ooh thanks. Starts crawling down the...crawling down into the cellar

LYDIA

I assume he's not sneaky

ALEX

He is not

LYDIA

In which case Sasha would immediately wake up and be at his side...

ALEX

I'll allow it

LYDIA

...and like get a dagger to his throat.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah. Oh.

BRYN

Guys, guys, guys, this is Ed.

ALEX

Hello.

LYDIA

Literally standing with a dagger to his throat. Who's Ed?

ALEX

I'm Ed. Hello.

LYDIA

I mean is he some kind of shapeshifter?

ALEX

That is a very shiny knife

LYDIA

Why are we allowing him in here?

ALEX

Because I'm lovely.

LYDIA

This so nonplusses her.

BRYN

I thought Azu you can detect if he's evil. I mean he looks like a...

ALEX

Azu you have knowledge nobility right?

BRYN

...Paladin of Apollo?

HELEN

I have knowledge nobility

ALEX

Give me the roll of knowledge nobility

HELEN

The roll of knowledge nobility!

ALEX

Welcome to knowledge nobility

HELEN

That's a 15

BEN

Plus?

HELEN

Nothing

BEN

Oh

HELEN

I've got it ticked. I don't have anything in the thing

BEN

No, well then no you don't have it.

HELEN

Well what's the point in ticking it then?

BEN

It's a class skill

BRYN

Yeah it means you can get it more easily. It doesn't mean you have it

LYDIA

I was thinking like why does Azu have knowledge of the English nobility?

ALEX

That's fine, you still get a 10 right?

HELEN

I guess

BEN

Yeah because...yeah

ALEX

This guy's really important. You don't remember why but you're pretty certain he's really important. Definitely British.

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

Definitely British.

HELEN

Can definitely tell that.

ALEX

Yeah definitely British

BRYN

Azu I thought you could detect evil.

LYDIA

He's detected British which he's...

HELEN

Threatening...

LYDIA

Same ballpark

HELEN

Detect evil is a magic thing. Would I have to cast anything?

ALEX

Well you don't have to roll. You can just say – I detect evil

BEN

It's an ability

BRYN

Yeah I guess it might not work in Rome but still

BEN

It's an ability though, it's not like a spell so...

HELEN

Ok. Yes, I think detecting will be a good idea.

ALEX

You reach out for your god. For a moment you think it might've worked, you know, it feels like there's a presence there. Not the one that you were reaching for. Not a nice presence either actually. You find yourself wracked with, of all things, grief temporarily. Not aimed at anything specific, just potent grief. Like really powerful grief. Then the moment's gone.

HELEN

Azu starts crying

ALEX

Yep.

BRYN

Azu are you ok?

LYDIA

What, so see he was really evil

(laughing)

ALEX

She could be allergic.

LYDIA

To what?

ALEX

Me

HELEN

To Britishness.

ALEX

Me. I'm allergic to dogs.

LYDIA

Sasha puts her knife down and just steps back. She has no skills to deal with this.

BRYN

Look guys...

ALEX

He's stooping by the way the same way that Azu does in this kind of cellar, like, very well built human. But haggard as.

BRYN

This might be some sort of complex long con but look at him. He looks...

ALEX

He gives a little wave

BRYN

...like a cleric of Apollo. I thought...

LYDIA

He looks this...

BRYN

He's wandering around

LYDIA

If he was this stupid really would he have survived...

BRYN

Everything that's tried to attack us since we got here looks like some sort of hell beast

LYDIA

Or doesn't look like anything at all.

BRYN

This is clearly a normal person. I thought we could at least start a conversation.

LYDIA

Are you a shapeshifter?

ALEX

He sort of does a little dance. [Singing] Doop, oop, Apollo, moving through the fields

LYDIA

If he was really *this*...

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BRYN

Ed. Ed. What brings you to Rome?

ALEX

I am so lost. I am so lost

BRYN

Sense motive?

ALEX

Go for it

BRYN

Do you want to roll it too? You're much better at it than me.

HELEN

Yeah I will try that as well.

LYDIA

Oh

HELEN

Well natural 1 there on my sense motive

BRYN

11

LYDIA

Azu what did you sense?

HELEN

My sense motive is 12

LYDIA

What did you sense that was so terrible about him that you burst out crying?

HELEN

It wasn't him

LYDIA

Are you sure?

HELEN

There's something...

ALEX

Oh are you a paladin?

HELEN

Yes

ALEX

Yeah don't do that. It's not nice

HELEN

Don't do what?

ALEX

Any of it. He comes over – I think I broke Apollo

(laughing)

LYDIA

I don't follow.

HELEN

I think Rome is...it's something to do with being here. It's not...

ALEX

Do you reckon?

HELEN

It's not personal.

ALEX

Oh thank god. I tell you what, I was well worried then.

BRYN

Ed are you a paladin of Apollo then?

ALEX

Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm here on my pilgrimage.

BRYN

Is that a thing your church does?

ALEX

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, we go and then we have to see where all them...I know this...Rome's hubris, that's the one, was and we have to look at it. You say hello to the Cult of Mars...not Cult of Mars, the Mars lot. They do good work, then...

