

RQG – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Content Warnings

- Mild body horror (body distortion)
- Kidnapping (adults & child)
- Unreality
- Discussion of injuries
- Explosions

ALEX

Hi everyone, Alex here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our patrons; Alex Rose, Rozzlynn, Jon Lozano, Rowan MacBean, Mildred, Amelia Stevenson, Mike Weiss, Finn Garza, Tommy Parker, Cornflake of Doom... 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 125 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today I have...

BEN

Ben Meredith.

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BRYN

Bryn Monroe.

LYDIA

I don't even know anymore, there's so much backstory! Sasha Racket.

ALEX

It's true.

BEN

No. You're Lydia Nicholas.

BRYN

Ha!

LYDIA

Oh, yeah!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

It all went wrong.

BEN

Uh oh, there's some serious bleed going on!

LYDIA

Oh, man.

ALEX

Who are you?

HELEN

Oh, I'm Helen Gould, by the way.

ALEX

It's Einstein's god effect, he's just bleeding all of them out onto one another.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Folks, I am out of it.

(Laughter)

ALEX

Who are you playing, Ben?

BEN

Grizzop drik acht Amsterdam.

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BRYN

Uh, Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan.

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas.

(Group laughter)

You're born and the rest is drag!

(Group laughter)

I am a persona! A fiction.

(Laughter)

A creation!

HELEN

Also, Azu is here.

(Laughter)

ALEX

So, you are...

LYDIA [sounding desperate]

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Please tell me!

ALEX

You are in... just... just the worst situation, currently. You're all in Rome...

BRYN

I don't know, it seems fine!

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You're all in Rome.

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

BRYN

Bossed it!

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ALEX

Bossed Rome, apparently, with no complications. You are nominally, like, let's be honest, you are not investigating the Simulacrum, you are rescuing friends and family at this stage.

BRYN

Yeah.

BEN and HELEN

Yes.

LYDIA

Mmm.

BEN

But only because I did all the investigating bits we had to do for now.

ALEX

You are all currently being Planar Shifted? Presumably? **[whispering]** Hamid, it's Planar Shifted.

BRYN

Cool.

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ALEX

... to the destination plane of the horrific thing at the centre of Rome, where apparently your...

BEN

Hadestown. Ha, ha.

ALEX

... friends and family are.

LYDIA

Mmm.

ALEX

So with that in mind, I'm gonna start off the way that all good episodes start.

LYDIA

Mm hmm?

ALEX

Can I get Fort Save from everyone?

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

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Whoop whoop!

HELEN

Okay.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BRYN

Why are you like this?

BEN

Do I get any bonuses for knowing what's going on?

ALEX

Um...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

No, but you will...

BEN

That's... ooh...

ALEX

... there are other bonuses that will come into play for you, Grizzop, having done this before, they are just not at this stage.

BEN

That's cool. 20.

ALEX

So, 20 for Grizzop.

HELEN

28 for Azu.

ALEX

28 for Azu. Oh, Paladins!

BRYN

Natural 20 for Hamid.

BEN

Going to like 22 for a sorcerer?

LYDIA

So a nine... oh, sorry.

BRYN

25.

LYDIA

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And 19 for Sasha.

ALEX

19. Good job, team, good job!

HELEN

Yay!

ALEX

You have made it to the... well...

BRYN

Hamid opens his eyes.

ALEX

You've begun to make it to the encounter.

(Helen laughs)

Okay. So, Grizzop, the wonderfully familiar and awful experience takes place.

Anyone have their eyes open?

BRYN

Yes.

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HELEN

No.

ALEX

Okay.

HELEN

Really?

BRYN

Yeah.

HELEN

Ugh!

ALEX

That's fine. First thing that happens...

BRYN/HAMID

'I'm interested in the phenomenon!'

ALEX

So, the first thing that happens for everyone with your eyes closed. I'm not gonna run through *all* of that description again, I did... was very explicit last time. But, yeah, you feel everything start to go a bit weird, specifically not only the things around you that you can hear strange sounds from, but you feel

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your own form starting to distort. It is not like people applying force to you, you just suddenly become very aware that your hands and your feet are much further from your body, or at least they feel it, than they normally are, but you seem to be able to move your arms okay, you know, that's fine. But, yeah, there's a distinct sense that the normal dimensions of your body are not now in effect.

LYDIA

So, it's a migraine or a plus sensory overload.

ALEX

But there is no pain...

LYDIA

Eh.

ALEX

... there is no pain at this stage. Hamid, you have the wonderful additional effect of... Fort Save please?

BRYN

I rolled a natural 20.

ALEX

Uh huh. A Fort save please?

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BRYN

Oh, no...

(Helen laughs)

[chuckling] Hubris!

HELEN

Yes.

BEN [chanting]

Get a one, get a one, get a one!

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN [sounding disappointed]

Oh.

HELEN

Aw.

BRYN

23?

ALEX

Okay.

(Lydia laughs)

ALEX

Yeah, two things. One, you definitely should have closed your eyes, that was... that's on you, you know? Number two, though, you're probably gonna survive what's happening.

[Everyone laughs and cheers]

ALEX

So, the first thing that happens, you know that distance between your body parts and so on? Well, first thing that applies to is your eyes.

[Everyone groans]

ALEX

Your field of view goes wrong.

BEN

You're a snail now.

ALEX

It goes completely wrong.

LYDIA

So cool.

ALEX

Other things that you start to realise. There's something approaching you. Ah, it's the back of your own head in the distance rocketing towards you!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

There's the horrific moment where you see through the back of your own head and find yourself now staring through your own eyes, sort of twice over, and it all gets a bit kaleidoscopic. It immediately induces a *powerful* nausea that you manage to fight down.

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX

Fun fact on the mechanics side, if you'd have failed that check, you'd have started to let go of your friends...

[Helen gasps]

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX

... and that it *all* goes wrong.

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ALEX

But your friends wouldn't have let go of you.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Always in our hearts...

ALEX

But you all make it.

LYDIA

... and always stuck in a temporarily frozen semi-space between planes.

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX

Everyone please give me another Fort Save.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN

Oh, 20 again.

LYDIA

Oh, no! This is in front of Eldarion, she rolled a two!

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[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN [gasps]

Ooh... 18.

ALEX

Mm hmm.

LYDIA [sighing]

I've got five total.

[Ben inhales through his teeth]

HELEN

Woah!

ALEX

Hamid?

BRYN

12.

ALEX

Hamid, give me a Reflex save.

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[Sound of dice being rolled]

LYDIA

From Sasha's vomit.

(Laughter)

BRYN

27.

ALEX

Okay. Sasha, give me a Reflex save.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

[Helen gasps]

ALEX

Natural one.

HELEN

Noooo...!

BEN

Ooh.

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ALEX

Who are you holding hands with?

LYDIA

Azu and...

BEN

No.

LYDIA

Ohh...

BEN

It's us two because [0:07:04].

LYDIA

... yeah, Grizzop and Hamid.

ALEX

Grizzop, can you give me a Reflex Save, please?

BEN

Yeah.

[Rolls dice]

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BEN

Yeah, we're fine, it's a 26.

ALEX

26. You say it was fine...

BEN

Oh.

LYDIA

Mmm...

ALEX

... you came as close as you could, while it's still technically being fine. On the return journey, it's a lot rougher. You know that hole you spread out over a big...

ALL

Return?

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

We move to an extraplanar space, and now we're moving from the extraplanar space to the new plane.

ALEX

... so, that feeling of yourself stretched over a large distance, kind of goes the other way and there's a horrific moment where you suddenly... the best way to describe it is you feel like you're all at a point. It does not go well for Sasha. Sasha manages to completely lose grip of both Grizzop and Hamid. At the last second, as you can feel yourself pulled – and I mean physically, like, pulled like a cannon from a gun away – both Grizzop and Hamid manage to re-catch you...

LYDIA [quietly]

Aww, yay!

ALEX

... It's not that they sort of held on, they have *just* caught you at the last second panicking and grasping.

LYDIA

Ah!

ALEX

All that I can say is that you were a... inches away from a universe of knives, but in a bad way.

LYDIA [sounding disappointed]

Ohhh...

