

RQG – Episode 122 – Gatekeeping

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, Sierra Tyrrel, Maltriestrei, Erin Kanani, Jonas Hallstrom, Holly neongrey, Tesss Leake, Joey, Daniel Masterson, Kathryn Sims, 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 122 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

I'm not angry, I'm just sad, Ben Meredith.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

BRYN

Bryn Monroe.

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas.

HELEN

And Helen Gould.

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Grizzop drik acht Amsterdam.

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan.

LYDIA

Sasha who's asking?

HELEN

And Azu.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And things are afoot, specifically combat with cloaked figures in Rome and mattresses I believe.

BEN

Bedding.

ALEX

Bedding my bad it is bedding. To break the tradition I'm actually going to finish combat if that's ok with you Ben, this is a genuine question because normally I would immediately come away from the combat but given where it is I feel like I probably should carry on with the combat.

BEN

Absolutely not.

ALEX

Ok podcast is over and it's Ben's fault but that's ok.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Nailed it.

LYDIA

Yay does anybody want to come round to my place and play Mario Kart woohoo!

ALEX

Actually I'm really in need of a D&D group now so.

BRYN

He's taking open auditions. Wait D&D not Pathfinder 5th? I'm in!

ALEX

I'll be your best supporter Alex. Right so I am actually going to pick up immediately where we left off without a proper recap today. Sasha?

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

It has all changed and the patterns are gone, bad day.

LYDIA

Don't like, need pattern, but I can't see anyone down there can I?

ALEX

You can see Azu and you can see Hamid.

LYDIA

I assume that it is too far down for me to jump?

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

So I.

ALEX

No you possibly could survive.

LYDIA

Given what.

HELEN

Please don't jump.

LYDIA

Given my knowledge of how the building is shaped is there a thing for me to run out and back in again like can I get, how do I get.

BEN

You could tie a rope really quickly and repel.

LYDIA

Oh that's true. I could do that.

ALEX

You could do that, that would be the quickest way down actually.

BEN

That would be one round to tie the rope.

ALEX

And then you'd be down in the next round.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Otherwise you're looking at multiple for you to follow down a route.

LYDIA

Yeah but then I could maybe find the hostages.

BEN

Also fair.

BRYN

Yeah.

LYDIA

I'm going to head, I'm going to split the party Alex.

ALEX

No that's fine.

LYDIA

I'm going to look for the hostages.

ALEX

That's absolutely fine in which case yours is going to have to be theatre of the mind because I cannot do multi layered battle maps yet.

LYDIA

That's cool.

ALEX

Yet, Azu you're up.

HELEN

I'm going to.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

BEN

Charge.

HELEN

You said the thing about charging and then smacking.

BEN

They've moved apart so you can't hit them both now.

HELEN

Well I'm still going to charge and smack this one.

BEN

Yeah you can do that.

HELEN

I'm going to do that.

BEN

Murder.

HELEN

My move is murder.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

ALEX

Don't forget your thing that lets you hit far, far too hard.

HELEN

Oh I never forget that.

BEN

That's a damage roll.

HELEN

Ok so.

BEN

Roll the attack, you get plus 2 for charging.

ALEX

Roll badly please.

HELEN

No.

BEN

She did not.

HELEN

That's 26.

BEN

Yeah.

HELEN

Ooh.

ALEX

Are you sure it's not a lower number?

BEN

That's a hit, roll 2 D12 add what's your damage bonus, 6, 2 D12 add 6.

HELEN

Yes let's hope that I don't roll really badly like I did the last time I tried to do this.

BEN

It's not bad, not bad. 12, 18 damage total.

HELEN

Decidedly average.

ALEX

The creature that you're facing off reaches out towards you.

HELEN

Oh no. No it just touched me, it has got tentacles and weird things.

ALEX

You're assuming, you don't know.

HELEN

Eugh. [Sound effects] that's what it sounds like. Eugh.

LYDIA

Octo death.

ALEX

What is your touch AC?

LYDIA

Nobody suspects anything.

HELEN

That's a new thing, let me scrutinise my sheet.

BEN

It should be.

HELEN

9.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

It reaches out and goes [sound effect] and then it's hand touches your breastplate right in the middle.

HELEN

Ok on the chest.

ALEX

On the chest armour.

BEN

Use your words yeah.

ALEX

On the chest armour.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

(Group laughter)

BEN

Wraps his squidy hands right on your jubbies.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Azu definitely insta kills that.

ALEX

I presume you take an attack of opportunity?

HELEN

Of course. 18.

BRYN

Yeah that's a hit.

HELEN

Plus whatever.

BEN

Your normal attack bonus.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

HELEN

Ok so that's 20.

BEN

You're fine.

ALEX

You hit.

BEN

Rolling a mere 11 more damage.

ALEX

The creature is really, really badly hit and has to make its concentration check.
It makes the concentration check.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

You take 9 damage.

HELEN

That's ok.

ALEX

Specifically.

HELEN

Oh no.

ALEX

It reaches out and onto your breastplate you feel your breastplate go cold, very cold. I mean it's already cold in here because as we established you're in the shade and the spotlight is helping but it's still darker and colder in the shadows and yeah it goes colder, it goes colder and you feel your life's warmth being suctioned out through the chest plate and it feels weakening is the best description I can give, it doesn't, it's not a sharp pain, it's not an agony, it just feels, it feels like it's taking something essential from you.

HELEN

Gross.

BEN

That's a lovely description, is Azu weakened?

ALEX

Azu does not have her condition weakened and Azu has not been drained I would mention it if that was the case.

BEN

Was it necrotic damage?

HELEN

Eugh I don't want that.

LYDIA

That sounds gross.

BEN

Because I think you should declare the damage type if it's a type of damage because we have resistances and spells and things.

ALEX

Technically yes I do have to announce that it's a necrotic damage.

BEN

I don't know if we do but sometimes you know paladins have.

