

RQG – 121 – Combat

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. Brooklyn Orchard, Benjamin Nothing But BS Sussman, Slug Farm, Lottie Lin, Valda Kiley, Emily Kellogg, Sarah Vakos, Monica Chialiaska, Bowjam Panic. 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 121 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

Ben Meredith

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

Sasha?

HELEN

And Azu

ALEX

And everything is better than it could be

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HELEN

No it's terrible

ALEX

But it's better than it could be

HELEN

We're not dead

BRYN

It was worse. It was worse.

HELEN

It was worse when I thought that two of you were dead

ALEX

And now it's less worse

BRYN

We hit rock bottom

LYDIA

Yeah

HELEN

We can go lower

BRYN

That's a dangerous sentence. We got pretty low. There's probably still...

ALEX

You can go lower than willingly blowing yourself up as a viable strategy

BRYN

That was awesome and I regret nothing.

ALEX

So as a very quick recap, it's been a little longer for us but we have at the situation as follows. We have Hamid and we have Sasha and we have Azu...

LYDIA

In Rusty Quill Gaming we have a situation

(laughing)

ALEX

Those three are in Rome

BRYN

With two of the audience's favourite NPCs

ALEX

They're getting along famously with Einstein and a...technically a Plantagenet which is a thing and they are...

LYDIA

I've just realised he's put us in the most dangerous place and then with it being Alex putting two of the favourite NPCs with us is basically a threat

(laughing)

ALEX

Oh look at you! Look at you being good at GM'ing. Yes. Good.

BEN

Ransom note to the audience

HELEN

Yes

BEN

Up those Patreon pledges or Ed gets it!

HELEN

Oh no!

BEN

Don't do that!

ALEX

I can take out both comic relief...no. So as it stands you are about to begin your sort of hostage rescue in creepy, forbidden, death building. I can't remember how much detail I went into with you beyond its layout. I don't think any of you passed any of your checks so creepy, forbidden, death building and meanwhile we have Grizzop who's been making friends

BEN

Hello

ALEX

Most notably you actually managed to get some information from Barret assuming that he writes it out properly and doesn't just pull some kind of shenanigans on you.

BEN

That's alright then I shoot him in the head with an arrow. That was the threat

ALEX

That is the threat. And you also got to meet Temple of Hephaestus and they were cool

BEN

They were great

ALEX

They were alright. And so as it stands I believe I'm probably going to start with Grizzop of all things

BEN

Hello. I mean hello

ALEX

Hello. So you have handed the bow over and blah, blah, blah and they are now beginning your construction. What's your next go to?

BEN

Go back to Wilde via Barret to update Wilde and threaten Barret a bit more if he has written his stuff.

ALEX

So let's go around to Barret's first. There is a cell guard waiting for you with a big old piece of paper

BEN

Oh lovely. Thank you.

ALEX

No worries. Anything good?

BEN

Well I haven't read it yet

ALEX

Oh right, yeah. They just stare at you. You might be on to the B Team. So things that you are reading. Barret knows specifically that all of the chassis that you have been engaging with in the factory in Damascus were definitely being shipped to Japan. Specifically he knows that they're being sent to the Shoin Institute on Okinoshima Island which is off South Honshu. I can go into more detail if you want

BEN

Shoin Institute?

ALEX

Basically yeah. Effectively he has said the direct lines like where to go and has given you a little piece of advice which is don't let anyone know you're getting there ahead of time

BEN

Ok

ALEX

Oh and wrote a pithy little joke at the end which was – take your swimming trunks

BEN

That's a joke?

(laughing)

Oh right, fine.

BRYN

Grizzop's famous sense of humour strikes again

ALEX

Well no the problem is Barret spent most of his life with people that had to life or die

(laughing)

And then I said that's not a dog, that's my butler. Silence. [laughing]. Doesn't hone those skills quite so much

BEN

That explains Wilde

ALEX

But yeah apart from that it is a lot of just nearest station info and things along those lines

BEN

He's written a travel guide

ALEX

He's basically written you a travel guide to that region.

BEN

At least he's thorough. I'll bang on his cell and say – ey, thanks for the info. Guess you might get to live for another six months and we'll see about it after that so have fun and settle in, you'll be spending a lot of time here.

ALEX

He gives you a thumbs up. His mathsing appears to have spread from one corner into...it's powering towards the other corner of the room.

BEN

Oh we're going for the whole creepy, equation thing. Good look. Good look. We've had a couple of those

(laughing)

Ass.

Walk away. Oh point to the guard – keep an eye on the maths, it could be something magical.

ALEX

Oh no, yeah, yeah. We just sweep it at the end of the night.

BEN

Oh fair enough. Cool. Carry on

ALEX

Yep

BEN

Go to see Wilde

ALEX

So heading to Wilde and as it stands he appears to be less centrally involved than he used to be insofar as there's not lots of people going in and out of the office. In fact he appears to be in a more obscure part of it. He stands up when you come in. He still looks alright actually. It's almost like having slept did 90% of the work for him

BEN

Is he still wearing the cuffs?