BRYN

They control the borders don't they?

ALEX

That's the one. Then you do your grrr, paladin thing

BRYN

I mean Rome's quite far from the borders

HELEN

Have you accidentally gotten through the border control of the Cult of Mars?

ALEX

Looks at you. No, yeah that might've happened, yeah

HELEN

He could be useful

ALEX

Please tell me you guys know the way out. I've been here ages. It's horrible

BRYN

I mean...

LYDIA

What have you been eating?

ALEX

Oh well...

LYDIA

This doesn't make any sense

ALEX

He reaches into his pack and opens it. There's a couple of things left. Tell you what, actually I found this dog yesterday. Got some of that.

HELEN

Don't eat...don't eat the dog things

ALEX

Seems alright

HELEN

I would not if I were you

ALEX

I mean I cooked it.

HELEN

Cooking doesn't affect evilness.

BRYN

I mean we are going to leave but we have something more important to do first

ALEX

Oh brilliant. How are you gonna get out?

LYDIA

We have a teleporter

ALEX

Oh wicked. Where is it? Can I have a go?

BRYN

We might be able to...we might be able to...

ALEX

Oh please. Please let me have a go.

BRYN

That's not how that works

ALEX

Oh no go on. Please. Please

BRYN

No Ed. It's not how that works.

ALEX

I just want to go home. I'm really, really tired. I've been here ages

BRYN

Our family...our family has been kidnapped and we need to...I heard what you said upstairs about smiting the evil doers. We need to do that first

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Oh. Oh right.

BRYN

You're a paladin. You should help us.

ALEX

Oh yeah. Where is it then?

BRYN

Well we were in the middle of resting so we're going to let the rest of the team rest...

ALEX

Oh right, right

BRYN

...but you and I can catch up and I'll tell you what's happened to us and you can tell me what's happened to you

ALEX

Oh right, yeah sure. Yeah

BRYN

Guys go back to sleep. You need more sleep

HELEN

I don't think he's a threat. Azu says to Sasha. Or at least not in the very, very bad way

ALEX

Kind of...Ed just kind of shuffles up to Azu. Who are you with?

HELEN

Aphrodite

ALEX

Oh right, yeah.

HELEN

Yeah we get on.

ALEX

I am, whilst you continue to rest, going to jump to Grizzop

BEN

Hello. So I've signed him back in. Unbound his hands, not taken the gag off.
Given him a pen and paper

ALEX

Barret begins writing. Looks up briefly. Might take a while

BEN

You're gagged

ALEX

That was Ed. Sorry.

BEN

Also you're still gagged Barret

ALEX

Gives you a look.

BEN

Oh might it take a while. Good. It better be good information.

ALEX

He starts writing.

BEN

I stand there and stare at him.

ALEX

Ok. Barret continues writing. Takes a little while. Gives you about four A4 sides. He's got a lovely script though. Ohh. Then hands it all over and passes it through the slot.

BEN

Thank you. Right so...

ALEX

You see a list of names, you see a couple of addresses that aren't familiar to you. For what it's worth, if he's telling the truth it looks fulsome.

BEN

Right thank you very much Barret. Rebind his hands. So I will go and follow up on these leads and make sure they are right and if they aren't I'll come back and I'll kill you and then in six months' time we'll do this again. Keep him in.

ALEX

Barret goes back to his obscure maths in the corner apparently.

BEN

And if he gets too mathsy, I don't know if he's a wizard, so you might want to stick anti-magic on him

ALEX

Guards like – oh right yeah

BEN

He needs to be here for the long term. Sorry. He's too dangerous to transport.

ALEX

Yeah alright

LYDIA

You just took him out on a cart!

BEN

Long term

ALEX

Yeah alright.

BEN

Good. Thanks

ALEX

[Singing] Artemis, everything's kind of simple when you think about it

(laughing)

BEN

I'll check in on Wilde. Is he still asleep?

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

Cool. I am going to get some sleep myself and wait for Wilde to wake up.

ALEX

Ok so you awaken. I am going to say that you slept a good number of hours and you are waking up of a morning.

BEN

I'm going to go down and check on Wilde.

ALEX

Seems to be asleep. Not unconscious or screaming.

BEN

Yeah. How long's it been?

ALEX

About 20 hours. Maybe a bit less

BEN

Ok going to poke him awake.

ALEX

He comes to, really groggily

BEN

Hello. Do you want breakfast?

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

I will go and get your breakfast

ALEX

Brilliant. Thank you

BEN

I will do that thing.

ALEX

You do that thing

BEN

Give him a chance to wake up

ALEX

You turn back up. You see that Wilde has a full head of hair and he's well dressed.

BEN

You're not fooling me. Anyway...wait how are you doing that? You're wearing anti-magic shackles?

ALEX

You come back and find Wilde exactly where you left him

(laughing)

Alex forgot about the anti-magic field. No you come back and Wilde is dressed and he's there.

BEN

Right so we worked out basically somebody is...or a group of people, probably no prizes for guessing who are repeatedly casting spells on you to try and kill you, I imagine or just curse you into not being useful. So you're going to have to wear those for a while and you're a guy now. You're not a wizard. You are clerical staff and not in the fun divine sense. Ok?