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(Group laughter)

BEN

Shouldn't have used that metaphor then, that'll make it really difficult for Sasha to process.

(Laughter)

LYDIA

Yeah.

HELEN

A universe of pillows?

(Laughter)

ALEX

You all find yourself dropped onto what feels like dirt and stone underneath your feet. Because of the nature of the situation, I immediately want everyone into Initiative...

BEN

Oooh...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

ALEX

... because I'm assuming you aren't just going to be, like, 'Cool, I'm gonna have a wander'.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN

Once we land and, you know, people let go of each other's hands, I'll keep grabbing hold of your hand, put my other hand on like, your upper arm, just look at you into your eyes and nod, and then get on, you know, sort of like 'we got this' kind of way.

LYDIA and HELEN

Awww...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN [groaning]

Oh, and then roll really badly on Initiative.

HELEN

I've got a 15.

LYDIA

I've got a 13.

BEN

Okay, uh, comparatively didn't roll too badly. I've got 13!

[he laughs]

BRYN

I've got 10.

BEN

Oh!

LYDIA

Azu's first!

BRYN

That's about as low as I can roll.

HELEN

Really?

BRYN

Yeah.

HELEN

I've never been first before!

[everyone laughs]

BEN

Oh, look at that little face!

HELEN

Yeah!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I mean, none of you know how Eldarion rolled.

HELEN

Oh...

BEN

Oh, no, but...

HELEN

Out of us, we're the ones who matter!

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah...

ALEX [whispering]

Eldarion got 14! **[then, in a normal voice]** So, I will probably... yeah, you know what, I should. I should describe the new universe that you're in.

HELEN

Thank you.

ALEX

I'm generous.

LYDIA

Do you want a Perception Check, or is it just Fog of War?

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

Er, you know what, sure! Give me a Perception Check.

HELEN

What?

[Sound of dice being rolled]

ALEX

I wasn't gonna do it, but you know what, now I am.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN

Oh, no...

HELEN

Lydia!

BEN

I've got my face in a puddle.

HELEN

Oh, no!

ALEX

What did Grizzop get?

BEN

11.

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ALEX

Okay. Hamid?

BRYN

18.

ALEX

Yep.

HELEN

18.

ALEX

Yep.

LYDIA

28.

ALEX

Cool. So, it's a Fog of War situation.

HELEN

What's that?

ALEX

Underfoot there is the feeling of grit and, sort of, sand, but not in a dune-y sense, more in a, sort of, like... you know like that, sort of, baked dirt thing?

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

So, it's that underneath, and baked dirt is the right feel insofar as, you know, it has cracks running through it, it appears to be like no real features...

BRYN

It's more like Californian desert than the Saharan desert.

ALEX

Yeah, very much not like dunes, I'm trying to steer you as far away from that image as I can. In terms of the actual surrounds of you, so far, you haven't been able to sort of see anyone, I realise you've literally just landed. But it feels... the best description is that you are surrounded by smoke in terms of the visibility. I don't mean like, you can't see your hand in front of your face, but about ten feet away it's all just this swirling dark clouds. You are not having issues breathing, you are not having issues in terms of, like, oh it's coughing, it's horrible, it's acrid. It also has no smell to speak of, of any kind, so it's not like 'oh, sulfur and f...' like, it appears to have nothing at all going on.

HELEN

This is weird.

ALEX

In terms of sound...

LYDIA

Mm hmm...

ALEX

... despite the fact that you have the sense that you're in this big open space, given the big wide flat ground, there is no sound of wind whatsoever. There is, however, the sounds of very distant, very *enormous* movement. I don't mean footsteps as well, I don't mean Boom! Boom! Boom! But you know that sort of rumble, could be shifting earth, could be something huge... like, you don't know but it's more of a kind of...

LYDIA

The Rubix cube of the plane we're on?

ALEX

Yeah.

HELEN

Oh, no, it better not be like a puzzle cube with every room is...

ALEX

Honestly yeah, that's the best description. It is a, er, a rumble that sort of gradually comes in and out, rather than it being a stomp or anything like that.

HELEN

It's just the [0:11:25] cube.

BRYN [chuckling]

With the long [0:11:28].

ALEX

Also, was the highest 27, did you say?

LYDIA

28.

ALEX

28?

LYDIA

Mmm.

ALEX

Guess who hit the DC by one!

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

There appears to be some very, *very* faint tracks in the dirt leading away from your location...

LYDIA

Mm hmm...

ALEX

... but in both directions, but to be clear, you know that they are heading, like, away in one direction and headed to this direction from another... I, sort of, I explained poorly...

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

... so, like, you've landed on someone's tracks. It appears to be a single person though, not multiple.

LYDIA/SASHA

Oh. 'Tracks going this way!' And starts running in that direction.

BEN

Right. Knock an arrow. Chase her.

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HELEN

Maybe we should... can we all see each other?

ALEX

Yes. You can all see each other clearly...

HELEN

Oh, okay, alright, I was going to be like 'Oh no, we should hold hands'!

ALEX

... also, the colours on all of you seem especially vivid, like someone turned the saturation waaaay up...

LYDIA

Yeah. Oversaturated plane.

ALEX

... especially given that the rest of the plane appears to have, like very, very low contrast and so on. You guys are like...

LYDIA

We're super real, guys.

ALEX

... shining bright in a very, very bleak place.

BEN

So, Azu is a *vision*.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Ah, I'm blinding.

ALEX

Actually, you know what, it is worth describing. Azu, you're all kind of used to that, you know the default pink glow that just associates her...

(Group laughter)

BEN

The background noise of Azu's armour!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

... you know, you kind of phase it out so it's understandable you wouldn't notice immediately. It's radiating from her skin...

LYDIA

Ohh.

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ALEX

... just all over, she is glowing strongly pink.

LYDIA

You're so literally blessed!

ALEX

Grizzop meanwhile, is *also* glowing in a way that you haven't Grizzop before.

LYDIA

Aw.

ALEX

Bright green.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Hashtag blessed!'

(Group laughter)

ALEX

It is a highly visible effect. It doesn't seem to be lighting the ground around them, but they are certainly getting a weird angelic vibe, wherever you are, that Hamid and Sasha very much do not have.

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA

Cool.

BEN

Paladins!

HELEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Pala-pals.

HELEN

Puny mortals.

(Laughter)

BRYN

Excuse me.

(Laughter)

ALEX

I realise I've asked you all to put you all in Initiative.

HELEN and LYDIA

Mm hmm.

ALEX

Until I get you to a specific point, that's when that Initiative will trigger. I am okay being muddy with it until that point. So, presumably you are chasing those tracks?

LYDIA

Yeah!

HELEN

Yeah.

BEN

Mm hmm.

ALEX

Okay. With that in mind, you start following the track and you are only going for, like, about a minute. No more than that.

LYDIA

Before we run back into Eldarion who hasn't moved?

ALEX

Not at all.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Alright.

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

So, you start... you start running down this track and then you see ahead of you what appears to be a stone circle in the sort of, like, ancient Druidic Stonehenge kind of thing. It comes looming up out of the smoke as you're, sort of, racing towards it. It is not enormous. It is not, you know, towering...

LYDIA

Tiny.

ALEX

... against the sky. It is...

LYDIA [laughing]

Like, a tiny model!

BEN

It's a spinal tap.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Yeah!

LYDIA

Exactly! Exactly. We trip over it.

ALEX

It is not a spinal tap either...

LYDIA

Aw.

ALEX

... I am afraid. This henge comes, sort of, out of the distance as you're heading towards the track, and the other thing that you start noticing is, just at the edges of your vision, you see that there appears to be a single track – this track leads through one of the henge arches and there appears to be what appears to be another single track leading to one of the other henge arches, and another one just at the edges, so they seem to be single tracks converging.

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX (also as the Voice)

As you approach the henge, a voice starts carrying across the distance.

'[0:14:34]? I will find you and I will defeat you! I have fought worse! I have no idea where I am...'

(Laughter)

'... I have no idea where I'm... oh, no, it's happened again, innit?'

(Lydia laughs)

HELEN/AZU

'Grizzop, that's Ed.'