ALEX

I know that Azu doesn't.

BEN

Ok we might have spells and stuff which like protect against necrotic.

ALEX

At later levels as a paladin you can be like that thing doesn't hurt me, why, because it doesn't.

BEN

Because it's evil and I'm good.

HELEN

I am too good.

ALEX

Because I'm a good boy and a good girl.

BEN

Although I would mention Helen that this, if you can talk to your God, this now might be a good time to smite evil because these things are definitely.

HELEN

I am, I am considering it.

ALEX

Hamid you are up.

BRYN

Hamid moves from, he is still sort of in the entrance to this huge room, he is skirting at a nice safe distance the big wibbly, wobbly [unclear 0:07:48] and he is slowly following Azu trying to get a general sense of the layout of the situation so he moves to the corridor which Azu has run down and presumably he can see the two squid figures?

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

But he can't really see past Azu to get a spell off so he is going to stop and look around the rest of the room and try and take stock of the rest of the situation.

ALEX

So the atrium extends a bit further down and then effectively reaches what can be considered a dead end as the back half of the building has collapsed in as we said previously. There is a corridor which runs immediately opposite to the one that is currently full of people. That appears to be empty. You notice that no matter what angle you approach the wibbly wobbly it always seems to be facing you.

BRYN

Where did Ed go?

HELEN

Into the weird thing.

ALEX

There you go combat talking, it's weird.

HELEN

Into the weird thing, into the weird thing.

BRYN

So I would like to take my standard action to study the weird thing more closely, this time without so many distractions.

ALEX

That's fine, I'll let you pick between spell craft or knowledge arcana, they are both applicable.

BRYN

They are the same role for me but I pick knowledge arcana because spell craft is what I used last time.

ALEX

Yeah that's fine.

BRYN

30.

ALEX

30.

LYDIA

I like the times when he just says numbers but like he's offended.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

It's a good feeling isn't it.

ALEX

You reckon you have a solid idea of what that is. It might be, your like educated guess, it might be a gate spell that has broken in a very strange way you've never seen before. Meanwhile [sound effect] the creature which is furthest back from Azu steps forward behind one square its ally.

BRYN

Sure.

ALEX

It reaches out and touches them.

BRYN

Nice yeah, healing them or something.

ALEX

At which point there is Azu.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Suddenly.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

No way, I don't want to see you anymore, it doesn't happen, if I can't see it.

LYDIA

No, no, no everyone is fine, everyone is fine.

ALEX

So Azu what you see is the creature in front that was touching you retracts its hand, turns to its ally in some kind, there is a big sort of bright shine of light in your eyes, something like what's the word a peal of thunder, that's the word I

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

was looking for, there's a peal of thunder immediately in front of you [sound effect] and the two are gone.

HELEN

Damn.

ALEX

They are just gone.

HELEN

No smiting for me.

BRYN

Swing your axe through the space just in case they are still there but invisible.

ALEX

Sasha?

LYDIA

Yeah, looking around.

ALEX

You immediately have seen that there is a route down from the roof down into the highest floor, about the fourth floor so yeah heading down you start

heading along it. Give me a perception check. I realise that I'm getting a bit wibbly, wobbly in terms of things but.

BEN

It's alright it's wibbly wobbly in the.

ALEX

Yeah it was wibbly wobbly all over the place.

LYDIA

That is 24.

ALEX

24?

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

You hear from the floor below you, not the atrium, the distinct sounds of rushed movements.

LYDIA

Going there but sneaky like.

ALEX

You can see that you will be able to drop down.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

Because there's a chunk of floor missing from a nearby room and from the corridor that you're in you can literally see there is a hole in the floor.

LYDIA

Nice.

ALEX

Like fallout three or four, like four star where's there's just holes in the floor sometimes. Give me a stealth check to drop down. It will use all of your move actions to get there though.

LYDIA

Ooh that's a natural one.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

Jumping, collapse her.

ALEX

You make not a sound. You approach the hole in the floor and as you are jumping down there's a [sound effect] from the floor that you are about to jump to.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

A peal of like thunder underneath [sound effect]. You drop down to an empty corridor maybe and I'm now going to tip my hand a little bit by dropping you all out of initiative order and returning to Grizzop where all the exciting bedding based action is happening.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Hello.

ALEX

Grizzop so you find yourself effectively in what appears to be a very crudely human tunnel that appears to be looping back towards the pub.

BEN

I'll go down it.

ALEX

Sure makes sense. It is dark, obviously it doesn't affect you in any way, you see, give me a perception check actually. I over use these I realise, I need to ease up on them.

HELEN

[Unclear 0:12:14].

BEN

10.

ALEX

10, there has been recent foot traffic here. So it's not like an abandoned no one has been here in ages kind of deal.

BEN

I hope so, I'm here to see someone.

ALEX

There is a door at the other end and a small amount of light is coming through like chinks in the door and so on. By your estimation you might actually be under the pub so.

BEN

That makes sense.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

Knock, knock, knock.

ALEX

As you reach up there's the muffled sounds of conversation which immediately stop as you knock.

BEN

Hello here to see the Harlequins, was let in by your friend out front. I've got a letter. Push it under the door.

ALEX

Everyone goes quiet. There's a, like a good little chunk of time, you see the letter is pushed back under the door back to you. Go away.

(Group laughter)

BEN

No. I need to get to Rome.

ALEX

The door opens, revealing an extremely elderly woman. She is positively like hunched over with age, she just opens it going why and then closes the door and you hear it locking.

BEN

What, right.

HELEN

Oh no say bye to your kneecaps granny!

(Group laughter)

BEN

Ok so is this door quite sturdy or not?

ALEX

Not at all, you could kick it in, I wouldn't require a roll.

BEN

I kick in the door.

ALEX

Yeah you kick in the door and the woman who is behind it. She falls backwards revealing, I want you to imagine kiddies first revolutionary group.

LYDIA

Awwwww.