ALEX

He is not but let's see where that goes.

BEN

Whatcha. Where's the cuffs?

ALEX

He shuffles out from behind the desk where they're wrapped around his ankle

BEN

Oh right. Ok. Fair enough. Did you move those or?

ALEX

I mean doesn't exactly look great going around in shackles whereas this I can, you know, bit less obtrusive.

BEN

Alright. Well your choice. Anyway I went to Hephaestus. They're building as much as they can. It'll take 24 hours or so.

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ALEX

How much did that cost you?

BEN

Something I didn't care about so free

ALEX

Oh. Cool.

BEN

Anyway, yeah also got this from Barret – hand over the sheath of papers – so...

ALEX

Ooh ok

BEN

Yep

ALEX

He's kind of hesitating and thinking. Are you thinking Rome first then?

BEN

Ideally I'd like to stop my friends and save people.

ALEX

I...

BEN

If we can hold off. I did tell you that this was the most important thing.

ALEX

I can send some people ahead of time. Check out the local beaches

BEN

Barret specifically said not to do that.

ALEX

Ok you can go in blind

BEN

He said don't...I mean his advice, if we wanna trust him which, his life literally depends on this going well. If I survive this I'll come back and kill him if it was wrong.

ALEX

Ok, ok. Fair, fair. Fair. Well in that case then I've been struggling to find a way to get you to Rome. I may have a lead but it's not one I can pursue for you

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BEN

Ok

ALEX

I'm not necessarily...

BEN

Spit it out

ALEX

...a VIP in this particular group of people

BEN

Just what? Get on with it.

ALEX

I got reports that there is a...basically a group of Harlequins in Damascus. We were going to move on them but given that we're going "off the grid" they might be the people to talk to

BEN

They're the ones who were the Prague board?

ALEX

Not necessarily

BEN

Oh I dunno. Ok fine, great. Harlequins. Brilliant. I'll chat to them

ALEX

Ok. I wouldn't mention I'm involved

BEN

I try not to.

(laughing)

ALEX

Takes a moment. Ok then. He writes down an address for you. It appears to...

BRYN

Is there anything worse than being talked about

ALEX

You don't have knowledge local do you?

BEN

I don't know. I looked at my character sheet but no I don't

ALEX

In which case then he hands you an address that looks normal enough. It doesn't say like Temple the First on...it's just street name and number and he says – yeah if you do make it to Rome and if you all do make it out, I guess I will be waiting for you in or near Atsugi I guess. That's the nearest town to Okino...yeah ok. I'll do that

BEN

Good. Have a backup team

ALEX

Yeah I might do that.

BEN

Yeah. Right well I'm going to go see some Harlequins. Don't forget to pick the stuff up from the Hephaestus lot

ALEX

Oh yeah. I wouldn't worry about that. Ok

BEN

I won't. Bye

ALEX

Travel safe?

BEN

Probably not. Bye. I leave

ALEX

And I will jump to Rome. If only it was that easy for you

LYDIA

Having a nice time.

ALEX

So to recap the plan quickly. I believe that Sasha, you were going around the back in an attempt to secure hostages whilst everyone else basically stands on the front door and keeps yelling distraction

HELEN

Yeah

BRYN

We keep them talking. Keep them distracted, yeah

ALEX

So I will give you all the choice. Would you like to follow Sasha first or would you like to follow the group first. I can't follow both at once

BEN

What is this Bandersnatch?!

(laughing)

LYDIA

Choices are bad!

HELEN

Would you like to die now or die later?

ALEX

Die now! Die now!

BRYN

A couple of things, we were gonna split up, wait approximately half an hour and then attempt to call each other on the mobile stones to coordinate. Also before we split Hamid will probably suggest a signal just on the off chance, it seems unlikely it will go this well but on the off chance you get all the hostages clear whilst we're still talking to basically do a drop call.

LYDIA

Yeah

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BRYN

Or two very...

LYDIA

That's so 90s.

BRYN

...two very quick drop calls as like a they're out signal which we don't have to actually speak to each other.

HELEN

What's the ringtone on the mobile stones?

ALEX

Hello.

(laughing)

BRYN

No it's a buzzing isn't it?

ALEX

[Singing] Do, do, do, boo, boo, doop, boo. In Einstein's voice, sure.

BRYN

It's not [Nokia ringtone] then?

ALEX

Maybe it's just him saying can you hear me now, over and over again. So in that case then we will say that you've already split up and we'll say that you're trying to do your check in. Whoever calls first do your call.

BRYN

So the other thing is we were gonna say is that Einstein stays a little bit behind us and tries to remain uninvolved and out of sight if possible but also...

ALEX

Tries not to get killed and take the only way out with him

BRYN

Yes but we also need him to be near enough that we can help him if necessary so that's quite difficult.

ALEX

So that if he explodes he takes other people with him

BRYN

Yeah

HELEN

We want him to be hiding behind a close pillar.

ALEX

He's your big barrel of explosives, you don't want him at the front but you need him nearby.