ALEX

Sasha, you make it to the henge first...

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Oh, right.'

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

ALEX

... you see... Ed is currently stood in the middle of this henge, kind of, looking around a bit lost.

LYDIA

So, given Sasha's Perception Check, she will think the same thing that I am, which is that all the tracks are Ed's coming from lots of different directions, 'cos none of this makes sense.

ALEX [sings]

Alex will not say anything!

LYDIA

Anyway, goes in.

ALEX (also as Ed)

Ed's, like, 'I've got you! Ohh, gonna...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Alright, Ed!'

ALEX (as Ed)

'I'm gonna... stabby girl, right?'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Yeah. That'll do.'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Hello.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Good name. I'll use that in the future.'

(Group laughter)

ALEX (as Ed)

'It's alright. Right, I've done this before, I know what's happening. We're definitely in some kind of Ancient Greece situation.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Sounds right.'

BEN

What colour is he glowing?

ALEX

Bright gold. Just...

HELEN

Yayyy!

ALEX

Just, whaaaa! Also, worth pointing out – his glow is brighter than Azu and Grizzop's. Don't know why, but it is!

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(Bryn laughs)

BEN

How dare you?

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Interesting.

LYDIA

He has less personality to balance out the colour!

BRYN

Big Paladin energy.

(Group laughter)

ALEX (as Ed)

'Yeah, so, I've done this before. What'll happen is, a queen's gonna turn up, right, and then no matter what happens, you just gotta wait and then you just come back out the other end. Honestly, I've done this before.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Uh, Ed, right?'

ALEX (as Ed)

“Ello.”

BEN/GRIZZOP

‘Yeah, no, that’s completely wrong. We’re in a different plane and this is where the hostages are.’

ALEX (as Ed) [whispering]

‘Can anyone else see him?’

LYDIA/SASHA

‘Yeah.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah.’

ALEX (as Ed)

‘Oh, wicked!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘This is our friend, Grizzop.’

HELEN/AZU

‘This is our friend.’

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ALEX (as Ed)

'Oh, cool, wicked.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Have you seen the hostages?'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Oh yeah, sort of saw them, then... then I ended up here.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Right. Where?'

BRYN/HAMID

'How... how long have you been here from your perspective?'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Oh, you know, uh... **[sucks in breath between teeth]** it's really kinda hard to tell time...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'This is too much detail, guys.'

BRYN/HAMID

'But like, a minute or two?'

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ALEX (as Ed)

'Yeah, something like that.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Right. Let's keep looking.'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Oh, right. Wicked! Where are we...?'

BRYN/HAMID

'Stick with us.'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Kay. Where're we looking?'

LYDIA/SASHA

'We... we thought you said you'd seen them?'

ALEX (also as Ed)

'Yes, right. So, there's one.' He points through one of the doors.

LYDIA

'Yeah?'

ALEX

You see, as the smoke sort of passes through it, there's a moment where you can see literally a hostage tied, bound. It appears to be Bi Ming and he's sort of hunched over and then the cloud passes and there's nothing there again.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right. Eldarion?'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

'Yes, hello.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'What's go...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Explain this.'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

'Um...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Don't pause dramatically! Where do we go?'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

I'm not pausing dramatically, I'm trying to figure this out. Go through the door and hope – I haven't got anything better right now.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'What?'

LYDIA

Sasha runs.

BEN

I go after her.

ALEX

Okay. So, you head through the door...

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

ALEX

... there is a brief moment where it feels like, you know that feeling you had before where, like, stretched and so on? Distance goes very, very strange, and then you genuinely find yourself in an identical stone circle...

LYDIA

Mmm...

ALEX

... with Bi Ming there on the ground, gagged and bound, apparently alone. The stone circle appears exactly identical to the one you left.

LYDIA/SASHA

Grabs him. 'Bi Ming!'

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

[Bi Ming makes muffled exclamation]

LYDIA

Unties his gag.

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'I will...'

BRYN

While Sasha's untying, I'm going to look around and make sure there's no one watching, if I can?

ALEX

So, I need to know now. Has everyone gone through this or just Grizzop and Sasha?

BRYN

All following. Like, I'm not letting the party split up if I can help it.

ALEX (also as Bi Ming)

That's... okay, fine. To be clear, Bi Ming is still blindfolded. Like, you're pulling off, he's like... **[shouting]** Oh, I'll get you! Oh, you know, the things that I've seen, oh, grrrr... I'll bite ya... I'll bite your knees! Arrrgghh...'

LYDIA/SASHA

Bi Ming!

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'... Sasha?'

LYDIA

Grabs the st... and he's a little Gnome, right?

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

So I've got him and I'm hugging him.

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'Oh, Sasha! You're alright! Oh, things have been *crazy!*'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Oh, Bi Ming!'

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'I cannot believe how things have been!'

LYDIA/SASHA

'We've got to get out.'

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'Like, so, where are we? Right, right, okay. Well, where are we? What's happening?'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Time's weird. We're here to rescue you.'

[everyone talking over one another]

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'Oh, right, okay. Yeah, 'cos these things... these guys just turned up, right?'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Yeah, back... back through it. Back through it.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Back through the same one?'

BEN/GRIZZOP

Yeah.

ALEX (as Bi Ming)

'What's happening?'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right. Go.'

LYDIA

Bi Ming sits on my shoulder.

HELEN

Awww.

ALEX

Yeah, he's fine. He's done the backpack thing before now. Cool. So, you all head through the same stone doorway?

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Yeah.

HELEN

Mm hmm. Oh, no.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

ALEX

So, you head back through the doorway that you came in and you find yourself in a stone circle...

LYDIA

Is Bi Ming still on my back?

ALEX

... with tracks leading in on all doorways. Bi Ming's on your back, everyone's still there.

[Lydia sighs with relief]

HELEN

Oh, thank god.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Alright, next one. Let's go.'

HELEN/AZU

'Okay.'

ALEX

Eldarion's like...

BRYN

'I'm gonna grab something, a lump of Adamantine ore out of my Bag of Holding and just chuck it hard on the ground.'

HELEN

Oh, you're so good at puzzles.

ALEX (as Eldarion)

'Absolutely, Hamid.' Like, this is Eldarion. 'Yes. Okay, before we move onto the next one, this is quick. I need everyone to back away from me.'

BEN

Yeah, I'll do that.

HELEN [laughing]

Yeah, okay. Yeah, we do that.

LYDIA

Gladly!

(Group laughter)

BEN

Ehhhh!!

ALEX

Eldarion takes a moment and puts her hand on the floor. Hamid, for free, it's so easy. You recognise she's just attempting to do a basic Prestidigitation to put a mark in the ground. As she does so, the ground temporarily, where her hand is, drops away. Have you ever seen, like, those diagrams of, like, a gravity well?

BEN

Mm hmm.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Where just *[whommmph]*.

HELEN

Oh, no...

ALEX (also as Eldarion)

She isn't falling into it or anything, it's very, very localised on her hand. She pulls her hand back and just turns around. 'Don't use magic.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Okay.'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

'Not a place to use magic.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Okay.'

BEN

Right. Arrow. Into the ground.

[sound of an arrow hitting its target]

BEN/GRIZZOP

'That worked.'

ALEX

So, as you're describing this, I am gonna say... Sasha, you have the highest perception as just a baseline, right? You are the first to notice it, there's no point doing a check on this. As everyone's, sort of, talking, you're keeping an

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

eye on the door you came through, you notice a crack starts running along the length of it, across the top...

LYDIA

Mmm...

ALEX

... and then, as everyone's talking, suddenly just *[sound of stone falling]* drops the archway, having broken, and then just a bunch of stone chips and so on flying up, and a bit of dust, and so on.

LYDIA

Well, we completed that level.

(Laughter)

ALEX

The sounds of that distant movement stop.

HELEN

Oh, no.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Go! Go go go go!'

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

'Next one!'

HELEN/AZU

'Right!'

ALEX (also as Ed)

Ed's sort of looking around going, 'Um. Uh...'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Follow us.'

ALEX (as Ed)

'Kay.'

HELEN/AZU

'Just come with us.'

ALEX

Do you just pick one at random, or do you pick the opposite one, or... ?