ALEX

By which I mean it's so amateurish as to be laughable. There is a board laid out on the barrels in the middle of the room with like a map of Damascus and like red string and little notes in Arabic presumably and you can see that they are literally in the pub, the beer cellar sorry, a group of people are sat on old kegs around this table. One of them appears to be maybe 14 at best, another one of them appears to be possibly the husband or something similar of the person that, the woman that answered the door, and then you see someone behind the door who is quite a burly, hefty looking woman who is halfway through cleaning a glass and they are all staring at you terrified.

BEN

Right any of you speak English? No. Any of you speak Goblin? No. Any of you speak Dutch?

ALEX

I speak English.

LYDIA

She just told you to go away.

ALEX

Says the woman underneath the door that you're standing on.

BEN

Oh sorry I forgot about you. Right so I got told you might know how to get me to Rome.

ALEX

We surrender.

BEN

I'm not here to arrest you Harlequin whatsits, I don't care about this.

ALEX

You should.

BEN

Don't try and recruit me ok?

ALEX

I'm just saying you know.

BEN

No.

ALEX

The plight of.

BEN

No.

ALEX

All peoples is shared.

BEN

Well yes but also not relevant right now, I need to get to Rome, I need to get to Rome now, I was told you could take me to Rome, if you are in fact the Harlequin group that I was told are under this pub and you're under this pub which means you're the Harlequins so get me to Rome.

ALEX

The woman kind of stops, takes a moment to process that, turns to the others, they all start having a conversation in Arabic. She turns back. What, why?

BEN

Because my friends are there and I need to go and help them.

ALEX

I mean one sec, they turn around, more conversation.

BEN

I vibrate.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

(Group laughter)

ALEX

She turns back. So are you a Harlequin or not?

BEN

Let's say yes.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Prove it.

BEN

Viva la revolution, I don't like the meritocrats, dragons are ****.

ALEX

There's another hurried conversation. Prove it more, prove it better.

BEN

I have this letter.

ALEX

Oh what did you do to him?

BEN

Nothing, I'll give him some water, do you want some water, I'll give you water?

ALEX

You've got water?

BEN

Well actually no not anymore.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Sorry.

ALEX

So why are you here just asking us for favours then, you know I mean the plight of all peoples is shared but I mean you are part of the problem probably.

BEN

Ok sorry no you have misunderstood. Send me to Rome or I'll kill the lot of you.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Always direct and to the point Grizzop.

ALEX

She takes a moment. Very slowly kind of gestures for everyone to huddle and they all go heads in and they start having a whispered conversation in Arabic.

BEN

Oh by the way if you try and fight me I will still kill you all because paladin and you're just a group of you.

ALEX

The kid seems to be acting up, seems to be arguing and then the adults are sort of shushing them down and then eventually the older woman just cuffs them round the ear. You see them hand over something and the older woman comes up and goes that's everything that we've got and it's maybe three gold between them, mostly in like silvers, a couple of coppers.

BEN

I'll give you 500 gold if you send me to Rome.

ALEX

She looks really confused, why don't you just buy a ticket to like a train or, or an airship then?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

BEN

You understand what Rome is right?

ALEX

Yeah but it will get you most of the way.

BEN

I want to go to Rome now.

ALEX

I mean they all look really, really like scared and confused and she is just like I don't know how we can do that for you.

BEN

Is there maybe a better Harlequin base beneath this one?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Can you please give me a diplomacy check please?

BEN

God I'm really good at this. Not that you'd tell. 16.

ALEX

16. Can you lay that on a little bit thicker for me?

BEN

Look I don't know what kind of amateur operation you're running here but I assume because I was told somebody who could get me to Rome is beneath this pub that you're probably sit on top of a proper Harlequin base and you're maybe like the first test, you know like when you go into a dungeon and you find like a skeleton, you're the skeleton and I want to get to the actual monster.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

They are a false bottom.

BRYN

He's genre savvy in completely the wrong way!

ALEX

So the elderly woman her face, her face just turns on you and she mutters over her shoulder in Arabic or something and then starts prodding you in the chest going we are not amateur we are, we're the, we're the grass roots and those big shots they wouldn't know a revolution.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

BEN

Prove it, prove it.

ALEX

If it revolved their face.

BEN

Prove it.

ALEX

We will.

BEN

Prove it now by sending me to Rome.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

Good. Right. Great.

ALEX

Good. She just kind of turns around and they all start huddling up again.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I'm going to jump back to Rome.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So you are all out of initiative order.

BRYN

Azu swings her axe through the empty air just in case.

HELEN

Yeah I am definitely going to do that.

BRYN

Ok.

ALEX

[Unclear 0:19:21].

BRYN

I move to the edge of the portal, I've looked up the gate spell, you know I'm not going to get sucked into it, I know roughly how large it is.

ALEX

Look who knows what he's dealing with now!

BRYN

Now I know it's wrong so I'm being safe.

ALEX

Yeah that's fine.

BRYN

But I'm moving to the edge of the portal and I'm shouting into it.

ALEX

That's fine.

BRYN

Ed, Ed, can you hear me, Ed!

ALEX

Sasha you hear the sounds of Hamid shouting probably sad, maybe one of them is dead.

LYDIA

Oh well I run towards that.

ALEX

Let's say that you finish shouting and Sasha turns up in the atrium. You are now all in the atrium.

LYDIA

Good.

ALEX

There is no response from Ed by the way.

BRYN

Tie a rope around me.

HELEN

Are you going to go in there?

BRYN

I've got to get Ed back.

LYDIA

Sasha does it while Azu hesitates.

BRYN

Hamid doesn't know the difference between a PC and an NPC you guys.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

ALEX

Guys he's upper class, I've got to rescue him.

BRYN

He's a friendly paladin that was helping us.

HELEN

Right ok, I feel like we have other priorities and he survived in Rome for several weeks.