BRYN

Also I probably need to warn the paladins that if I'm doing distracting keeping talking stuff, I'll probably lie a lot and they should do their best not to contradict me.

ALEX

Oh no you can't lie. That's evil, that is. Lying's bad.

BRYN

I know but this is for a very good reason.

ALEX

No, no, no. You see I covered this. I covered this. The thing is you can't do bad things for good reasons because when you do that the good reasons end up being bad things, yeah

HELEN

Depends on the virtue that you're using

ALEX

Oh no I've got loads of virtue but you can't lie because that's not...

BRYN

Yeah you can't lie but I'm allowed.

HELEN

He's not a paladin.

BRYN

Do you want me to roll bluff?

ALEX

Yeah. Ed may have a dump stat and it may involve sense motive

BRYN

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ALEX

He's just like...he takes a moment and then he gives you the big grin of a lightbulb going on his head – oh no, right yeah. Yeah. He looks to Azu and he's just like – oh yeah. Normals right.

HELEN

Azu looks politely back

BRYN

But that's why it's important that if they ask you questions just try not to say too much because you're not allowed to lie

ALEX

No that's fair

BRYN

So you have to let me do it.

ALEX

Right yeah. Einstein is hearing this as he's backing in towards his hiding spot towards the entrance just like – wow.

(laughing)

Wow

BRYN

I'm telling him you're not allowed to lie but I am!

(laughing)

HELEN

But it's true though!

ALEX

So yeah Einstein's holed up in a gatehouse at the base of that hill that would lead up the sort of route up to the, let's say, estate, for lack of a better word and Sasha's long gone around the side. Everything's as set as it's gonna get.

BRYN

Ok last thing, they might have traps. We don't have Sasha with us. We've just got to do our best to spot them but the good news is that they're almost certainly just not expecting anyone to come here so they might we;; not have set any up

HELEN

They'll be expecting us though because they told us to come

(laughing)

BRYN

No they didn't

ALEX

They didn't tell me to come here. No one told me to come here

HELEN

That's very true

BRYN

They said...they said to stay away and talk to them and we're doing the thing they told us not to do.

HELEN

But they...they knew we would

BRYN

Well maybe

HELEN

You don't say your loved ones are in danger and then not expect people to come and get them

BRYN

But they don't know how we're getting around. They don't know long it'll take us. We might still catch them by surprise.

ALEX

Plus you know they might be really squishy

HELEN

That's what I'm counting on

ALEX

Like if they're dead squishy, you know.

BRYN

Ok so everybody ready?

ALEX

Er...

HELEN

Yes

ALEX

Yeah probably.

BRYN

Sasha? Sasha?

ALEX

A voice comes from inside the stone that isn't Sasha's.

HELEN

No!

ALEX

It just keeps chanting Latin. Does anyone have any knowledge that might be relevant? Maybe a couple of languages. Any ancient languages they've got.

BRYN

No.

[Sound of ancient language chanting]

BRYN

Well we knew that was possible. We said...we had a plan in place for if that happened.

ALEX

So what did she say?

(laughing)

BRYN

It's going to go really well.

ALEX

So Grizzop you are heading to the seedy part of Damascus. You can tell because...

LYDIA

[Singing]

BEN

It's just loads of people playing slap bass on every corner.

ALEX

Honestly for Damascus a lot of it just seems to be things like, interesting no public works here, no fountains, no...

BEN

Ah this is where the poor people live

ALEX

Almost. Almost. For what it's worth it doesn't appear particularly rough insofar as no one's trying to give you trouble. You're not seeing shady deals in alleyways. Mostly it's empty. Like abandoned empty. Like people have closed up and gone – no water, guess we leave now. So it's quite deserted. Eventually you find yourself at the address you were given and you see what appears to be an empty pub. Well not a pub...what's the word

BEN

Bar?

ALEX

Yes thank you. I literally forgot the word bar. There we go. I was about to say saloon

(laughing)

HELEN

Please make it a saloon

BEN

Howdy partners.

(laughing)

ALEX

You see what appears to be an empty bar with boarded windows and it appears to be shut up

BEN

Knock on the door

ALEX

Oh also it appears to have no name. Like the sign's torn off and stuff

LYDIA

One of those cool bars

BEN

Knock on the door.

ALEX

No one answers. Give me a perception check

BEN

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ALEX

You see that there is someone observing you from the opposite building up on the first floor, like, think sort of blinds pulled down a little bit to have a look kind of thing but it also could just be someone looking.

BEN

I turn around and go – are you with this lot?

ALEX

The eyes disappear

BEN

Hmm

(laughing)

Hammer on the door again

ALEX

No response

BEN

Fine. You made me shout it. Here to see the Harlequins.

(laughing)

HELEN

Ooh! Absolute perfect stuff. Wonderful!

ALEX

A couple of moments of stillness pass

BEN

I'll shout it louder!

(laughing)

I'm here to see the Harlequins!

ALEX

I feel like you're about to be me, me, me.