BRYN

The one around?

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

Yeah.

HELEN

Yeah, the next one.

BRYN

Yeah, the next one along, probably.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

Rotating around

ALEX

So, you run through one, there's that brief stretching out, coming back together. You find yourself in a stone circle. Exactly like the one you left, albeit one of the doorways hasn't broken.

HELEN

Okay. Is there anyone there?

ALEX

No.

HELEN

Okay.

BEN

Arrow.

[sound of an arrow hitting its target]

LYDIA

That's so good!

ALEX

Okay.

LYDIA

Just peers through each of the gateways to see if you can catch a glimpse of anyone through the smoke.

ALEX

Give me a Perception Check.

LYDIA [quietly]

Ohh...

[Rolls dice]

27.

ALEX

27? Okay. You're peering through one and it's just smoke, smoke, and you're just, like, 'come on, come on, come on, come on', and as you're sort of looking around to decide what to do next, you catch the smallest glimpse of some kind of movement...

LYDIA

Mmm?

ALEX

... on the opposite door to the one that you're looking through.

LYDIA/SASHA

'There's one through there!'

HELEN/AZU

'Okay.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Alright!'

BEN

Also, while Sasha's looking there, I look behind us. Can I see the arrow on the floor?

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

Brilliant.

LYDIA

Yay!

BEN

They're seen through the doorway, so that's good to know.

HELEN

Fantastic.

ALEX

Okay.

LYDIA

Genius.

HELEN

Off we go into the...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN

... the move-y one...

ALEX

Okay. So you... **[laughs]** the move-y one. So, Shatner's there and he's like 'Hello! What are you doing here?'

(Group laughter)

ALEX

... and so, yeah, you head through the gateway. That stretch out happens, that compression, and you find a Goblin is face down, bound, hands and feet together. They appear to be in a *far* worse state than Bi Ming was. Like, far, far worse.

LYDIA/SASHA

'Alright.'

BEN

'Is it recognisable as Vesseek?'

ALEX

Yes.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Vesseek!' I'll run over, turn them over, like, so they're not face down. How are they doing?

ALEX

They appear to have been heavily beaten up, but not actually, like, mortally wounded.

LYDIA

Oh, that's cool.

ALEX

You don't even need to do a Heal Check, like...

BEN

Lay On Hands.

ALEX

Okay.

HELEN [gasps]

Noooo!

LYDIA

Oh. Yeah, but...

BRYN

Maybe... no, she said no magic. This is different.

LYDIA

If he does it, he does it. You know?

BEN

Also, still have faith in my god.

[Rolls dice]

LYDIA

Oooh!

BEN

So, either it's ten Healing, or kill.

ALEX

Is it plus anything, or is it just those two?

BEN

No, that's 2D6. Oh, they're not fatiguing anymore.

ALEX

Correct!

(Lydia laughs)

ALEX

That would have been a factor, look at your mercy doing its thing!

(Laughter)

Works really well.

LYDIA

Oh, eh!

ALEX

[whommmph] Yeah, really good!

BEN

Right...

ALEX

Really, really good.

BEN

... cut their bonds.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Vesseek, come on!'

ALEX (as Vesseek)

'Right. Okay. What's happening?'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Uh, you've been kidnapped. Let's go!'

BRYN/HAMID

'There's no time. Quick.'

ALEX (as Vesseek)

'Perfect.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Get... put another arrow in the ground.'

BRYN

I'm... as he's already doing that, I'm ripping just a piece of clothing, just to wrap very quickly around the top of the arrow. I want each circle to be distinguishable, so a single arrow alone...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

LYDIA

Mmm.

HELEN

Ahh.

BRYN

... isn't enough.

BEN

Mmm.

BRYN

So now we've got arrow with Adamantine, arrow alone, arrow with ribbon.

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

Cool.

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

Uh, Vesseek grabs you, goes, 'I know we're in a rush – you need to know, there's no pattern, don't look for one. It's just a trap.'

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Okay, cool.' And then I'll hand them a...

BRYN/HAMID

Good info! Thank you!

BEN

... and I'll hand them a long sword.

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

Sorry, Vesseek's like, double thumbs up, '[through gritted teeth] Yeah! Let's get out of here!'

(Group laughter)

HELEN

This is great. We've got two Grizzops!

BEN

And I hand them a long sword.

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

Yep. 'Wicked!'

(Group laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

HELEN

Aw, yay!

BRYN/HAMID

'Let's look in the next one then.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right, let's go.'

ALEX

Everyone give me a Perception Check, please.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

LYDIA

Oh...

BEN

11.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BRYN

17.

LYDIA

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Only 20.

HELEN

16.

LYDIA [squeaks]

Sorry, guys, I've let you down!

ALEX

Sasha again is like, 'I think I see something, like this one it's, like, come on, come on, come on, what's happening'. You're all... I'm going to say for the sake of, like, the picture... you're all picking a door, you're all, like, come on, come on, come on, let's do the thing, let's do the thing. Sasha, you're like 'There's something. It wasn't there before. Go'.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Sorry, you ju... that's what you see.

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

ALEX

You all head through?

BEN

Yeah, yeah!

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You find yourself in a stone circle with a, oops, actually I should...

[Rolls dice]

ALEX

... yeah. You find yourself in a stone circle with an Adamantine rock just plunged into the dirt.

LYDIA/SASHA

'Well, I mean...'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right. Next one.'

ALEX

Perception Check again, guys.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BRYN

So, from the centre circle, one of the doorways is collapsed.

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

And only in this circle.

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Okay. Good.

[Rolls dice]

BRYN

Perception Checks.

BEN

12.

LYDIA

And the one that we took Grizzop's buddy out of...

BRYN

30.

LYDIA

... that doorway didn't collapse?

ALEX

So, first things that happen, the door that you just came from, *[sound of falling stone]* collapses down. Hamid, as you're looking at that and looking over your shoulder, you see the distinct shape of something else in a distant one, and it's definitely a person.

BRYN

Okay, so... and it's three doorways still open from this one?

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Okay.

BRYN/HAMID

'I think there's someone in that one.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Go!'

HELEN/AZU

'Alright, let's go.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Yeah.'

ALEX

Okay, at which point, you enter Initiative.

[someone squeals]

... you are running through, you come through, and you find yourself in the presence of not-a-hostage.

LYDIA

Oh, dear.

BRYN

Uh, well it's time for a break, so let's take a break there and come back in a minute when we've rolled for Initiative.

ALEX

You know what, yeah, let's take a long break. Let's do that instead.

(Lydia laughs)

ALEX

And welcome back. You are all in Initiative order. That's easy. I need to check something.

[Rolls dice]

That's good.

BEN

Do... could you remind us and the listeners what our Initiative order is?

HELEN

Mine is first!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I am going to... Having just rolled...

LYDIA

Mm hmm?

ALEX

... I am going to give you a surprise round, because you are literally coming from nowhere and are not expected. Azu, Eldarion, Sasha, Grizzop, Hamid. Vesseek gets tagged on to the end.

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

Bi Ming...

LYDIA

Is not a fighter.

ALEX

... is currently on your back, so...

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

... he's not being added. So, with that in mind, Azu, you are up. You have run through into a stone circle, it has all of its gateways still there.

HELEN

Okay.

ALEX

So, you all see a robed figure. Azu, obviously, you're first. It is facing away from you. It appears to be acting on some kind of object in front of it...

HELEN

Oh.

ALEX

... like, its elbows are out and it seems to be moving its hands, or something, over an object. You cannot see what the object is. You are directly behind it and it has no idea that you are there.

HELEN

What if that's important, what if I stopped it and the whole thing would collapse and I... ?

ALEX

Six seconds!

HELEN

I hit it with my axe.

ALEX

Five seconds. Are you sure? Four seconds. Three... I'm happy to just fuff.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

[Lydia shrieks]

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA

You can't un-act, unless you're Thanos!

ALEX

So, because you're running, you can't do the multi-attack thing, but you can do your first attack with all of the bells and whistles.

HELEN

Okay.

ALEX

Are you doing anything else special with it, or are you just hitting the thing?

LYDIA

Easy answer.