LYDIA

Sasha does it while Azu hesitates, she runs.

BRYN

Hold on tight this should be a two way portal.

HELEN

Ok, Azu takes the rope.

BRYN

I'm going to step into the gate.

ALEX

Ok I'm going to deal with a perspective from everyone else if I may?

BRYN

Yeah I'm not rushing I'm very much gently edging through.

ALEX

That's fine.

BRYN

And I'm going to throw myself backwards as quickly as I am able to.

ALEX

So.

BRYN

When it goes horribly wrong.

ALEX

So Hamid starts edging forward and you see the same thing that you saw with Ed rushing off just slower, like those vibrations start to obscure Hamid a little bit. The rope is taut enough for you to like yank, there's not slack but he's not like straining against it or anything and just when he starts being completely obscured the rope stops being pulled.

HELEN

Uh oh.

ALEX

And just appears to be hanging there.

HELEN

I'm going to pull on the rope.

ALEX

You pull on the rope. Hamid just when you're about to make it to the gate Azu pulls you back.

BRYN

Ok good test, well done, that seemed to work, let's try again, give me a little bit longer this time.

HELEN

It went slack, I thought you'd been dissolved or something.

BRYN

No I hadn't made it through yet.

ALEX

Hamid.

BRYN

We're going to have to try a bit.

ALEX

I'm going to give a little bit of extra.

BRYN

Cool.

ALEX

The rope didn't go slack, Azu is overreacting.

BRYN

Just give it a little bit longer this time. Maybe it will go slack, we don't know the laws of physics on that side could be a little different, I just need to get through so I can see if Ed is there and help him get back if he is.

HELEN

Fine.

BRYN

I do it again.

HELEN

Yeah I let him go.

ALEX

Ok. Azu from your perspective the same thing seems to happen with no difference whatsoever. Hamid you basically start going in and just when it

seems to be clearing you think you see someone just on the far side of all this sort of swirling colour and these warped images, it looks to be Ed mid-charge away from you and then Azu pulls you back. Again it feels like.

BRYN

Does he look frozen?

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

I mean it's hard to tell obviously because of the warping.

ALEX

He doesn't appear to be moving.

BRYN

Ok. Oh thank you, good work, yes, I think the spell has gone wrong, I think he's trapped between the two planes of existence. It's going to be really hard to rescue him.

HELEN

Maybe we should rescue him later then?

BRYN

Yeah we'll probably have to get the Professor involved to help us figure it out, let's look for everyone else now that we know he's not immediately in deathly danger.

LYDIA

I mean I could lasso and pull him out?

BRYN

I think that's going to be very complicated.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Maybe Hamid should start explaining what he thinks is going on?

BRYN

It looks like he is literally frozen on the membrane between planes and somehow trapped in a medium state between this plane and another and therefore out of both space and time.

HELEN

So he's alright?

(Group laughter)

BRYN

No but he's going to stay exactly the same amount of not alright indefinitely while this thing stays here.

HELEN

Alright then.

BRYN

Which way?

HELEN

Well.

BRYN

I shuck, shrug, shrug the rope off?

BEN

Shuck.

BRYN

Shuck. Shrug, shrug the rope?

ALEX

Shrug would work so would shuck.

LYDIA

No shucking would be stabbing it right?

HELEN

No shucking is like removing a piece of clothing.

ALEX

Well what you do is you shuck corn so if you shuck a rope you destroy it.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You shuck the rope is that what you do?

BRYN

I shrug off the rope.

ALEX

Boo.

LYDIA

We've got to be looking for the hostages right, I haven't heard anything so they will have heard this.

BRYN

Yeah.

LYDIA

They could even be anywhere, they could have left Rome with them?

HELEN

Well.

BRYN

We've got to explore the rest of this building I guess.

LYDIA

Let's go.

HELEN

The ones I saw ran down here, I point down this, the corridor that I've gone down.

LYDIA

Good place to start.

BRYN

Start that direction.

ALEX

So you all start searching together or do you all maybe split up you know, cover more ground?

BRYN

No we'll stick together.

ALEX

Are you sure you don't want to cover more ground?

HELEN

No.

ALEX

Are you sure you don't want to split up?

HELEN

We're fine Alex.

BRYN

Hush naughty voice.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

We'll be back in a couple of minutes.

[BREAK]

ALEX

And welcome back, so I'm going to join back with Grizzop.

BEN

Hello.

ALEX

So they are all starting to have a more and more heated argument.

BEN

Oh while they are arguing I am going to rifle around in my bag, walk up to them and put a hundred gold on the table.

ALEX

They start arguing more fervently than ever with the occasional [sound effect] when the younger one keeps reaching out.

BEN

Oooh I put another hundred gold on the table.

ALEX

It exacerbates the situation.

BEN

Oooh I put another hundred gold on the table.

ALEX

So.

BRYN

I don't know if the carrot is working, try the stick.

ALEX

The reverse happens at this point and they all go very, very quiet and then look to you expectantly.

BEN

I'll start taking coins off one by one and putting.

ALEX

The arguments starts really big, really quickly, they are all starting to argue.

BEN

I will keep doing this for as long as it takes. Now there are three hundred gold pieces now so.

ALEX

You've got time, you've got time.

BEN

They've got a while.

ALEX

Eventually [sound effect] and it is clear that what is coming out is something along the lines of oh we could, that's a terrible idea, you're a bad person, stop it, no, what about this, that's a terrible idea, God, and they are all just arguing, arguing, arguing until eventually the woman who speaks English sort of turns around and goes yeah we can get you to Rome.

BEN

Cool I put the one in my hand back in the bag.

ALEX

She winces just a little bit.

BEN

Well?

ALEX

You've got to give us a little bit of time.

BEN

How much time?

ALEX

Um, she takes a moment, she can't consult her watch, she doesn't have one.

When is it, when are we?

BEN

I don't know about 2pm?

ALEX

Tomorrow morning.