BRYN

I think you were expecting the door to open just before he said it the second time.

ALEX

So the alleyway at the side of the building that was opposite to you, you see someone come forward wearing a hat. Look left and look right

HELEN

A moustache?

ALEX

No. No moustache.

LYDIA

So suspicious!

ALEX

But they've got a big, wide hat and a collar pulled up. They are *terrible* at this. Like really, really quite bad at this and they kind of look around and you see them run off in the opposite direction back down the alley

BEN

Run after them

ALEX

So what I'm going to do is I'm not gonna do an entire chase scene. Spoilers, I don't think this character is physically capable of that kind of thing. So what we're gonna do is to make this work is we're just going to do opposed fortitudes because otherwise it's gonna get really complicated and I don't want it to be

BEN

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ALEX

You run them down so easily! Like...really easily. Like you catch them as they're hopping the fence at the end of that alley one leg over each side.

BEN

So I have a tactic which is I run up behind them, put my hand through their legs, grab their belt and pull down.

ALEX

They fall. Argh. What languages do you speak Grizzop?

BEN

I speak English, Goblin and Dutch

ALEX

In a language you don't speak, panicked noises and begging.

BEN

Look just calm down. Calm down

ALEX

I'm not gonna do an impression of a language I can't speak so just – argh

BEN

Calm down – in Dutch

ALEX

Argh

BEN

Urgh. Harlequins. You?

ALEX

Argh. You're getting basically nothing from them

BEN

I'll pat them down and see if they've got any documents or identifying features.

ALEX

They do have a piece of parchment on them written in a language you don't speak

BEN

Cool. What does it look like? Is it like the signs around here?

ALEX

No it seems to be a scribbled note from someone

BEN

No what does the language look like?

ALEX

Oh the language. Yeah, yeah it is...

BEN

The local language

ALEX

...it is Arabic. Presumably that's what he's yelling at you

BEN

Which seems fair

ALEX

Well begging at you...grovelling at you. It's what he's grovelling at you. He's also carrying a very cheap knife and a sealed wax cylinder

BEN

I'll break open the wax cylinder or pick up the wax cylinder, go to break it and watch his reaction

ALEX

He kind of looks and goes quiet but doesn't say anything.

BEN

Open the cylinder

ALEX

It appears to be locked in a password cyphery kind of way

BEN

Open it

ALEX

Argh. He just kind of gestures at you like, I dunno. He keeps pointing at the handwritten note that you can't read going – urgh.

(laughing)

BEN

I am not built for this

ALEX

No you are not!

LYDIA

Can you just ever pray really hard to your god and be like...

ALEX

I mean there are specifically things that allow you to pray for divine guidance and it pretty much turns into the GM going oh my god it's that one. It's that one there. I don't believe Grizzop has any of them, I'd have taken note.

BEN

Yeah no I don't. Erm...er...I smash it on a wall.

ALEX

The cylinder?

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

It shatters and a...you have a sort of faint acid smell like vinegar or something is released. It shatters. There may have been something in it but it appears to be dissolving whatever it was.

BEN

Alright grab the...

ALEX

The word “plot” drifts away on the breeze

(laughing)

BEN

Shouldn't have given me something I can't open. I will grab this individual, drag them as long as they're willing because you know I'm still small, back to the door of that bar and continue to hammer on the door.

ALEX

I should point out although this person is human they are super scraggly looking, quite thin, very, very clearly dehydrated and also short to boot. Like there's, in terms of body mass they are distressingly close to Grizzop for a human

BEN

Sure

ALEX

Easy to drag along.

BEN

Actually I also grab a cup from my bag, create water over the cup and give them the cup

ALEX

Ooh that shuts him up. He drinks slowly and then just starts gabbling at you in a language that you don't speak but much more affably.

BEN

Then I'll lead him back to the bar door.

ALEX

Yeah he follows you

BEN

Hammer on the bar door.

ALEX

And then he just looks at the water, looks at you, sort of looks left and right and then gestures with his head around the side.

BEN

Alright

ALEX

Kind of waggles the cup at you in a sort of eyebrows raised, mmm

BEN

Yeah alright

ALEX

Mmm?

BEN

Create water

ALEX

Great he's gabbing along, chatting away. He leads you around the back and then he leads you to what is effectively, might have been close to a beer garden at one point. It's now full of detritus, like a rusted bin, that kind of thing, a broken swing. He gestures to what appears to be a broken mattress or something across the middle of the garden and is just like yeah

BEN

This wasn't what I was thinking

ALEX

Gives you a thumbs up and is like yeah. Good water

BEN

So he's pointing at a broken mattress?

ALEX

Yeah. Well I say mattress, you know what I mean, like a sacking layer with stuff in it.

BEN

No I thought you meant mattress because you said mattress.

ALEX

Technically I realised as I said it that it can't be a mattress mattress because of the period. It is...

BEN

Sure. It's some sort of bedding. Obviously it's been used as that.

ALEX

Bedding is the word I also forgot. Alex also has lost parts of his brain last night apparently.