HELEN

I'm going to flip and hit it.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Okay. Give me an attack roll. It is taking all the penalties.

HELEN

[Rolls dice]

Oh, wow.

BEN

Is that good?

HELEN

That was a three.

BEN

Ah!

HELEN

That's... 13.

ALEX

You miss. Well, specifically, you hit it in the cloak where there isn't some body apparently.

HELEN

Oh, dear.

ALEX

Not your fault, these things happen. Like...

HELEN [laughing]

That doesn't help!

ALEX

... *[tuts]* oh, but well, yeah, I'm afraid... you could... No, in order to have got there you'll have done something else. Yeah, that's you done on your first turn, I'm afraid.

HELEN

That's okay.

ALEX

Eldarion...

[Rolls dice]

... *immediately* holds her action because she... casting magic here will kill everyone. So, she doesn't do that.

HELEN

Okay.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

Sasha, you're up.

LYDIA

I... drop Bi Ming... and run up and stab the thing. If I can do all those things.

ALEX

Cool. Would you like to do your flip thing, as well?

LYDIA

No, 'cos I'm already flanking it, because...

ALEX

You could... yeah, you could flank it without having to do your flip, that's fine.

Um, in which case then...

LYDIA

And you know, acrobatics is basically magic...

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

You can only do one attack, because you're having to move to get up to the creature.

LYDIA

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Mm hmm. That's fine.

[Rolls dice]

Ooh, I've got a natural 20.

BRYN

Roll to confirm.

ALEX

Roll to confirm the crit.

LYDIA

Oh, yes, I forgot crits. I've never had one...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

... I've got five, so...

HELEN

Nonsense. Absolute nonsense!

LYDIA

... no.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

Which dagger are you using?

LYDIA

I am using the... ice one.

ALEX

Cool. So, you get a fine hit. The dagger...

BRYN

That's... I mean, that's still 18.

ALEX

Ooh, is it?

BRYN

Even on you rolling a five...

LYDIA

Oh, are you using my...

BRYN

... with all your bonuses to a single... dagger attack...

LYDIA

Where is it?

BRYN

... with the flanked...

LYDIA

Yeah, so 12, 13, 14, 15, plus five, yeah, is 18.

ALEX

Good call, that's a hit. You've confirmed the crit.

BRYN

So, you've confirmed the crit.

LYDIA

Oh, cool! I didn't know that was how it worked.

ALEX

Yep. So, I'll... I'm happy to own that one, I'm not going to edit the mistake out.

Yeah, good spot.

LYDIA

Well, I didn't tell you so, it was my...

ALEX

Yeah, you uh, you hit, your crit.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

LYDIA

What is a crit, then?

BRYN

Uh, so you roll all your damage twice.

LYDIA

Oh, okay, cool.

HELEN

Ooh!

LYDIA

Well, I mean, it's... it's not quite a... um...

[Rolls dice]

HELEN

So stabby!

LYDIA

So, ten, 13, plus one.

[Rolls dice]

14 and six ice damage. And then again?

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

[Rolls dice]

... and then... oh, dear. 18.

BRYN

No, so you...

LYDIA

Yeah, I took one away from that...

BRYN

But you get one for the dirty fighter, so it actually... they cancel out.

ALEX

Yep.

LYDIA

Oh! Okay, so...

BRYN

So, I already added that. So it's 15 from the first roll and then 19 from the second roll. So...

LYDIA

Plus four ice damage.

BRYN

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

So, it... but it all happens at once, so it's ten ice damage plus... 34 normal damage.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

Good grief...

LYDIA

I'm more impressed...

BEN

... that's absurd!

LYDIA

Oh, no, that's less than a Fireball, but I'm just impressed...

BRYN [smugly]

I mean, yes!

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA

... with Hamid's...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

Are you using your ice dagger?

LYDIA

Ice. Yes.

ALEX

Definitely. Okay, cool. So, you've run up, it's, like, 'oh, I've got you'...

LYDIA

Now he's going to say none of that counts, because it likes ice!

ALEX

... you plunge your dagger into the creature. Your dagger explodes in your hand!

[Helen gasps]

LYDIA

Noooooo...!

HELEN

No!

ALEX

You take that damage.

HELEN [gasps]

No!

ALEX

All of it.

LYDIA

I... oh, okay – I'm down to six.

ALEX

To be clear...

BRYN

No, no, that was 34 normal and ten ice.

LYDIA

I'm minus two.

BEN

That's it, you go down!

LYDIA

I go down.

ALEX

So, you plunge in. The dagger begins to vibrate and, everyone, there is a huge bright flash of light, and I don't mean that a burst comes off the dagger, the dagger literally explodes in Sasha's hand, in her face, blowing her backwards away from the creature.

[Helen gasps]

LYDIA

I'm down.

ALEX

Sasha is down.

HELEN

Oh, no.

ALEX

Grizzop, you're up.

BRYN

Would you like Sasha to cross ice dagger off her character sheet?

ALEX

Sasha, could you cross ice dagger off your character sheet?

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

LYDIA

That's almost worse... like, she's covered in scars already!

BEN

Haha. Oh, yeah, that's another one.

LYDIA

But like, losing her dagger...

ALEX

Look, I figured it out. Hit Sasha where it hurts...

BEN

In the daggers!

BRYN

Wow!

ALEX

... in the daggers.

(Helen laughs)

BRYN

Wow. Cruel...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

One dagger at a time, I'm just gonna take 'em away!

BRYN

We thought Bi Ming Gusset was the hostage, it turns out it was the dagger all along.

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

This is all just an elaborate ploy to take Sasha's daggers away!

LYDIA

No, man, she's down.

BRYN

That was...

ALEX

Yep.

BRYN

... painful.

BEN

So, I...

HELEN

Oh my word...

BEN

... 'cos we're...

LYDIA

And you can't Lay On Hands.

BEN

Well, no. No, no... well, also, 'cos this is all happening simultaneously, basically...

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

I am going to... I whisper a prayer to Artemis...

ALEX

Yep.

BEN

... and my bow starts vibrating?

ALEX

Mm hmm...

BEN

I'm casting... I'm using Divine Bond and putting speed on my weapon. I'm gonna make a rapid shot full attack action, so that's two for the rapid shot...

[Rolls dice]

ALEX

Yep.

BEN

... one for my second attack.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

And one extra from speed. So, I make three shots at... three shots at 11. Is it within 30 foot?

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

Okay, three shots at 11.

ALEX

To be clear, just for everyone's benefit, it turns out the radius of the stone circle is 60 feet, it is 30 feet from the stone circle to the middle.

BEN

Cool.

[sound of dice being shaken]

ALEX

All of them are the same.

BEN

[Rolls dice]

28, 18, and 21.

ALEX

All hit.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

I think they all hit. So, I'll roll the damage on that first.

LYDIA [laughing]

Roll low, is what I advise.

(Laughter)

BEN

It's not magic. You used magic. I reckon that's...

ALEX

Ben's really hoping and betting a lot...

BEN

Otherwise, I've just... oh, no, I have loads of hit points, I can't one-shot myself.

This is fine.

[Rolls dice]

Oh, especially not if I roll like that. six, two, two. Then my third shot, er, fourth shot.

ALEX

Yep. All good so far.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

[Rolls dice]

(Lydia laughs)

I have a limited amount of space.

ALEX

The trick... the trick is to roll it on the table!

BEN

There we go! And then that's, um, 16.

ALEX

16. Ooh, yes, it's flat-footed. Cool.

BEN

[Rolls dice]

And another three.

ALEX

Perfect.

BEN

Oh, need a magic bow.

ALEX

All of those *[thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk]* plunge into the creature. You don't explode, it doesn't explode.

LYDIA

Oh, come on!

ALEX

It does give a *[sound of a creature screaming]*...

BEN/GRIZZOP

'No magic!'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

... yell. Elarion goes... yells as well, 'Not even magic weapons!' At which point, Hamid, you're up.

BRYN

Hamid is halfway through preparing a spell...

ALEX [laughing]

Yep!

BRYN

... before he catches himself.

ALEX

Yep!

(Helen laughs)

BRYN/HAMID

He's like, 'Oh! Um...'