BEN

Where shall I meet you tomorrow morning?

ALEX

Joe no you won't know, er where do you know in Damascus?

BEN

Point on the map on the wall.

ALEX

Oh right yeah, she goes over and she just points at a non-descript street quite close to where they are now.

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BEN

Ok.

ALEX

Tomorrow morning.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

Dawn.

BEN

First light?

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

Good, you get to keep what's on the table, if you are no shows I will hunt all of you down individually and get my money back.

ALEX

Oh yeah, yeah. The others sort of wait expectantly, she turns around, translates and they all look really, really sad and then she goes over and places herself between them and gently starts sweeping the gold into a bag.

BEN

And just to make my point I knock an arrow, light it with holy fire, and fire it into the ceiling.

ALEX

She puts the gold back out from the bag onto the table where the others can see it.

BEN

Good. I'm not joking. You might want to put that out. Bye.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

It's so effective.

HELEN

I could happily listen to you do this for.

BRYN

I really liked there's a real Harlequin base beneath this one, I think you should have pursued that.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Should have started digging.

BEN

There's trapdoors all the way down.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So what's your current plan until tomorrow morning presumably?

BEN

Prepare. I buy rations, I buy bits and pieces.

ALEX

All the stuff that everyone else should have prepared.

BRYN

Healing potions.

BEN

Healing potions.

ALEX

With this in mind then potions are big ticket items so they are ones where I am just going to need you to tell me how many you buy because you could blow through all of your gold for like ten.

BEN

Well I will get ten potions of cure serious wounds. For those counting it was 7,500 gold, I have 2,400 gold left.

LYDIA

My word.

ALEX

At which point then you're wanting to basically stock up on as much mundane items as people are realistically going to need.

BEN

Yes although like I don't know much about Rome, can I make like a knowledge religion check to check if there's anything special I need.

ALEX

Yeah absolutely.

BEN

You want like tents and ropes and compasses and things. However I got a mighty 13.

ALEX

A mighty 13 is enough to know it might genuinely be worth investing in, and it sounds silly, a holy symbol for like a few of the Gods that you think are going to be a good like ally in this case to maybe dish out amongst the party might be worth it and they are not particularly expensive.

BEN

Ok I buy one holy symbol of Aphrodite and three holy symbols of Artemis.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

At which point then yeah for the rest of the equipment realistically I'll give you [unclear 0:30:08] adventurers kit for 250 gold but that isn't going to include, I'm being very careful in this one, you do not get the collapsible bath tub, that is a high ticket item.

BEN

I will survive. So I do that and I check in on Wilde in an uninteresting fashion unless he has anything particularly interesting?

ALEX

I do need to know do you tell him about the Harlequin group and do you tell him about you're heading off in the morning and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah?

BEN

I tell him I'm heading off in the morning.

ALEX

I'm not going to bother RP-ing it, we will just return to you in the morning I think unless you die in the night?

BEN

Do I die in the night Alex?

ALEX

You don't.

BEN

At first light I go to the place marked on the map.

ALEX

That's fine, I'm going to return to the rest of the group. Could everyone please give me a perception check for your search of the area for hostages?

HELEN

18.

ALEX

18 from Azu.

LYDIA

25.

ALEX

25 from Sasha.

BRYN

20 total.

ALEX

20 total from Hamid. So Azu and Hamid out of the three of you, you two both notice like what I'm about to describe, Sasha gets extra. As you are working your way through this complex it becomes readily apparent this is not a big secret base full of death monsters and full of things trying to get you and mostly what it is, is really empty, really old and a bit manky. However you do

start noticing these little sort of glints of light and colour around the place. At first you're not really paying attention like you'll have a look and it's like oh a bit of moisture, something like that and then at some point you actually get a closer look and you realise there are tiny copies of that wibbly, wobbly thing dotted throughout this complex and by tiny I'm talking like really tiny, like size of an uncut diamond you know just a little spec kind of thing. Like you know you can get like basically diamond dust is what I'm talking about.

LYDIA

Oh right I was just like uncut diamonds can be any size.

ALEX

Yeah so what I'm talking about is the stuff where it's like so small you can't see the thing you just see the light that it is giving off. Eventually you do start to notice a couple of bigger ones, Sasha you specifically start looking out for them and notice that they get denser the closer you are to the main atrium. There's no way you would have noticed it if you weren't sort of hunting around, but once you do start like looking with them in mind and taking the time to like there's a bit of light, I'll lift up that floorboard, you start finding bigger ones, some maybe the size of your fist things like that.

LYDIA

Can I see anything about the world that is on the other side?

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

Does it look like it might be the sort of thing that the hostages are being kept there?

ALEX

It takes a weird turn when the first time you see Ed of all things. Really, really close up to it like really close up and then you go to another one that's maybe a little bit smaller but like the size of say a keyhole and you look through that one and you see Ed from really far away and underneath, like there doesn't seem to be any correlation of space from where these things are and the angles that you're seeing him.

LYDIA

Impressive.

ALEX

At which point you then find a larger one, the biggest one that you have found and it is about the size of a football, obviously you're not shoving your head in or anything but like the big major tear appeared to have a lot more distortions going on than the other ones and for that one you do definitely get a glimpse of one of the hostages, apparently also frozen. They are in a sitting position with a blindfold on but you can just get a glance of Hamid's little brother.

LYDIA

She calls Hamid over.

ALEX

This took by the way like a couple of hours because once you saw a bit of Ed it was like there will be a big one, this place is huge and finding something football sized in an utterly random location took a while.

LYDIA

Right they are being kept wherever these gates open and they are fine look and point out look he's alright.

BRYN

I look through.

ALEX

Eventually with Sasha sort of pointing out and like giving you a leg up because it's right up in a corner of a room and half way in the actual wall and stuff it's like oh yeah you see it. It is your brother.

BRYN

And is he also frozen?

ALEX

Yes. It takes a while to like determine it but yeah.