LYDIA

Party. Lose things. Gone.

BEN

I'll check the bed

ALEX

It becomes easily apparent when you check the bed that there is a trapdoor underneath it.

BEN

Oh thanks. Give him a thumbs up and go down the trapdoor.

ALEX

He goes...runs over, sort of gives you back your cup. He gestures for you to hand him the handwritten note

BEN

Yes

ALEX

He holds it, points at it and clearly says something along the lines of “this is really important” and then gives it back to you.

BEN

Thanks. Put it in my pocket and go down the trapdoor

ALEX

And I'll take a break there.

And welcome back. And I think it is...let's jump in with Sasha. You are around the back of the building. You've managed to easily get your way back around to where all of the walls had collapsed downwards and you are there now. From this point you are entering unknown territory where you haven't scouted out ahead so what are you doing?

LYDIA

I am like the spiders that are clever do, I am planning my route up. So this is, I suppose a perception and a stealth check working out how...

ALEX

Yeah ok. That works. Let's go with...

LYDIA

Planning. I don't know why I picked the one creature that like...but they do they just sit and plan stuff.

ALEX

They do. Give me the perception check first

LYDIA

20. Not natural

ALEX

That's fine. Now give me the stealth check

LYDIA

That is 34

(laughing)

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

Off a 9!

ALEX

Be warned, the times they are a-changing. Let me check something.

HELEN

Oh no!

BRYN

No!

ALEX

Last but not least could you please give me a climb check

LYDIA

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ALEX

Good set of rolls. Ok, so at the back you take a moment and you really plot out how is this gonna work. Not just how do I climb up there but stuff like do I wanna be in at the first floor, do I wanna be in at the second. What's gonna be the most useful here. And you realise despite how crumbly it is go with what you know, it might actually be worth going top floor and working down because you go oh did assassinate that person jumping from a roof and that

time, I mean yeah, last time I was on a roof I nearly died but that was a fluke. So like, that checks out.

LYDIA

On average roofs

ALEX

On average equal good not bad. Most good. So you start climbing and it's an easy climb because of the nature of the brickwork. So like I said that first rubbly bit, it's a bit exposed, you manage to get up without too much issue and then when you start climbing the actual building it's positively easy. The bits that haven't completely caved in and so pitted and pockmarked with age that it's trivial for you to get up to the actual roof roof. So you made it up to the rooftop and immediately it becomes apparent on the roof this was the right call because among other things you see a, still there, albeit the glass and so on has gone, massive sort of domed skylight type deal. Again you have no knowledge history so there's no point going into it. What's left of a dome is still there and you know that you will probably have a good view of the majority of inside from there.

LYDIA

Nice

ALEX

It is worth mentioning as well from this point you would be able to have a really good lay of the surrounding land as well if you chose

LYDIA

Yeah look at some stuff

ALEX

But it's kind of up to you.

LYDIA

Looking at stuff

ALEX

Give me a perception check

LYDIA

Oh that is...

BEN

Is this knowledge local roll. Sasha's literally...

LYDIA

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BEN

...at an eagle point doing eagle vision

(laughing)

ALEX

Yeah you know what, give me a knowledge local as well. I'm making you do all the checks for this. I don't know why. I'm going to info dump you. Why not

LYDIA

That is 31

ALEX

31. This is useful. So even though you've got stuff to do you're like this is probably the best chance I'm gonna get to memorise as much of this city's layout as I can. If we have to leg it on foot and things that would be really useful time spent even if it costs you a couple of minutes. Just take the time to learn the layout. It becomes clear, one, Rome's huge. Rome is enormous, like disappearing off to where the haze is and the haze is wrong like your visual distances are slightly distorted. So you can't...you have been up high places before. You chilled out with gargoyles multiple times. This isn't right. In terms of the layout it becomes very clear that you reckon that you would be able to find your way around at this point. Not to like perfect exactitude but certainly you won't get lost and last but not least you also notice that from a high enough point you're very much at, sort of, ground zero insofar as right at the edge of where you can see before the haze just becomes a real problem, the buildings are more whole so the more close to the centre of Rome it is, the more broken down things are with the exception of, like I said before, this one building which is stood up better than it should have.

LYDIA

Oh dear

ALEX

You also see there are a number of very large flying creatures, maybe two or three. They are flying solo so they aren't near one another and they are dotted right at the edges where the more full buildings are, not in the centre. There doesn't actually appear to be anything living...there doesn't appear to be anything living and there doesn't appear to be anything moving this close to the centre. There are just those big things way far off in the distance around the edges.

LYDIA

Well you know that you can't see everything now don't you. Can't see anything must be safe.

ALEX

Sasha muttered

(laughing)

What next? I'm going to stick with you a little longer

LYDIA

Going to look over the edge of the dome thing and thus try and see what's going on inside.

HELEN

[Singing] Make a little song about very dangerous things

(laughing)

ALEX

What are you rolling?