(Laughter)

... he's, sort of, reaching for his crossbow which he hasn't used in... well, about a week it turns out...

(Group laughter)

... or two years, however you want to look at it.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Well, bear in mind as well, it's probably, like, 47 years now in game-time. It's all a mess!

BRYN

Yeah.

HELEN

This is all a metaphor. The circle's a metaphor for life...

[0:33:34 talking over one another]

ALEX

I finally found a way to...

BRYN

When Sasha is blown back across the circle towards him, and he goes
'Aaaahhhhhh!'

(Group laughter)

Drops towards her, and I would like to pour a potion down her throat if I have
time in the round?

ALEX

You can. You have to say which potion, though.

BRYN

Potions are divine magic.

ALEX

Yes, they are.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

It's a Cure Serious, right?

BRYN

It's all I've got.

BEN

Roll your damage.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

Un-damage.

ALEX

For what it's worth, **[speaking through gritted teeth]** this is absolutely the right time to use a Cure Serious, why are you even debating?!

BRYN

Because if it's...

BEN

Roll the dice, Bryn!

BRYN

... if it gets perverted, it kills her.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

Roll the dice, Bryn!

ALEX

Do it! Kill her!

BRYN

Oh, that's a terrible roll...

ALEX

Kill her! Kill her, Bryn... !

LYDIA

Ohhhh...!

BRYN

12.

ALEX

12?

LYDIA

Oh, she's on ten hit points.

ALEX [resignedly]

Sasha heals ten... 12, sorry, damage.

LYDIA

She's on ten. Er, she jumps up!

ALEX

I don't like it when Ben's right and understands the situation. I like it when he doesn't.

BEN

Isn't it lucky you have 14 non-magical daggers on you?

HELEN [laughing]

You've got your Adamantine ones!

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah.

HELEN

You've always got those!

BRYN

Adamantine's really good 'cos often creatures aren't immune to it, as well.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

It bypasses DR.

BRYN

Yeah. They can be immune to other things.

ALEX

But yeah...

LYDIA/SASHA

But she's a... but she wouldn't... she's just been unconscious. So, she's like,
'Uh, what? *[mumbles indecipherably]* Where am I?'

BRYN/HAMID

'Don't use the magic dagger!'

LYDIA/SASHA [squeaks]

'But they're so nice!'

(Laughter)

BEN

That's it. Combat!

LYDIA and HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

At which point, Vesseek charges. Of course they charge, they've got a sword, why would they not? What sword did you hand them, just so I can make sure I've got the damage right?

BEN

It's a long sword. It is a small long sword, which means it is 1D6.

ALEX

1D6.

[Rolls dice]

Dealing some damage, there is no need to give you the specific figure.

BEN

That's fine.

ALEX

Yeah, Vesseek's like *[makes screeching sound and a noise of the sword hitting home]...*

(Helen laughs)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

... and takes the biggest baseball bat swing possible with the sword that they are wielding.

HELEN

Aw, lovely.

ALEX

At which point then, we head into...

HELEN

What about Ed?

LYDIA

Mmm!

ALEX

That's a good point.

HELEN

Oh, no, Ed's really stupid!

BEN

But also not magical.

LYDIA

Does he have a magical sword?

BEN

No idea.

BRYN

He probably has a magical sword.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Alex is gonna confess something that he's never done to listeners before.

Didn't put him into Initiative order...

[Lydia gasps]

... and for the sake of ease, he goes last. He didn't realise what was happening, now he does. It's fine!

LYDIA [laughing]

I mean, that's in character, right? You're just method!

BEN

Oooh? Oooh, evildoer!

(Laughter)

ALEX

In fairness, he is taking horrendous penalties to Initiative at all times, so it's not that far-fetched. He immediately charges.

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

HELEN

Ohh.

LYDIA/SASHA [shouts]

'IS IT MAGIC?'

[Sound of dice being rolled]

Sasha calls...

ALEX

Hits. Okay. His golden glow suddenly is just *the sun*. It's just in the stone circle, it is *not* a good thing, it's just...

BEN

[0:36:01 Apollo...]!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Yeah, exactly. He swings his Morningstar. For both of the Paladins, this guy is smiting evil, like, just so much...

BEN

Mm hmm.

HELEN

Mmm.

ALEX (also as Ed)

[Bommmmp]! Hits the creature. It literally just explodes into shards of golden light, leaving nothing behind. Ed's just like, **[rrrraaaaaaarrrrrggghh...]**
[bommmmp]! Be gone, evil!

(Laughter)

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Uh, evil...'

ALEX (also as Ed)

'Probably!'

(Laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

On the other side of the creature that he just exploded because... I forgot how much he was optimised, there is a pedestal. It appears to be made of stone, maybe onyx, something like that. With a crystal ball atop it. The crystal ball is, you know, for Hamid's benefit because he'll know this, it is the crystal ball component of a bunch of scrying spells. Like, the formal thing crystal ball, not just a ball of glass, you can tell at a glance. That's Ed's turn. I'm going to drop you out of formal Initiative, back into the rushing round thing. It just exploded. But Ed's a little bit like, blood up! *[rrrraaaaaaarrrrrggghh...]*

BRYN/HAMID

'Good work, Ed!'

[rrrraaaaaaarrrrrggghh...]

Someone, grab that crystal ball and stick it in an...

LYDIA

Sasha grabs it. She's already...

BRYN/HAMID

'... bag.'

(Laughter)

ALEX

Grab that... *[whomp]*!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

LYDIA

Yeah. Like, she would've been...

ALEX

Yep. Absolutely fine.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

LYDIA

I was gonna Sleight of Hand it if you said not to grab...

ALEX

Oh, but you didn't check for traps, did you?

LYDIA

No, I didn't.

[Helen gasps]

ALEX [laughing]

You're fine.

LYDIA

I don't even need to roll to grab it now, 'cos we all...

[0:37:24 laughing over Lydia]

HELEN

I can't take it! My heart! My heart's... I can't take it!

BRYN

Can we just get a supercut of Helen gasping?

(Group laughter)

Helen gasping is like, my favourite thing.

ALEX

It is wonderful! So, yeah, you manage to do so.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right!' Run up to Sasha. Lay On Hands.

LYDIA/SASHA [shouts]

'AH!' She flinches away.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'No time!'

(Laughter)

Uh, five, you are cured of fatigue... **[giggles]**

ALEX [laughing]

Yes, you are.

LYDIA

Oh, good, we've been running around quite a lot.

BRYN/HAMID

'Is everyone okay?'

LYDIA/SASHA

'No.'

ALEX (as Ed) [panting]

'Yeah, yeah!'

BRYN/HAMID

'Okay. Back, and then the next one.'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right.'

HELEN/AZU

'Okay.'

ALEX

[Fwommph]!

BRYN/HAMID

'We don't need to mark this one, there's a pedestal in the middle.'

ALEX

Yep.

LYDIA/SASHA

'Mmm.'

HELEN/AZU

'Yeah!'

BRYN/HAMID

'It's already distinguishable.'

HELEN

Oh, lovely.

ALEX

So you head back?

LYDIA

Mm hmm.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

[sound of stone falling]

HELEN

Oh, no... Oh! Right, it's the doorway!

ALEX

The one that you came from cracks, shatters, breaks.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'One left!'

BRYN/HAMID

'Two.'

LYDIA

Sasha...

BEN/GRIZZOP

'So... right. Yep. Two left!'

LYDIA

... chugs her other Cure Serious Wounds, which is three...

BRYN

3D8 plus five.

LYDIA

... D8 plus five.

[Rolls dice]

Ooh. Ooh!

BEN

There you go.

LYDIA

Eight plus eight is 16, plus five, 21!

BEN

There you go.

ALEX

Yes! Good. Everyone, give me a Perception Check.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN

That's more like it, 24.

BRYN

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

30.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN

25.

LYDIA

21.

LYDIA

I'm a little shaky still!

ALEX [laughing]

So, about at the same time...

(Helen laughs)

... like, Grizzop and Hamid and two of the NPCs ... I believe it was Ed and Eldarion ... all at the same time go, 'THAT ONE!'

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Wait, wait, wait... Ed noticed and Sasha didn't?!