ALEX

Ok

BEN

So I talked to Barret. Threatened to execute him and he gave me this.

ALEX

Wilde has a look through

BEN

This is apparently the location of their factory in Japan

ALEX

I'm going to have to take a little bit of time and fact check some of this obviously.

BEN

Right. Anyway you'll be safe here. I'm going to go and find the Temple of Hephaestus.

ALEX

Ok I'm a bit more with it now. In terms of the illusions up at the top of the mountain, are they actually causing any harm or are they just inconvenient at this stage?

BEN

No they're just mildly annoying.

ALEX

I'll send someone else to do it

BEN

Right

ALEX

And the rest are trapped in Rome?

BEN

Yeah. With Einstein.

(laughing)

ALEX

Sorry for listeners, eh. I am going to see what I can do. But I can't do it from here.

BEN

Ok. But you need to be protected obviously because people are trying to curse you to death from range

ALEX

Reckon you could spare a paladin?

BEN

I'll ask the high priestess

ALEX

Ok so if you can arrange me for some kind of escort then what I can do is I can start chasing up my people whilst you head to the Hephaestus lot

BEN

Yes I will go do that

ALEX

Take them a gift

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BEN

Right. Eat breakfast and I will.

ALEX

Yep. Starts eating

BEN

Right, I'm gonna go and ask the high priestess if they can spare a paladin. It's incredibly important and I will owe them a favour.

ALEX

As you leave, Wilde goes – oh Grizzop.

BEN

What?

ALEX

I love a bit of sausage

(laughing)

BRYN

He's back baby!

LYDIA

Wielding...

BEN

I'm going to regret this but...I close the door.

ALEX

Ok. I'm going to jump back to Rome. So you all finish your rest.

BRYN

You get twice your level in hit points back. My endure elements has worn off.

ALEX

Yes it has.

BRYN

But everyone else is protected for longer.

ALEX

Thankfully you didn't need the rest, you had the rest. Well I mean you do but you know what I mean. We've sort of spent 16 out of the last 24 hours resting in some form.

BEN

It's what happens when a spooky, invisible puddle tries to murder you.

LYDIA

I've got written down or I had written down -1 on everything.

BRYN

That might've been a failed save against the elements

LYDIA

Right yes, that was it.

ALEX

That sounds like that.

BRYN

So you probably...that's gone away now because...

ALEX

Yeah it will have

BRYN

...ensure elements

ALEX

To be honest you're in far better shape than you could be in Rome

BRYN

Yeah

BEN

You could very easily be dead

BRYN

More hit points wouldn't hurt but we'll make do.

ALEX

What I should do is tell you what Ed has been talking to you about whilst you slept.

BRYN

Yes I'll fill them in. I won't go into anything like classified or dangerous knowledge but I'll fill them in on what's happened to us.

ALEX

In that case then Ed gives you a brief summary that he did his pilgrimage. He met this really cool guy called Tjelvar at one point and he's just gotten to the bit where he's like – oh yeah Tjelvar he was really, really cool. I hung out with him for a while and then there was this other guy, he was...Bertie, he was weird. And he starts going on about this guy Bertie for a while.

BRYN

Like it won't take me long to connect dots at all because I got the full story from Bertie

ALEX

No that's fine.

BRYN

And I'll put it together with, oh that's this guy and I will realise we've got this connection

BEN

That's the stupid, sexy paladin

LYDIA

All those things that Bertie was saying in his sleep

ALEX

And eventually he carries on and goes he completed his pilgrimage, made it to the edge of Rome, then he thought he saw some evil so he went in.

BRYN

I mean that's accurate. Yeah, there's definitely some evil there.

ALEX

And then there's a bit of an issue which is that the blasted wastelands are mostly full of evil so he kept seeing evil. Then it turns out that space and time go...these aren't his words, space and time goes really weird in Rome so going back the way you came didn't work either so mostly he's been just going from one evil to the next really.

LYDIA

Sometimes eating evil

ALEX

Sometimes eating it.

BEN

Smiting about the place

ALEX

He found some wine.

HELEN

I wouldn't drink that

BRYN

Oh dear

ALEX

But he didn't like it so put it back

BRYN

Good. Good.

ALEX

This is the level of narrative that you're getting. You know what, in fact a bit of a downer but I'm going to take a break there whilst you just continue with this really poorly told rambling but bonding

BRYN

But we get on. We get on.

LYDIA

These are...

BRYN

We've got friends in common. It's an old boy's network

LYDIA

These are exactly the people that Hamid actually, despite his efforts at being down with the kids, kind of knows how to manage. They're the people he's comfortable with.

ALEX

Yeah so while you're having a rambling story, shall we call it bonding...

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Bonding the way that you could bond with a dog. That's what's currently happening with Ed.

So coming in from the break you have managed to bond and I'm going to skip ahead to - what is it with Bertie and he was like...he always look at people weird whenever they're...whenever they're...he's just weird int he?

BRYN

Did he look at you weird a lot?

ALEX

Yeah he did, yeah

BRYN

Hmm, yeah. Weird that, innit

ALEX

Yeah.