LYDIA

I assume it's a perception check

ALEX

No

LYDIA

And a stealth check

ALEX

It is a stealth check

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LYDIA

Ok well that was...

BRYN

I think that's a 9 again

LYDIA

I think that's a 9

BRYN

Yeah that's a 9

ALEX

So you're peeking over the dome I'm guessing?

LYDIA

Yes

ALEX

So you approach the dome and you peek your head over. At the bottom that you see...

LYDIA

Tiny little eyes

ALEX

Just the eyes. You're clearly overlooking an atrium of some kind. Because of the period, it's an actual atrium. Yay!

BRYN

Is Caecilius in it?

LYDIA

And Quintus!

HELEN

And whatever the dog's name was!

BRYN

No that was Pompeii guys

ALEX

Let me get this right. Draconis est in atrium...no. So looking over the side you see...

BRYN

Conjugate

ALEX

...there is a large, extremely broken mosaic laid out across the floor. It has huge cracks running through it.

LYDIA

Evil

ALEX

It's not evil

LYDIA

Is it moving around like magic?

ALEX

It's not. The mosaic is broken, discoloured and you can't tell what it was meant to depict. Just that it is there. Upon it are stood four robed figures. Their heads are bowed and they are all sort of stood in a circle of what was presumably the centre of this mosaic and isn't anymore

LYDIA

Are they different heights?

ALEX

They are all the same height

LYDIA

Ok. Not our lot

ALEX

And in the centre there's some weirdness which is very difficult for you to make out from this angle. I'm gonna go on. I'm getting there.

BEN

No it's just unknowable weirdness in the spook capital of the world is worrying!

ALEX

There appears to be what Sasha would describe as magical wibbly wobbly stuff because dunno what it is in the middle of them. It is moving. It is not moving like running around the place. The best way I can describe it is you can see a vibration. Have you seen smoke and then there's loud music playing and you can see it moving with that. With the sound waves and the rhythm

LYDIA

Sounds awesome

ALEX

It's like that but there's no smoke. The actual air is doing it

BRYN

This ritual is so metal

ALEX

And it is moving in a sort of whoomph. Whoomph, whoomph, whoomph. Like random rhythm that doesn't seem to have any pattern to it. And it's expanding and it's shrinking

LYDIA

All drum and bass

BRYN

Woom, woom, woom

ALEX

All four of them then immediately look up at you and give a big cry. Again it's been a while. I can best describe as a [yelling noise]

BEN

And also Invasion of the Body snatchers

ALEX

Oh yeah, full. Full like...yeah.

LYDIA

Or rather I drop a bomb on them

ALEX

Of course you do. Give me the attack roll. Are you dropping it into the wibbly wobbly or at one of them specifically

LYDIA

Into the wibbly wobbly

ALEX

Into the wibbly wobbly, ok

HELEN

Destroy the wibbly

LYDIA

Oh dear

HELEN

Oh no

BEN

It wobbles and it wobbles but will it fall down

LYDIA

12

BRYN

Probably enough to hit a stationary target from directly above it

ALEX

The man's not wrong! You drop your bomb. It falls into the wibbly wobbly's obscured. Doesn't go off.

HELEN

Oh

ALEX

And then...

LYDIA

Does it...oh no, it's going to come back somewhere else

ALEX

Sasha give me a will save please. The best save. Followed only by death saves.

BRYN

That was only a 6

LYDIA

Yeah 10.

ALEX

I'm going to jump to the rest of the party in Rome

BRYN

Do we hear the scream?

ALEX

You hear the scream from the centre of the building

BRYN

Too late. Let's go.

ALEX

Alright, yep, yep. Evil doers! He's kind of running, tripping over his cloak, throwing it off. Evil doer with the...Apollo's gonna get you. And charges. Can I please get everyone in initiative.

BEN

I really hope that Ed is an absolute combat monster

HELEN

Me too

ALEX

He might be! Ok so can I please get initiative scores from people

LYDIA

9

ALEX

Yep

HELEN

7

ALEX

Yep

BRYN

21

ALEX

Yep.

BEN

A theoretical 11.

ALEX

Good. Thanks Ben. I'm a fool. Hamid you are up. So to describe the layout at the moment you can see a dark entrance to a building up an avenue that you can sprint along

BRYN

I move 20 foot forward because that's my move speed and cast mage armour on myself crossing my fingers

ALEX

Good. Sasha, I'm going to describe things for you

LYDIA

Oh dear

ALEX

A new sort of wibbly wobbly seems to appear between you and the original wibbly wobbly

LYDIA

Does the bomb fall up out of it

ALEX

But this one's quite brightly coloured. That would've been way cooler than what I've done. I regret my decision already. It is very, very sort of brightly

coloured but in very positive warm tones. So it's like sunsets and tequila sunrise drinks and that kind of thing. Like very warm oranges and reds and yellows and so on and this wibbly wobbly kind of expands...

BRYN

And the fires of Hades

ALEX

I didn't say that. And then it expands and it seems to be looping coils of colour etc. It's very pretty actually. It's very, very pretty and you just find yourself really interested in how gorgeous and intricate this design is and I'm going to leave it at that. Meanwhile Ed bombs it right into the middle.