(Helen laughs)

This is a low point.

ALEX

Ed rolled... critically successful

BRYN

You were too busy drinking a potion.

BEN

And also Ed's like 'Door!'

(Laughter)

ALEX

Yeah, in fairness, he could have been wrong!

(Laughter)

BEN

Yeah.

(Laughter)

He saw *something*.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

He's just copying what he sees.

BEN

Yeah.

HELEN

Aww...

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Let's go!'

ALEX

Yep. *[Fwommph]*!

HELEN

Yeah, in we go.

ALEX

So, you head in and what you find is an Orc, who is stood with a bunch of torn bonds at their feet, already looking around like... *[grumbling and muttering]*.

HELEN/AZU

'Emeka!'

ALEX

They immediately turn around to smack... and then don't smack Azu.

(Helen laughs)

ALEX (as Emeka)

'Hey.'

HELEN/AZU

'Hi! You're coming with us.'

ALEX (as Emeka)

'Yeah!'

HELEN/AZU

'Fine. Come on!'

[she laughs]

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right, let's go!'

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA/SASHA

'So, we're looking for a little, *little* Halfling.'

HELEN/AZU

'Yep.'

BRYN

Well, we charge back and then there's a single doorway left.

ALEX

Emeka takes the time to spit at where he was before running back through.

HELEN [laughing]

Good, he's marked it with spit, there.

ALEX

So the door... the door starts to crack... *[sounds of stone falling]*. It drops as you come through. Everyone, give me a Perception Check.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BRYN

26.

HELEN

18.

BEN

16.

LYDIA

19.

ALEX

Who got the 26?

BRYN

Me.

ALEX

You're the first to notice, none of the others will notice it at this point, that sound of very distant movement has restarted... quieter, but it's clearly approaching. But it's such a low rumble that it is something that could sort of go past...

BRYN

Hamid hasn't found his hostage yet, he doesn't have time to pay attention to that sort of small context clue.

BEN [chanting]

Let's kill a god! Let's kill a god!

(Group laughter)

Shoot Hades in the eyes! Let's kill a god!

ALEX

So...

LYDIA

Bi Ming's back on me back.

ALEX

... none of you see any sign of anyone through the other doorway.

BRYN

We... I mean, we're going through it regardless, we're not even...

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Yeah. So, plough through it...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

... and then find yourself staring at a set of tracks that lead to where you've just come from. Turning around, you can see the stone circle that you just left.

BRYN/HAMID

'Wait, what?'

HELEN/AZU

'Oh, no.'

BEN

Are there any other doors?

LYDIA

Yeah.

BEN

Out?

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

Vesseek pipes up, I warned you, it's... it's just random!

HELEN/AZU

What did you mean, what...

ALEX (as Vesseek)

One of us got out earlier and tried to leg it. It... you ju... you just bounce around.

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Right. Let's follow the tracks, then.'

LYDIA/SASHA

'They go back where we...'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Yeah, yeah, follow the...'

LYDIA/SASHA

'Yeah, yeah, we go there.'

ALEX

Okay.

LYDIA/SASHA

... go there and then, like, I would expect to just keep looking into that door and that it would reset, that's the... seems the logical...

BRYN

Hamid literally runs back and forth through the door a few times.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Stop it! Follow the tracks!'

BRYN/HAMID

'Okay, okay! I'm sorry! I'm just...'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Yes, I know. Just follow the tracks.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Okay!'

BEN

Following the tracks...

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

... wherever they lead, because they're going to keep going through different doors...

ALEX

If... yeah, yeah.

BEN

... based on where he randomly he's...

ALEX

Yep. For what it's worth, by the way...

BEN

... until all the doors are dead.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

... Vesseek is right up there with you running like, '[**strained, through gritted teeth**] Oh my god, they're so slow!'

(Helen laughs)

Just legging it.

LYDIA

Just as fast.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

Didn't say Vesseek was talking about you!

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

There's like 12 people in the party at this point!

HELEN

Wow, oh.

ALEX

It's so crowded!

LYDIA

And Eldarion can only take back like... eight...

ALEX

So, charging along the path, the large thing you can all now hear is approaching, and approaching from the direction that you just left.

HELEN

Mm hmm.

ALEX

Sprinting along, you then hear the distinct sounds of what may once have been a stone circle being pulverised.

HELEN

Okay.

ALEX

You all continue running?

BEN

Mm hmm..

HELEN

Mm hmm.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

And then you start, it takes... let's put it this way, you've gotten very used to just ... **[boop!]** ... new place, new place. This one is... you're running for like a couple of minutes and this thing is getting closer. It is not charging, do you know what I mean?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

It's unhurried, but it... whatever it is must be... *huge*.

HELEN

It's stalking.

LYDIA

Can we look behind us and can we see it?

BRYN

Remember, we're still in the Fog of War.

ALEX

Still Fog of War style thing. You do see in the distance, a stone circle...

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

... which appears to be the same as the others, and just about make out a tiny little Halfling in the middle, bound, gagged, etc.

BEN

Yeah.

HELEN

Okay.

ALEX

I am presuming everyone *immediately* just charges up.

LYDIA and HELEN

Yeah!

LYDIA/SASHA

'Don't go through the doors. Like, the doors would take you to somewhere else, you go through the gaps in between.'

ALEX

Are you saying that in character?

LYDIA

Yes.

(Alex laughs)

LYDIA/SASHA

'Don't go through the doors, it might take you somewhere else!'

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Got it!'

ALEX

Everyone...

BRYN/HAMID

'Good plan.'

HELEN/AZU

'Yeah.'

ALEX

... goes around the doors... Metagame!

(Helen laughs)

ALEX

Bonus points for Lydia!

HELEN

Oh, I've got too many emotions!

ALEX

That would have been brilliant! Damn! **[laughs]** So yeah, you charge in and yeah, you find a certain...

BRYN/HAMID [frantically]

Ishaq! Ishaq! Ishaq!

ALEX (also as Ishaq)

He is bound and gagged and **[Ishaq tries to speak]**.

BRYN

I rip through the ropes and gags with claws.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

Perfect.

ALEX (as Ishaq) [panting]

'Oh! Hamid! Hey.'

BRYN/HAMID

'It's okay, it's okay, it's okay. I've got you, I've got you, I've got you!'

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX (as Vesseek)

'Where are they? I'm gonna blast 'em...!'

BRYN/HAMID

No, we're gonna be fine, no magic!

ALEX (as Vesseek)

... I'm gonna blast 'em!'

BRYN/HAMID

'NO MAGIC!'

ALEX (as Vesseek)

'Eldarion, we're done. Let's go.'

ALEX (as Eldarion)

'Hold hands.'

BRYN/HAMID

'Everyone!'

(Helen laughs)

LYDIA

Such a big circle...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA [laughing]

... We're such a big circle!

BEN/GRIZZOP

'Everyone keep your eyes closed and *do not let go!*'

ALEX

Eldarion goes quiet. And then begins to scream.

[Helen gasps]

Not in pain, but in a kind of [rrrooooooaaaaaarrrrr...]...

BEN

Dragon Ball Z.

(Laughter)

ALEX

Full DBZ-ing. Full DBZ-ing, like. And by that I mean, *really* going for it.

LYDIA

Oh, gosh.

ALEX

A lot of things happen in a short space of time, I'm now going to describe some stuff. Please do not interrupt, I am probably going to be getting around to the thing. A lot's happening at once.

[Lydia squeaks]

HELEN

Oh my god!

ALEX

Number one. Eldarion begins to scream and you can all feel, like, an electric current running through your hands. Eldarion then steps back and joins the hands of the two people that she was holding... and then as that's happening, the enormous pit, you know that sort of gravity well thing I was thinking? I'd like you to take a moment and imagine, if a pit the size of her hand came out for Prestidigitation...

[Lydia gasps]

... this pit is *just* enormous, it *sweeps* out from Eldarion. The stone circle plummets down into it. There is a split second of Eldarion there, eyes closed, before Eldarion also plummets downwards.

BRYN

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

We've all got our eyes closed...

BEN

Yep.

LYDIA

Mmm.