BRYN

Anyway. I think everyone else is waking up.

ALEX

Yes they are.

BRYN

So we'd better...

ALEX

Einstein crawls out of an amphora.

Evil doer!

BRYN

No, Ed, Ed...

ALEX

Then throws the cloak off. I will vanquish thee...

BRYN

Ed!

ALEX

What?

BRYN

This is our friend, the professor.

ALEX

Hello the professor. Puts his cloak back on, sits down.

LYDIA

How has that cloak survived?

ALEX

It hasn't. It's a mess.

LYDIA

I suppose that's his camouflage.

ALEX

Einstein's like – ok.

BRYN

How are you feeling professor?

ALEX

Good

BRYN

Bit better?

ALEX

Comes over to Hamid. Can anybody else see the Adonis?

BRYN

Yes that's our new friend

ALEX

Great. Ok, cool. Really worried there for a moment. Hello. Einstein and Ed chat. I'm not doing it.

(laughing)

It'll take ages

BEN

And I assume Einstein gets quite bored, quite quickly.

ALEX

Oh on the contrary.

BRYN

Do it for Patreon. I want to listen!

ALEX

Oh I might do a conversation on the side but I'm not doing it now.

BRYN

Yeah fair

ALEX

I'm just gonna fall off my chair instead

BEN

Good job

BRYN

Ok is everyone ready to...

ALEX

Yeah let's do this!

BRYN

Go to the source

HELEN

Yeah

LYDIA

Right, you point in the direction, I'll scout out ahead.

ALEX

Don't forget your teleporter

BRYN

He's coming with us. The professor is a...

HELEN

He can teleport

BRYN

...a wizard who's very good at teleportation

ALEX

Oh cool. Thanks the professor.

It's alright. He's a keeper. I like him.

LYDIA

Sasha asks Hamid to point which direction and then sort of zooms off suspiciously glancing back at shapeshifters

BRYN

Just don't go too far Sasha. I think it's good for you to be out in front just not too far.

ALEX

So assuming you're all setting off...

BRYN

I'll give you your cloak of elven kind back

ALEX

...could everybody please give me a survival check

HELEN

20

ALEX

Nice

LYDIA

6

ALEX

Nice!

HELEN

Oh no

BRYN

8

ALEX

Nice. Einstein does terribly unsurprisingly and Ed does as he should have done which is good for the story. So Sasha you're good at the sneaking side but when it comes to navigating in a wilderness where all of nature's gone wrong and space and time are going a bit weird...

LYDIA

Yeah it should be her kind of thing but she's just a bit out of sorts because of the...she's just been clonked on the head more heavily than...

HELEN

Yeah magically clonked

BRYN

Well you said the directions came to me in my very disturbing dream so that's what I'm basing my direction on

ALEX

Yep. Between you basically you are all able to make decent progress. Hamid you know it's half a day's journey away. You don't know why or how

BRYN

Sure

ALEX

Meanwhile Ed's just chomping along next to Einstein. Einstein seems to be having...Einstein just likes meeting new people, you know what...

HELEN

Aw

ALEX

...a new face is just a new friend you haven't met yet unless they bite you

LYDIA

Or a shapeshifter

ALEX

Yeah right. Did I tell you about the time I accidentally teleported a mimic instead of my colleague

BRYN

Oh dear.

LYDIA

Oh. Is this over lunch?

ALEX

Cut across to Grizzop

BEN

Hello

ALEX

So you're heading to the Temple of Hephaestus?

BEN

Yes. I have a gift. It is the magical bow.

ALEX

Ok.

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BEN

Good thing I remembered that I had that.

ALEX

The soup's posh magical bow.

BEN

Er yeah?

ALEX

Yeah it is. Ben pays attention to items

BEN

No

ALEX

So turning up to the Temple of Hephaestus

BEN

Yes

ALEX

You went past it a couple of times because it seems to be just a warehouse.

BEN

I like these guys. Seem to have their head screwed on.

ALEX

You do realise eventually it's a warehouse. There is no signage. There is no one at a desk or anything. You can head in if you want

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

So heading into the warehouse it has a certain Spartan vibe which you appreciate from the Artemis side but while there is more like functionality and defensiveness and blah, blah, blah. This is more like it's a massive empty room because that's the best way to fit more workshop in. But it's not manic. So it's not the kind of goblin factory. It's two tiered for a start so there is a...you notice that actually it's almost cubicled.

BEN

Sure

ALEX

So I don't mean like soulless, you can stare out over 50 people, they're all slightly off. Like some would be bigger, some would be smaller, some people have round ones or so on but every, single person appears to have their own space which is their own workshop and they're just tinkering away. And

heading in there's a central corridor which has loads of doors heading off in different styles and so on but even from here you can see there are bunks in some of them. Clearly like this is the place you go if you want to work and live your work. No one comes to greet you. There's just the gentle sounds of more like artisan crafting going on rather than heavy industry

BEN

[coughing noise] hello?

ALEX

Someone pokes their head out. Pair of goggles, welding goggles, takes them off and looks at you

BEN

Hello. Got a question about automata.