BRYN

Ok we have to get the Professor he might know how to repair the spell, the gate spell has malfunctioned somehow but he might be able to help us work out how to get through it safely without getting frozen too.

LYDIA

Yeah alright.

HELEN

Yes good idea.

LYDIA

That's what we'll do.

HELEN

Yeah we've got to go and get him.

ALEX

Ok so you go and grab Einstein. He's there and like you open the door and he's like oh I'm going to get you, oh hey.

BRYN

[Unclear 0:34:31] ok Professor?

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ALEX

So did we win or are we running?

BRYN

Neither.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

Come with us.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

And I start explaining on the way.

ALEX

Am I coming with you quietly or kind of ok?

BRYN

No there were some enemies around, we saw two, Sasha said she saw four.

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ALEX

What were they, I bet they were Romans?

LYDIA

Screamy things with tentacles.

ALEX

Screamy things with tentacles ok.

BRYN

We've seen them before. They look, they can affect your mind and they have got.

HELEN

They made me go cold.

ALEX

Made you go cold, ok.

BRYN

They are part of the cult of Hades but yeah so it looks like in the centre of the main atrium in the building there is a gate spell that has gone wrong in some way.

ALEX

Oh cool.

BRYN

And our other friend, the paladin.

ALEX

Oh yeah he's cool.

BRYN

He ran into it and he seems to be frozen on the membrane of these planes.

ALEX

Of course he did. Einstein doesn't appear to be upset, he is like yes that is a very logical statement that you said which makes sense with what I know of the man.

BEN

If anyone is going to understand that concept it is Einstein.

BRYN

But we also, we saw shattered pieces of the same gate spell leading into the same place from other perspectives and through some of them we can see the people that were taken from us, the hostages.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

So it looks like there is some other plane that they were in the middle of transporting to but it has gone wrong.

ALEX

Ok, ok that's a lot of speaking ok.

BRYN

Come and study this with us and we can try and see what we can work out.

ALEX

He heads up with you into the atrium, oh it's like wibbly and kind of wobbly eh?

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

So you said there were other ones yeah?

BRYN

Yeah Sasha spotted them.

LYDIA

You want to see them?

ALEX

Show me one.

LYDIA

I show him the football one.

ALEX

Woah hello. What are you, oh this is so bad, this is like really bad. Wow.

HELEN

You mean like it's badly done or bad like you can't fix it?

ALEX

First one then the other wow!

BRYN

It does seem like magic works better in this building than outside this building though.

HELEN

You think so?

ALEX

Oh does it? He immediately tries to cast a spell. A bunch of flowers appear in his hand. Oh cool. He then clicks his fingers again and they burst into flame. Cool.

HELEN

I am going to.

BEN

Channel positive energy, heal everyone.

HELEN

Yes do that. I'm going to do that.

BEN

Oh I should have mentioned that sooner, my bad.

HELEN

I am channelling positive energy which is 3 D6 in a 34 area.

BRYN

So it heals everyone in range.

LYDIA

Yay.

HELEN

And if you want to not be healed you have to have a will save of 16.

BRYN

Or if there's any cheeky undead they get hurt.

LYDIA

Nice.

HELEN

No not nice at all.

ALEX

No it's terrible. Everyone takes that amount of damage as I describe what happens.

HELEN

What?

ALEX

Yeah.

HELEN

I hate you, I actually.

ALEX

You know how I said a while ago you tried to reach out for your guard and there was no one there and then just for that moment there was but it wasn't who you were reaching for.

LYDIA

Oooohhh.

ALEX

Oh yeah they are very much like hello.

BRYN

Alright [unclear 0:37:14].

ALEX

Yeah I know right, you don't like there's no speech to you or anything but let's put it this way.

HELEN

Have I healed you?

ALEX

You reach out for a little bit of healing and what you get is a lot of hurting.

LYDIA

Help I think I'm undead again, the healing hurt me.

BRYN

Me too.

LYDIA

We're all undead.

ALEX

If you imagine channelling positive energy is like opening a door to a good place and letting some good things out, you open the door, oh it's a bad place, something kicks the door in and [sound effect] it hurts.

BRYN

How much?

ALEX

A lot, it hurts, because I'm feeling generous, as much as you tried to channel positive energy.

LYDIA

That's only 8.

BRYN

Everyone takes 8 damage.

ALEX

However it also apparently knocks Azu out.

LYDIA

Oh dear.

HELEN

Good luck picking me up!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

From everyone else's perspective Azu is basically like it's fine, I'll heal you all, [sound effect], everyone is hurt, [sound effect].

HELEN

That didn't work you guys, that spell went.

ALEX

Wow your healing is terrible.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Oh my God.

BRYN

So it seems like divine magic maybe doesn't work the same as arcane magic in this building?

ALEX

What are you doing?

LYDIA

Einstein are you any good at healing with arcane?

ALEX

I mean I could teleport you to a healer.

LYDIA

That sounds great.

ALEX

Or explode you, I mean.

LYDIA

That's true. Can you teleport an object and see what happens?

ALEX

I mean yeah but if it explodes I'll die.

BRYN

Right I don't think teleporting is very sensible while the gate spell has malfunctioned and appears to be affecting the entire building.

ALEX

Oh yeah, oh yeah totally. I agree.

BRYN

Yeah you know with the membrane between worlds.

ALEX

It would be really awful I destroyed the whole world.

BRYN

Extreme tension.

ALEX

Trying to teleport like a part or something I'd never live it down. Everyone would be like what happened to reality and they'd be like oh Einstein tried to move a part again and I'd be like oh.

LYDIA

Exactly who would be surprised.

ALEX

You know like I could do without that press you know.

BRYN

Azu, Azu are you ok?

HELEN

Am I conscious?

ALEX

Einstein goes it's ok, I have a plan.

HELEN

Is he going to kick me?