ALEX

At the same time, there is the distinct sound of something impossibly huge suddenly covering the remaining distance. It is just raw noise, like, there is no, sort of – 'Oh, I wonder what that is' – it's like someone took the sea and then hit someone with it, it's just *[fwwwrrrrmmppph]*.

LYDIA

Poseidon is here!

BEN

I open my eyes, I *have* to look!

ALEX

Please give me the Fort Save.

BEN

Whup, whup, whup!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BRYN

Hamid is gonna scream 'eyes closed'...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

... not at Grizzop, specifically, but mostly to Ishaq, because he knows that...

HELEN

And Ed.

BRYN

... he knows that he wanted to open his eyes really badly, he knows Ishaq is quite like him.

HELEN

Aww.

BEN

17.

ALEX

17? I'll allow you to pick who's holding hands with you.

BEN

Uh... it's Vesseek and probably...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BRYN

We're probably alternating PC, NPC.

BEN

Oh, actually no, yeah, um... Well no, it was probably Eldarion 'cos we would have done sort of the Initiative...

ALEX

But Eldarion stepped out, so Eldarion...

BEN

So, Azu, I guess, if we were...

HELEN

Okay!

BEN

If you...

HELEN

Okay...

ALEX

Could you please give me a Reflex Save, Grizzop? Can you give me a Reflex Save, Azu?

HELEN

My reflexes are so bad, Ben! Why would you... ?

BEN

You're a Paladin, it's fine!

HELEN [squeals]

Nooo...!

[Sound of dice being rolled]

BEN

Oh, that's... yeah, that's pretty good.

HELEN

That's 20.

BEN

26 again.

ALEX

So, yeah. The thing that you see, that enormous yawning portal, Eldarion is crying and smiling as she drops away and is staring 100% at Sasha as she does so. What you find is the inte... the massive swirling smoke *sweeps* back from

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

your position – coagulates, is the best way to describe it – to a hand... just the hand, that's all. And this hand dwarfs the sky. The thumb stretches out further than you can see to one side, the little finger stretches out further to the other. You cannot see beyond the wrist, because it's beyond the curvature of the plane that you're on.

BEN

Knowledge Religion?

ALEX

Absolutely.

HELEN

Benjamin...

BEN

[Rolls dice]

20.

ALEX

Yeah! You just saw a god!

BEN

Yeah!

ALEX

More importantly, you just got *away* from a god!

HELEN

Benjamin!

ALEX

As you're starting...

HELEN

I'm so stressed!

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Do you know what you're doing to me?

(Laughter)

ALEX (also as Vesseek)

As you're starting to slip, like, 'cos of the, like, woah... and then obviously the whole eye-stretch, blah, blah, blah, begins happening, Vesseek just grabs you, yanks you closer and goes, 'No, you don't!'

(Laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Everyone, please give me a Fort Save, you have to give another one Grizzop, because you were getting cheeky!

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN

20.

ALEX

Mm hmm.

BEN

23.

ALEX

Mm hmm.

BRYN

18.

ALEX

Mm hmm.

LYDIA

14.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

You are holding hands with Bi Ming Gusset and... I'm gonna say Ed.

LYDIA

Yeah, sure.

ALEX

Give me a Reflex Save.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN

Ed's a Paladin, so hopefully he'll be alright.

LYDIA

23?

ALEX

23? You catch yourself. The others are like **[panting]** can't find you, *you* regrab yourself. **[Fwommmpph!]** Everything starts shifting. I know that's a lot of checks in a short space of time, everyone give me another Fort Save.

BEN

It's quite dangerous.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

Oh, yes!

[Sound of dice being rolled]

HELEN [shrieking]

It's so dangerous!

LYDIA

Oh, dear.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

[Helen gasps]

BEN

Oooh! 27 for me.

BRYN

Natural one.

[Helen gasps again]

ALEX

Sasha?

LYDIA

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

Five.

[Ben gasps]

HELEN

19.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

Oh, that's not good. That is not... we don't want two at once!

ALEX

I'm gonna roll Reflex Saves for Sasha first. Sasha, can you give me a Reflex Save?

LYDIA

[Rolls dice]

Come on!

BEN

And Bi Ming and Ed...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

LYDIA

Okay. Er...

BEN

That's not great.

LYDIA

... that is 20.

ALEX

20? Okay. Hamid? You're obviously holding hands with Ishaq, there's no version where you're not.

BRYN

Oh, yeah.

ALEX

I'll let you pick the other person.

BRYN

Emeka.

[Rolls dice]

[Ben inhales sharply]

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

13 on my Reflex Save.

BEN

Ooh, Hamid doesn't do himself.

ALEX

So...

BEN

Is that a kill-a-character crack?

HELEN

Oh, no, Alex just cracked his neck, guys!

ALEX

Just so I can make sure I've got it right...

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

... you were holding hands with Bi Ming, and I said Ed, right?

LYDIA

Yeah.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

And you rolled...

LYDIA

20.

ALEX

Cool.

BEN

Oh, god.

ALEX

I'm going to describe something first. Hamid, the first thing that happens is you take 3D6 damage, just straight out the gate.

BRYN

Oh, you should roll it. It's your damage!

(Laughter)

That's not... don't roll damage on yourself, generally...

[Sound of dice being rolled]

LYDIA [laughing]

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

I just did!

BRYN

... unless you've done something terrible!

ALEX

So, you take 10, that wasn't too bad, actually. This is because, you know how I said that being stretched out doesn't hurt? Turns out it does, sometimes! Who knew? It's not good! The other thing that happens is that your hands then slip from the people, like, it's way too much... like, you're literally curling foetal...

BRYN

Mm hmm.

ALEX (also as Ishaq)

And Ishaq of all people screams, 'No! No! No, no, no! No! No!'

LYDIA

Ohhhh!

ALEX

... and you feel Ishaq grab you.

LYDIA [squeaks]

Little dude!

ALEX

I'll get to Sasha in a bit.

LYDIA

Oh, yeah.

HELEN

Oh!

ALEX

Grizzop. Did you close your eyes for the return journey?

BEN

[inhales]... Gahhh!

ALEX

Give me a Fort Save – I'm making the call.

BEN

Okay, fine.

[Rolls dice]

Geeuuuggggghhh!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

(Group laughter)

[Alex copies Ben's response!]

14.

ALEX

14. Guess who's back on the Reflex Saves!

BEN

Yeah.

[Rolls dice]

HELEN [gasps]

No!

BEN

13.

ALEX

Cool. Deal with Grizzop later as well.

LYDIA and HELEN

Nooo...

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

BEN

Death club!

HELEN

No!

ALEX

Half of the party...

LYDIA

Oh, my...

ALEX

... appear... to be specific, you're all eyes closed, you hear from the distance...

[ahhhh, heyyyy!!]

BRYN

Hamid's eyes snap open.

ALEX

Quick description? Everyone's here apart from Eldarion, Sasha, and Grizzop.

HELEN [shrieks]

NNNOOOOOOOOO...!!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [125] – [Don't Let Go]

ALEX

I'm gonna end the episode there.

HELEN

Noooo...

ALEX

I'm gonna end the episode there. That's where we're gonna end the episode...

HELEN

No!

LYDIA

Oh...

BEN

Bye, guys!

LYDIA

... gosh.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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ALEX

Should we give this a go?

LYDIA

Yeah.

HELEN

Yeah!

LYDIA [laughing]

Please don't make us have an emotional conversation in a time warped...

(Alex laughs)

BEN [singing (same tune as the Time Warp)]

Let's do some sadness again!

(Group laughter)



BEN

It's a henge.

ALEX

It's a henge.

(Laughter)

It's... you know what, mate, it's your standard henge.

(Group laughter)

You know, just...

BRYN

Common or garden henge.

ALEX

Just a... yeah...

LYDIA

Lesser spotted henge!

BRYN

You know, if you want one of the fancy ones, you've gotta pay extra!

ALEX

Yeah, yeah. No, no...

BEN

Henge plus.

(Laughter)

ALEX

No bells and whistles. You know what, you can't even use this to tell time, it's basically a display henge.

LYDIA [laughing]

Yeah!

HELEN

What you see is what you get.

(Laughter)

Yeah...