ALEX

The person who looks at you, looks a bit nervous and worried and is just like...and then just hides again

BEN

Hello? I'm gonna go up to their station

ALEX

They appear to be bent over their work and seem to be making something incredibly tiny and intricate with 50 lenses between their eyes and the thing

BEN

Oi. Clonk, clonk on my breastplate

ALEX

They kind of wince and look over at you. Again nervous.

BEN

I'm not here for a social call. Are you a paladin?

ALEX

No

BEN

Are you a cleric?

ALEX

Yeah

BEN

Right. So you're supposed to help people

ALEX

I mean yeah?

BEN

Then do that. Or...

ALEX

Hello. They hold their hand out to sort of shake it

BEN

Show me to somebody who will help me and then I will leave you alone

ALEX

Ok. They just get up, step outside and start heading down the corridor.

BEN

Such good impressions

ALEX

They're very uncomfortable with you there. They don't want you there. They get to the far end of the corridor and there's a circular room which is built up against the back wall of the warehouse which is semi-circular, sorry, and there is a semi-circular desk behind it and you see that there's a very, very heavily bearded dwarf behind the desk. Their beard is like out over the desk, down and then goes back up onto a little stand.

HELEN

Aw

ALEX

And they appear to have, again, loads of lenses and so on. They appear to be examining a single gem that is on their desk and there's a really nervous looking apprentice, maybe, who looks like pants wettingly nervous whilst this dwarf's just like, hmmm and just looks at it. Notices you. You know they have the big optical illusion giant eyes thing. Hello

BEN

I'll turn to the nervous...not the nervous apprentice, the one I'm with. Is this someone?

ALEX

They give a nod

BEN

Run off then

ALEX

They run off.

BEN

Right. You. Got some questions about automata

ALEX

Oh right ok. Takes his goggles off. Go on. Gestures to the apprentice. They flee. They openly flee. Dwarf hops down, comes round to you. Sort of reminiscent of Bronk insofar as tools as far as the eyes can see

BEN

Shirtless? Tattoos?

ALEX

No shirts or tattoos. That would interfere with...

BEN

Ah. Wait no shirts? I love it

(laughing)

Everyone's so nude in Damascus.

ALEX

The problem with having tattoos is that that's valuable pocket space and you'll never see them anyway. This is just, he appears to be a...you know those really bad dad vests where it's like loads and loads of pockets...

BEN

Like a fishing vest

ALEX

Yeah, yeah. Imagine if you had a fishing vest and then it had a baby with another fishing vest and then you took the babies and you stitched them onto...it's just...

BEN

So lots of pockets

ALEX

It's just all pockets. It's great. And then a load of tools that you've never seen before. They just hold out their hand. It is oiled and dirty and everything else.

BEN

Right, Grizzop. Nice to meet you. Paladin of Artemis. I've got some...

ALEX

Garten

BEN

Garten?

ALEX

Yep

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BEN

Right, nice to meet you.

ALEX

Yeah it is, I guess. Hello

BEN

Yeah I've got some questions about automata. It's quite important

ALEX

Ok

BEN

I was told to bring a gift. Can you help me or do you need to show me someone else?

ALEX

Oh did you bring something?

BEN

Yes. For the person who's gonna help me.

ALEX

That'll be me

BEN

You're automata?

ALEX

Well it's either me or it's gonna be a heck of a lot of apprentices.

BEN

Oh no. Right, I'll get my bag of holding and get the bow out and just dump it on his desk. There you go. Have one of them.

ALEX

Takes it. Puts it on the desk. Examines it a bit

BEN

Oh it's Isaac Newton's

ALEX

Starts looking at it again

BEN

Well from his hoard. Dunno if it's his

ALEX

Looks up at you again. Do you reckon you could get more?

BEN

No

ALEX

Oh well.

BEN

He's in a...

(laughing)

Oh but if you want him he's in a pocket plane in Prague.

ALEX

Good to know. You know what, yeah alright. Sits up. Rehangs his beard.

BEN

Has he got like a little beard weight to keep it there.

ALEX

Oh no, so imagine like a brasier on a stand. The stand is on wheels so he can wheel his beard stand around

BEN

What like a blooming...

LYDIA

Like an IV?!

BEN

Yeah!

ALEX

Yeah

LYDIA

That's amazing!

ALEX

He's got a massive beard. It's full of tools.

LYDIA

All looped around...

BEN

Full of tools?

ALEX

Yeah, that's valuable pocket space

BEN

Extra pockets in the beard, fair enough

ALEX

So he's just got his little brasier full of beard and pockets. He's like yeah ok, wicked.

BEN

I value the aesthetic, I question the pragmatism

ALEX

It's not about pragmatism, it's about craft. Yeah ok, wicked. Take a seat.

BRYN

And we respect his

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

You know what that is the best thing that someone's brought in ages. What can we do for you?

BEN

Right. I need you to make this.

ALEX

Takes a look at it

BEN

Ooh sorry, very quickly can you keep a secret?

(laughing)

HELEN

Oh Grizzop!

ALEX

I mean sort of goes with the job. You don't tell people how to make stuff do you?

BEN

Cool. Just so we know where we stand. On my honour as a Paladin of Artemis if you tell another soul about this I will kill you.