ALEX

Azu? He grabs you and starts shaking. Azu, wake up! Wake up you have to wake up, and you do.

BRYN

Are you ok, Azu are you ok?

ALEX

Hello, there's a very, very hairy man very close to your face going hello.

HELEN

Agh she says again.

ALEX

Agh you're terrible at healing.

HELEN

No I'm not.

ALEX

No you really, really are, really terrible.

HELEN

It's this place it's messy.

BRYN

It's definitely the place.

ALEX

Ok.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 122 – Gatekeeping

HELEN

Thank you.

ALEX

A bad workman blames his Eldritch horrors.

HELEN

Yes because Eldritch horrors are the worst.

ALEX

They are, they are terrible.

BRYN

Right so we should try and sort out this gate spell if I can.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

Repair the tear in reality maybe?

ALEX

Yeah ok.

LYDIA

Are you any good at that?

ALEX

He just starts going into the atrium, probably.

BRYN

I mean that's a spell you can cast right Professor you probably understand it better than I do?

ALEX

I mean it might have to be a spell I can invent but ok. He just kind of heads down.

BRYN

I mean gate is a spell you can cast right?

ALEX

Technically yes I can cast other spells. Einstein is the leader of a school, of course I can cast other spells.

HELEN

Oh no.

BRYN

I mean gate is quite similar to teleportation.

ALEX

Oh yeah, yeah it's basically the same. I'm fine, I've got this. He kind of goes to the atrium and then adopts what he thinks is a pensive academic pose in front of it.

HELEN

I don't think he has got this Hamid.

BRYN

Talk me through your thinking Professor, it's sometimes helpful to bounce stuff off an assistant.

ALEX

So the thing about a gate is you know it's very gatey and sometimes you know you need to close a gate so what you do when you close a gate you find an assistant and you tell them to close the gate or you could with yeah I've got, it's fine, it will take a little while, just give me, it's fine.

BRYN

Ok let's not do anything until we're all ready.

ALEX

Oh no, yeah, yeah, sure, yeah.

BRYN

I pull the other guys just a bit away and say what do we do, it doesn't seem like he does have a good idea.

LYDIA

I mean I could go into the gate, like it looks frozen but what I bet it is, I once dealt with this trap right where it just slowed you down super, super slow and so like my mate six knives Jimmy like he went in, we thought he was dead right but no it just like he turned up like several years later. We'd taken his knives by then though.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

So we just called him weirdly young Jimmy.

ALEX

Einstein suddenly yells from the atrium, you throw a rock through a window that's how you get past the gate.

LYDIA

Yeah do you want me to be a rock?

ALEX

Yes good ok.

BRYN

You're saying we should open a different dimensional portal to the same space?

ALEX

Sure that's better than what I was thinking, let's do that. Yes ok. Yeah I can probably do that.

BRYN

Would it be safe to do that here?

ALEX

God no, God no.

BRYN

We know that anything, any magic we try outside this building has a very high chance of going wrong anyway due to the.

ALEX

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

BRYN

[Unclear 0:42:04]. Where should we try to do that?

ALEX

Ooh Azu comes from a pretty cool place.

BRYN

You think we should leave Rome behind?

HELEN

We can't get there fast enough can we?

ALEX

I mean.

HELEN

We're not even sure we can get out of Rome.

LYDIA

We should teleport back to Damascus, pick up Grizzop and then.

HELEN

But we don't know if the teleporting will work and also.

ALEX

You know what we need to do, we need to find out where this plane is.

BRYN

Yes that would be very helpful.

ALEX

Do you have any kind of laboratory with you, maybe, maybe like some kind of planer specialist or maybe you know another skilled wizard who also knows loads of spells?

BRYN

No.

ALEX

Hmm we didn't plan at all did we?

BRYN

Well I mean it was really a spur of the moment decision.

ALEX

Hmm yeah, yeah.

BRYN

We had to do something.

ALEX

Most things that end the world kind of are you know. No one sets out to blow up the world but here we are.

BRYN

This is not exactly the situation we were anticipating encountering.

LYDIA

I'll go and see if I can find one of them wizard things, maybe they'll talk.

HELEN

They might kill you.

LYDIA

A lot of things might kill me Azu including boredom.

HELEN

Then I'm coming with you.

BRYN

Ok we'll stay here then and try and work this out.

ALEX

Oh yeah it's fine we'll figure it out.

LYDIA

You do the academic stuff.

HELEN

Think about some magical things.

LYDIA

We'll go kill some dudes but like not fully kill them so they can tell us stuff.

HELEN

I don't know if they speak our languages though?

ALEX

I am going to jump to Grizzop. I'm going to jump to Grizzop the following morning.

BEN

I arrive at the place unless I am waylaid by brigands?

ALEX

You are not waylaid by brigands.

BEN

Good.

ALEX

You head to the place and eventually you see someone in a big wide hat and a big coat and you realise it's probably the same hat and coat that the person was wearing.

BEN

Yes they have one.

HELEN

One hat.

ALEX

And they sort of like look left, look right, there's a couple of people around, it's still quite a quiet area. A couple of them look at them really suspiciously but carry on about their business and they are like [unclear 0:44:12].

BEN

That's really conspiratorial, you probably want to lose the hat and coat it makes you.

ALEX

They start giving like hand signals that mean nothing to you.

BEN

I'm walking up to them, it makes you more obvious.

ALEX

They give more fierce hand signals.

BEN

You don't speak English, ah, yeah where am I going? Start pointing in places.

ALEX

Finally they are looking at you and you realise it's the boy who was there earlier the much, much.

BEN

14 year old.

ALEX

14 year old, the younger one and then they are like giving you all these hand signals that mean nothing and then they hold up a piece of paper.

BEN

Take it.

ALEX

The first thing it says in really terribly spelt, really badly written English is, eat this after reading.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

It then says you'll find a woman in a red coat. Ask her what time it is, she'll tell you more.

BEN

Ah.