HELEN

Azu...

ALEX

Another thing happens that no one can see. Sasha all that really happens is that pattern gets bigger

LYDIA

Oh god it's an exploding...

ALEX

Something else happens...

BRYN

No it's there just holding you

ALEX

Azu you're up

HELEN

I run after Ed

ALEX

So I am actually going to take the time now to describe what Ed, I suppose, but mainly Azu as our player can see.

HELEN

Thank you

ALEX

Having come into the building you see immediately, like you're stood in the doorway. It is a very large, quite long atrium. It has a pair of pillars up at the front, big, thick like ten foot across pillars. Stone ones that disappear up to what's the majority of still the ceiling. You can see that dome up at the top and additionally around the wibbly wobbly you can see the cloak figures, they're definitely human shaped. From this angle the wibbly wobbly is a tear in the world. It is about ten foot high, about three foot wide and its shape keeps vibrating randomly in an almost stock motion. You know that kind of shutter speed movement thing. One of the creatures is facing the rift and

looking upwards with a hand outstretched and there's that thing, that glowing pattern there between the floor and the ceiling. For the players, all of the others are gone. Obviously for Azu, oh a bad person and a thing. That must've been what it was all along presumably.

HELEN

Well you know I'm not quite that stupid but I am probably gonna try and chop that guy.

ALEX

Hamid you're up.

BRYN

Can I see into the room yet?

ALEX

No there is something very weird happening with the lighting which is that the second you're under a sort of porch, it's dim but you can see because there's light coming in from the dome but Hamid you can't. It just appears black. You can just see Azu's back and Ed's back.

BRYN

I am going to double move. I'm not going to run because I don't want to get there ahead of the paladins.

ALEX

You still are not able to see into the room

BRYN

That's fine

ALEX

But there's clearly oh that's some kind of magical nonsense. That's what that is. Ok

HELEN

Magical pish posh

ALEX

The creature that everyone can see suddenly turns, sees Ed and Azu and then apparently flees down the nearest corridor behind the pillar out of sight.

BRYN

Ok

ALEX

They are now effectively off the board. The pattern still appears to be moving etc. Ed uses the charge action...

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HELEN

Oh no! No.

ALEX

And charges the wibbly wobbly.

HELEN

Edward!

ALEX

He screams – die evil doer for I will... - and then disappears

HELEN

No!

BEN

He ran through the portal didn't he.

HELEN

Oh the fool!

ALEX

He disappears

BEN

Ok. So that's important. Does he blink out of existence or go through a thing?

ALEX

For Azu's benefit. You know the sort of vibrations in the air and so on, he first enters those vibrations and it makes his form waver a little bit and then it's clear that the closer he gets, the far more extreme those vibrations are. He doesn't appear to cry out and disappear. He just charges, gets kind of obscured by all the vibrations and then there's no Ed anymore. There's just the shaking tear thing. His cry doesn't even get cut off insofar as like a scream or anything. It's just a – die, evil do...

HELEN

Urgh!

BEN

Follow him. Follow him.

HELEN

No I'm going to confer with my companions

BRYN

Follow the enemy. We don't have time to confer.

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ALEX

Sasha.

LYDIA

Yep

BRYN

You saw a nasty squid thing flee

ALEX

Luckily you know that pattern, it's getting closer

LYDIA

Lovely

ALEX

And it's brilliant. You know what it's got a sort of fractal thing going on. You know those curls and loops, right, they're made of curls and loops

LYDIA

Appraise

ALEX

I know right. In fact you know what give me an appraise

LYDIA

17

ALEX

Oh right yeah, it might be god.

(laughing)

BRYN

Which god?

ALEX

All of them apparently. It's wonderful. Azu, you're up

HELEN

Azu swears in orcish but she has only just met Ed.

BRYN

I don't speak orcish but I know what that was

(laughing)

Something universal

ALEX

And orcish swear words translate better than most

HELEN

Ok so Azu turns to Hamid. Ed's gone but someone ran away down a corridor.
I'm gonna go down there.

ALEX

That's your six seconds

BRYN

That's all you say. You've used all the time available.

ALEX

You could stand still for another full turn and say some more things if you'd like.

HELEN

No

ALEX

I wouldn't do that either. I think that'd be very silly

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

What are you doing? I'm just forcing you to second guess everything now Oh you're going that close to the wibbly wobbly

BEN

Ignore the bad man

LYDIA

Ignore the bad man

BRYN

You can get to there with a double move action. You can't run because it's not a straight line

HELEN

Then that's what I'm gonna do. Here?

BRYN

Yeah so she can see down the corridor from there.

ALEX

Oh dear

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HELEN

What do you mean “oh dear”?

ALEX

Could you put number 2 there next to number 1. Number 2’s readied action goes off

BRYN

Ah

ALEX

Could you please give me a will save

LYDIA

Oh you should be ok at this right?