ALEX

On my honour as a Cleric of Hephaestus, yeah alright

(laughing)

BRYN

Excellent!

LYDIA

I love them! I love them so much!

ALEX

So he's just sort of digging through, digging through and he goes – what is this?
Let me rephrase, I know what this is. How and where did you get this?

BRYN

Let me start at the beginning...

BEN

Well you know about...ok, do you need to know that?

ALEX

Yeah alright.

BEN

What I can tell you is that that and the making of it might very well save the world.

ALEX

Well the problem that you've got is that it's unfinished.

BEN

Well yes

ALEX

And the other problem you've got is that I've no idea what that is there.

BEN

What's he pointing at?

ALEX

So he's pointing at some technical stuff

BEN

Oh not a drawing.

ALEX

Oh it's some kind of drawing

BEN

Do I recognise it from anything?

ALEX

You do not. Nope

BEN

Well dang

ALEX

If anything it sort of might be a toilet. I don't know

BEN

Oh

ALEX

Lots of pipes.

BEN

Fair enough. Right

ALEX

Yeah so there's two things with this that I am not able to place for you. One of them is the fluidics

BEN

Yes

ALEX

It's not really our thing. You're gonna want to probably...I hear there's a lot of stuff coming out of Japan with that. They do a lot of magitech, a lot of fluidics. And the other one is this, you're looking at organics. I don't really do organics.

BEN

Right so it's a bit of a conglomeration

ALEX

I mean yeah. Hodge podge.

BEN

Ok. Can you make me the bits that you can make?

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah no worries. That'll take...oh you know what, I'll just cancel all their projects, they're rubbish anyway. Yeah I reckon we can have that done for you, what, 24 hours?

BEN

Good. By the way can those apprentices keep a secret?

ALEX

It's why they're apprentices.

BEN

Ok on my honour as a Paladin or Artemis if one of them breathes a word I will kill them

ALEX

On my honour as a Cleric of Hephaestus do you really think I'm gonna tell them anything.

BEN

Just being careful

ALEX

Yeah alright

BEN

As I said it's important, alright. But great 24 hours, brilliant. I'll be back in 24 hours. Thank you very much for your help

ALEX

That's alright.

BEN

And I will leave.

ALEX

Watches you leave. Ah the Hephaestus lot, I didn't know if they were gonna come up. I'm glad they did

HELEN

Yeah they're lovely

ALEX

They're fun. Good call bringing a gift. There were two ways that conversation could've gone. You picked the right one. I'm going to jump back to Rome. You have made significant progress. Does anyone have knowledge history?

BRYN

Nope

ALEX

Knowledge geography

BRYN

Nope

LYDIA

I've got local

HELEN

I've got religion

LYDIA

If you think I've seen enough of...

BRYN

I've got arcana

ALEX

Is all you need right

BEN

The geography's very magical

ALEX

You can't find the answer with magic it's not worth knowing

LYDIA

Alex created all this beautiful backstory hoping that someone would know

ALEX

You continue to just head through the city. The types of building changes. It goes from commercial into more formal so you're looking at, to your eyes Sasha, like town hall kind of things. Hamid from your experience it is

interesting in that it doesn't appear to be...so meritocratic cities all have one thing in common which is that they tend to have quite a lot of segregation of function. So it tends to be like merchant district, commercial district. Rome seems a little bit more ancient insofar as that super formal structure that seems imposed on everything isn't really here and it's a slightly weird to post meritocratic eyes

LYDIA

I get mixed use, dense combination. Very Jane whatever her name was. Very important...

ALEX

I'm going to say Jane Eyre.

LYDIA

Ah. Thought quite radically about how you keep everything mixed together so you let society bubble up and form organically

ALEX

Don't get me wrong there are sort of districts to a degree but it's very much a case where no one has come in and demolished things to make room for more things as much. But nonetheless you find yourself eventually, Hamid, you're at the right building. You just are. And this one seems to be in slightly better condition than the ones around it. You did see very far off in the distance what's left of the coliseum for instance. Not over there, not over there. You seem to have been climbing up a slight rise, it's hard to tell because the land's

been so disturbed and there's been a few moments where you've had to avoid creatures and so on but nothing's really come up again. They're out there but turns out when you blow your feet up people get scared. But yeah you find yourself at a...

BRYN

Sasha, Sasha.

LYDIA

Mm huh

ALEX

It may have been some kind of like large sprawling villa. Maybe. It's hard to tell.

LYDIA

Sasha appears behind you

BRYN

Oh, yeah, thank you. I think it's this one. Does this one...everyone gather around. Does this one look a bit different to everyone else too?

LYDIA

It's still got a roof.

BRYN

This is the one I saw in my dream I think but also it...you see how it looks a bit together.

ALEX

So there's a slope which has what possibly used to be gardens leading up to a larger building. Things like the odd bit of fountain, there's a crumbled wall, things like that but there's very clearly an avenue approach. The building at the far end appears surprisingly intact. Not pristine but better than you might have expected.

BRYN

I think depending on how many people there are they'll be watching the entrances but it might be worth the rest of us just hiding around the corner and if you want to scout around and get a look at the building and the layout but don't go too close.