BRYN

These guys are amazing.

BEN

Yeah, fine, alright, cool bye.

BRYN

But they might all deserve a big old Grizzop murdering.

BEN

They don't deserve a murdering, they're just incompetent.

ALEX

The kid gives what he thinks is a salute but it's not really any kind of formal salute so it's more kind of like a hand to the chest and then maybe the head and kind of twisted it and then he just kind of loses it half way and then runs off.

BEN

Right.

LYDIA

Suddenly in the [unclear 0:45:23] world.

BEN

Yeah well that was the Damascan people's front.

(Group laughter)

BEN

You wanted the people's front in Damascus.

BRYN

You're saying that wrong.

BEN

What have the meritocrats ever done for us?

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

BRYN

Nat 20.

ALEX

Wow you can see a woman in a red coat waiting in a nearby alley ready to walk past.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Hello, oi what's the time?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

They kind of look a bit non plussed and then decide to press on regardless and then start acting like they haven't seen you and you haven't seen them.

BEN

I walk up to them, oi what's the time?

ALEX

They try to turn so that you are back to back and then.

BEN

I will grab them by the collar, drag them down to my level and go what is the time?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

You have a hard time pulling them down because it's just the burly barwoman.

BEN

Ah ok sorry.

ALEX

In a big red coat.

BEN

I revise that, I jump to reach the collar.

ALEX

That's fine.

BEN

I either pull her down or hang off and pull myself up to her level.

ALEX

Yeah that's better.

BEN

What is the time?

ALEX

They hand you piece of paper, it says eat this after reading at the top.

BRYN

Oh it's a scavenger hunt.

BEN

I will not let go of them and read it with the other hand. What does it say?

ALEX

Oh sorry it says at the top obviously it says eat after reading and then after it, it says something, let me get it right, a fountain is a lovely place for a walk. Buy some food, I'm sure you'll find someone to share it with.

(Group laughter)

BEN

I will look her dead in the eyes and shove the paper into her.

(Group laughter)

BEN

And drop down and go and find the fountain.

ALEX

Ok you don't have to look far it's like 200m away maybe. Like it's not even the far side of the city it's like yeah it would be that one, it's definitely that one.

BRYN

Alex this is the best stuff you've ever written.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So you.

BEN

Is there a food stall?

ALEX

You know what there is.

BEN

Ok cool I walk up, I will have one of those please.

ALEX

This person doesn't speak English but yeah they are happy to serve you and you get basically a wrap.

BEN

Cool I'll give them some money.

ALEX

For what it's worth they don't appear to be so incompetent a conspirator that they are conspicuous.

BEN

Ooh I do wish I had somebody to share this with.

(Group laughter)

BEN

And I will start walking around the fountain in a circle holding the wrap up.

(Group laughter)

BEN

I'm just marching around with this held over my head.

ALEX

Only within like two minutes of you marching around the fountain.

BEN

I really wish somebody would share this with me.

ALEX

Sat against the fountain is a (beggar) who is, you literally see them, see you go oh adjust their clothing a bit and then go [sound effect] gesturing for arms and stuff.

BEN

Please tell me they have at least gone as far as in their bowl there is a note?

ALEX

Yeah obviously.

BEN

Thank goodness. I'll take the note and put the wrap in it.

ALEX

Right so the person starts eating the wrap obviously. Eat this note after reading. Sometimes friends will bring you back to their homes for a good warm meal.

LYDIA

Oh my God.

BEN

I'm just going to look at the beggar and go, this one doesn't have any directions. Is it you?

ALEX

The beggar finishes eating the wrap.

BEN

Take me home.

ALEX

Wrap and starts you know.

BEN

Right fine I'll put the crumpled up note in their begging bowl.

ALEX

Ok they begin walking you, it's really clear that they are not a beggar by the way like you can see decent clothes underneath like a single tattered shawl, it becomes readily apparent that they are leading you back to the pub.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

The thing is all characters have to suffer Ben it's just that yours took a bit more work.

BEN

You're just making the audience suffer.

LYDIA

All the time.

BRYN

Oh this is gold.

LYDIA

The whole time that they needed to they were like oh we need some time it was just because they wanted to make the plan. The spell was ready.

HELEN

They done it immediately.

ALEX

So you're heading to the pub.

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

They immediately lead you back to the sacking that covers the trapdoor.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

They look around. They go to reach it. They stop. They look around. They go back to the street to see if they are being followed. They come back.

BEN

Alright I'm going to grab this person, rifle through their clothes and try and find another sealed wax thing.

ALEX

You can't, you do find their homework which they still have, apparently they are in some kind of night school but apart from that.

BRYN

They're learning to be a knight?

ALEX

They appear to be learning English, there you go but no in all seriousness they have nothing of worth or interest on them at all.

BEN

Right I kind of roughly rifle through their pockets, find the homework, feel kind of bad and just give it back to them. Get on with it.

LYDIA

[Unclear 0:50:29] start doing his homework.

ALEX

I was tempted but I've already established that they don't share the language, they are just like, and then just kind of sheepishly lift up the sacking and go down.

BEN

Thank you.

ALEX

As you approach the door you hear an incredibly cultured voice on the other side of it going, a woman's voice sorry, I swear if you do anything else of this level of incompetence I might actually arrange for all of you to be disappeared.

BEN

Kick in the door.

HELEN

Didn't you kick it in last time, is the door still there, is it not just?

ALEX

It's propped up. You knock it down again.

BEN

I've got a bow and arrow knocked.

ALEX

And all I'm going to describe is that you see an incredibly, incredibly like beautiful looking woman. Incredibly well dressed, the rest of the room kind of warps around her and she looks at you and you just have one perfect shared moment of utter distain and hatred for the nonsense that you have both had to go through to be in this place at this time.

BEN

Fair.

ALEX

And I'll end the episode there.

LYDIA

Yay.

ALEX

Bye guys.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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