HELEN

Who knows? It’s a D20 innit? That’s 21

ALEX

I think...

BRYN

That should be enough

ALEX

Pretty certain...yeah you're good. You're good. So it gives another sort of body snatchers cry of [yelling noise]. You get this weird tunnel vision for a moment where like...like an oncoming migraine, you know the colour washes out and everything goes very, very narrow.

HELEN

Oh dear

ALEX

And you manage to shake it off. You can't read body language underneath robes, that's what happens. Maybe that's intended. Who knows.

HELEN

I get screamed at

ALEX

Yes. At which point...

BRYN

What do you mean he's gone...why are you...

(laughing)

ALEX

I love the disjunction between when Bryn's in full Hamid he's like wahhh and then this calm just comes over his face and he goes, I move this place, I take the defensive stance. I make sure to activate this item

BRYN

I'm very good at slipping in and out of character

ALEX

It's lovely

BRYN

I take a move action to where I can finally see the room

ALEX

You can see the room. You see the wibbly wobbly. You see Azu staring down a corridor. You don't see anything else other than what I've already described of the room

BRYN

I would like to assess the wibbly wobbly using knowledge arcana

ALEX

The wibbly wobbly that's high up or the wibbly wobbly that's at the bottom.
There are two wibbly wobbles

BRYN

Oh probably the one at the bottom first because that's more in my eyeline.
Wil that take an action or can I do a second move action while I'm doing that?

ALEX

I'll give you a choice. You can take a second move action and get a first impression glance which I'll allow you a spell craft...knowledge arcana, sorry, but with...no actually it would be spell craft in this system

BRYN

Either one

ALEX

It would be spell craft but with a penalty or you can take the time and I'll give you a little bit of a bonus

BRYN

I would like to move and take the penalty

ALEX

That's fine. Ok give me a spell craft check

BRYN

ALEX

24. Ooh you are close. You are very close. Let's have a look. You are not sure what that is. Your take away from this is above your paygrade

BRYN

Sure

ALEX

The issue with spell craft is sometimes things happen and they're not even spells

BRYN

Yeah that's fair. That's why I assumed it would be knowledge arcana but basically yeah

ALEX

Yeah.

BRYN

I don't know.

ALEX

It's almost like having no knowledge and just accepting that stuff turns up in your head ready to go occasionally doesn't give you everything you need

BRYN

I beg to differ.

ALEX

You know what I will do. I'm feeling very generous because I like people taking a non-combat thing in combat and taking the time to look at things. I'll also allow that roll to apply to the wibbly wobbly that was above.

BRYN

Sure

ALEX

It's a general situation...

HELEN

A general wibbly

BRYN

[Singing] I'm assessing the situation.

ALEX

That is a classic hypnotic pattern

BRYN

Classic

ALEX

Classic hypnotic pattern that has almost certainly been used to incapacitate someone on the roof

HELEN

Who could that be?!

ALEX

A well-cast one. Interesting that it's working apparently with no complications but yeah it's just a hypnotic pattern. It's not even that particularly dangerous

BRYN

Well interestingly as soon as we stepped inside this building the first spell I cast had no problems at all unless that was just you forgetting all the mechanical stuff you've been doing to us in Rome so far.

ALEX

Look who's paying attention.

LYDIA

I thought I saw you roll a dice

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BRYN

That was Ed's initiative roll which he'd forgotten earlier

LYDIA

So I genuinely thought that was him checking

BRYN

No I'm paying very close attention

HELEN

I'm so glad you're on my side Bryn

(laughing)

ALEX

You don't want him as a GM. He's horrifying

BEN

You should try talking to your god Azu

HELEN

Just gonna yell out – oi!

LYDIA

Oi!

HELEN

Help!

LYDIA

Where you been?

HELEN

Give me a hug

LYDIA

That's just how Aphrodite prayers go. Anybody?

ALEX

So number one, please, backs away to the edge of the map. Azu, give me a will save

BEN

Roll well

HELEN

30

BRYN

Natural 20

HELEN

Natural 20 plus 10

ALEX

Yeah nice

BRYN

I mean she should basically be immune to more of the same affect from either of those two now

HELEN

Really?

BRYN

Well there's supposed to be a penalty for repeatedly trying the same action if it's failed

ALEX

Yeah exactly.

BRYN

And a natural 20 on one is like, that should give a bonus of some kind

ALEX

Sasha the pattern went away

LYDIA

Ah

ALEX

Oh look. There's Hamid, oh there's Azu. Everyone's gone. Oh this is bad. This is terrible. What do you do?

LYDIA

Uh

(laughing)

ALEX

You know what, I'm going to end the episode there! I've never ended it with someone about to describe in halfway through but that's too good to end on...too good not to end on even.

LYDIA

I believe that Sasha coming out of the hypnotic affect feels exactly the same way that I do now

(laughing)

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ALEX

Well I guess we will return next week

BRYN

We'll pour some tea into Lydia and hope she stays for the next episode

LYDIA

Fine, I'll just save the world

ALEX

See you next week guys!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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