ALEX

So I don't mean to tell you what to do but I find that if you loudly yell, the bad things will come find you so you don't need to go find them. They'll just come to you

HELEN

No we don't want to find them

LYDIA

Sasha gives a withering look and says – it's done – to Hamid and just goes. Just heads off

BRYN

Good thank you.

HELEN

We need you to be quiet

ALEX

Alright

BRYN

We might do that later. It might be useful to have a distraction at some point.

ALEX

I'm well good at them

BRYN

But at the right time

HELEN

Definitely not now

ALEX

Right, how do I tell the time? The sun isn't moving

HELEN

We will tell you

BRYN

We'll let you know

ALEX

Ok how will you let me know?

BRYN

For now we're just gonna stay here and stay quiet while Sasha does what Sasha does best and she is very good at it.

ALEX

Yeah alright.

LYDIA

And then I roll a 2...

ALEX

Einstein's just kind of looking at Ed and Ed is just a birthday present that came early.

(laughing)

It's not even cruel it's just like [sighing] ah this is so great. This is so much better than I thought Rome would be. You know sometimes it's easy to get down but you know, this is fine. This is ok

LYDIA

Is there still flesh moving from his spine?

ALEX

From Einstein? Yeah. There's chunks of his back

BRYN

He will also have healed overnight so he'll get twice his level in hit points back, have you noted that down?

BEN

He's probably quite a high level

ALEX

Einstein has. Einstein's got a lot of damage. So yeah ok.

LYDIA

Perception check and a sneak check?

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ALEX

Needs a stealth check first

LYDIA

32

ALEX

Ha! Yeah that's really good.

LYDIA

Well I'm starting from a base of 20

BEN

I was gonna say, what did you roll a 3

ALEX

Could you also give me a perception check

LYDIA

Oh so that's only 25

ALEX

25. Yes. There's definitely monsters around this villa thing but there doesn't appear to be any that you can see in or on this villa and this is with you paying

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attention to fool me once, keeping an eye out for weird dust devils and stuff like that. Appears empty.

LYDIA

Right she...

BRYN

What we wanna know is entrances and exits to the villa as well.

LYDIA

Can...

ALEX

Do you do a full loop? I will allow you to if you do

LYDIA

Yeah I do a full loop

ALEX

So if you do a full loop it's going to take a while

LYDIA

That's fine

ALEX

Ok you find...

LYDIA

The further she goes away from Ed and...

ALEX

So it's a big complex. It rapidly becomes apparent, oh I'm gonna be gone, if I'm going stealthily, I'm going to be like half a day. Like big complex and as you're doing the loop something becomes readily apparent once you start getting around to one side which is that although most of the front is here, the back has been just destroyed. Just completely obliterated. It doesn't even appear like there has been subsidence. Bits of it and you're like, oh yeah I can see how this chunk of rock in the middle of street must've come from up over there...like boom I guess. But round the side it appears that you probably can get into it from the back by just scrambling up this detritus and so on but you also are aware that the way it looks like there's probably a crater in the building as well so it's not an easy climb. For like anyone good at climbing, yeah, yeah. You could get in and out.

LYDIA

If only we had someone who was good at climbing?

ALEX

Someone with plate armour or things like that. Not so much. Not so much and around the other side it appears a bit more whole again. So it's very clear that

something happened towards the back of this complex and it's just gone. To the point where you found it hard to loop around because it's just so open. It was mostly like finding a hunk of rock and then using its shadow because there's just not much there. A bit of the hill appears to be missing among other things.

LYDIA

I appear behind Hamid again. He's not surprised.

ALEX

Ed gets so as [gasp] at which point Einstein slaps his hand over his face and he's just like – no

(laughing)

LYDIA

In many ways this building is like our new friend. It's all front.

(laughing)

ALEX

Ed takes a moment and then a lightbulb goes on and he goes – oh thank you. Stretches a little bit and flexes a little bit

LYDIA

It's just completely empty, dismayed, blown up around the back

BRYN

Ok so it's not in the same condition. Is there a way in?

LYDIA

There's a climbing way. Maybe if you guys came around the front and then I went around the back and surprise them but we don't really want to split up.

BRYN

Not really.

ALEX

Einstein just pipes up – I'm gonna go ahead and say I'm not really gonna use any spells unless we're all definitely going to die. Just FYI. I think that's a really terrible idea.

BRYN

I think that's a good plan. I mean the thing is they've got hostages inside. That's what...why we're here.

ALEX

Oh, how do you tell which are the hostages?

HELEN

Because we know them

LYDIA

And they're tied up

BRYN

We think we know what all four of them look like

LYDIA

Well you say that, I don't actually know who is there for...

BRYN

I can't remember in character if we know or not

HELEN

I saw them all

ALEX

Azu saw them all and could give descriptions

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

The description that Azu gives by the way it's probably Bi Ming Gusset

LYDIA

Ah

BRYN

So yeah, so we can give descriptions. So that's...so we will and we will make sure that Ed knows what the four hostages look like

HELEN

It's very important for us to state

BRYN

So I suggest that...

ALEX

The four hostages are people not other stuff

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Great

LYDIA

But some of the bad people here also might be people

ALEX

Right so how do you spot them

HELEN

They'll be shooting or stabbing

BRYN

We'll....

ALEX

Oh great, yeah. Cool

BRYN

What I suggest is the three of us - indicating everyone except Einstein and Sasha – go in the front. We occupy their attention. We keep them talking for a while if we can. Sasha goes in the back and your number one job is not to be seen until you've got eyes on the hostages and can...

LYDIA

Get them out

BRYN

Once things start, number one job is to free them while we take care of everyone else.

LYDIA

We've got the mobile stones, right? How about you give me one and...

BRYN

We'll keep the other

LYDIA

...you give me a signal...I give you the signal once I've got eyes on and then...

BRYN

That's a really good idea

LYDIA

...you come in and start a distraction so I then get the hostages out.

BRYN

Einstein?

ALEX

I can't promise those stones are going to work. I didn't build them for Rome, you know

BRYN

We'll just have to hope.

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ALEX

Ok

LYDIA

And test them now.

BRYN

I have...

HELEN

You rang earlier

ALEX

Well I mean what if you test it and it explodes and kills us all

BRYN

Well I mean it worked earlier.

ALEX

True. True

BRYN

Ok second option if we can't get a signal on the phone...

HELEN

The stone

ALEX

The what?

LYDIA

The what?!

BRYN

On the stone

ALEX

Oh right yeah

BRYN

I will do my best to send up a flare and even if it doesn't work you might hear an explosion. It's a low level spell so it won't do damage

LYDIA

Ok I suppose that's true of a lot of things in Rome, right.

BRYN

Unfortunately

ALEX

So there's one thing. Now this is not my first rodeo and I need to know if there's any...

LYDIA

Will there be a rodeo?

ALEX

If there's any challenges I need to know now. If...I want the strong ones, you know, the running fast ones, I'm alright at them but none of these...none of these puzzles, none of this scripture stuff. I'm not...it's not my thing. The professor, he's probably quite good at...

Yeah I'm well good, yeah.

BRYN

It's likely to be a bit of a fight Ed

ALEX

Right, good yeah. But just...just...I'm not the one for your puzzles. I've played this game before

HELEN

Understandable.

LYDIA

And if they end up capturing me because if I'm going in alone that is a possibility, get the hostages out first.

BRYN

We'll get all of you out Sasha. We're not leaving you behind

LYDIA

Ah, I can make things explode though, you know

ALEX

Oh me too

LYDIA

I can take them down

BRYN

Yeah me too.

ALEX

Bright new world!

BRYN

So professor you stay back, you're back up. I don't want you getting involved unless everything's already gone very badly.

ALEX

Unless you really, really want the palace to explode because then I'm probably your man

BRYN

Absolutely. But we don't wanna leave you behind...

LYDIA

The one thing that doesn't work is an exploding...

(laughing)

I healed them all!

ALEX

So I mean sounds like we have a plan right?

BRYN

Yeah everyone ok with that?

LYDIA

Yeah it'll be a while because it's a big complex as you know from the fact that I was away for so long so if I'm gonna sneak up and then find my way around this enormous building better hope that the stones work because...basically give me...

BRYN

Fingers crossed. I'll give you about an hour and a half. Longer?

LYDIA

Give it...give it...yeah

BRYN

It's not easy to tell the time exactly so it's not going to be exact

ALEX

How about sunset?

BRYN

The sun doesn't...

ALEX

The sun does not move.

Oh, this is important. I don't know a lot but I do know this. Puts his hand in and gives you the most puppyish looking like, we definitely need to do the hand thing otherwise it's not gonna work

BRYN

Ok but quietly

ALEX

Oh yeah obviously.

HELEN

Yes, very quietly.

BRYN

We're a mercenary group. Our name is The London and Other London Outstanding Mercenary Group. Or for short...

ALEX

LOLOMG

BRYN

L-O-L-O-M-G

ALEX

L-O-L-O-M-G yes

BRYN

I like to spell it out. So name on three...

LYDIA

LOLOMG

ALEX

Einstein's like...

BRYN

LOLOMG. LOLOMG

ALEX

Yes. OMG...

BRYN

One, two, three

EVERYONE

LOLOMG

BRYN

Good work team

ALEX

I've got to end the episode there!

LYDIA

Literally going to sneak off massaging her temple

(laughing)

BRYN

Sasha

LYDIA

Yep

BRYN

Good luck. Hamid offers you a handshake.

ALEX

Introducing Ed to Rome led to some really big tonal dissidence there.

(laughing)

So with Grizzop having been denied another assassination, that was this episode right?

BEN

An execution

ALEX

Execution.

BEN

And my tactic worked so I'm happy to not execute him so long as the information he gave me is good.

ALEX

And with the party definitely not going into any kind of problems whatsoever I think we can take a break there...

BEN

By break you mean end the episode

ALEX

End the episode there. Take a week's break. Chill out. Relax and then we can see what happens next week and maybe not wait six months this time.

BEN

Yeah we only have to wait two weeks.

ALEX

Bye guys

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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