

RQG – 148 – Jumble Sale!

Content Warnings

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Hi everyone, Alex here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our patrons. Jamie Martinelli. Kate. Gabrielle Breteton. Aidan Grahane. Marcus Bolton. Ellen Torry. Jeb Kenobi. Felix. Jamie Levene. Oma Fiddler. Rhea. Artie. Davies Doherty. Annie Spener. Manon. Ji Aldiar. Stephanie Lecock. Lydia Campbell. Erin. Mars J. 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 148 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

Ben Meredith

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

And Helen Gould

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Birthday girl!

(Group laughter)

BRYN?

And it's Cel's birthday!

ALEX

Weirdly enough, I think it's going to be...

LYDIA

I'm just playing the persona.

ALEX

I think it's going to be Lydia's birthday for about four weeks!

(Group laughter)

Give or take.

BEN

I don't know, I reckon three, if I'm honest.

ALEX

Oh, it'd better not be!

LYDIA

We're celebrating me!

(Group laughter)

Just an annual festival! OK, yeah.

ALEX

And...

LYDIA

I'm also playing Cel Sidebottom.

HELEN

And Azu.

ALEX

Yeah, you're in here, you're in here, it's all good.

HELEN

I am certainly.

ALEX

So, um...

HELEN

On the floor.

BEN

Wait, Azu's just broken through the fourth wall? Kill - kill him for us, Azu! Only you can save yourself this way!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Are you kidding me? If Azu broke through the fourth wall, Azu would take me aside and go, Listen. I know - I know you're playing the big man, but is everything okay? And I'd be like, Hug me, Azu!

(Group laughter)

Hug me! I need the hug. No one's given me hugs.

LYDIA

It's the weird thing though, that we think Azu is the lovely kind, caring one, and she is, but she also has killed a lot of people?

HELEN

Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

LYDIA

Like...

ALEX

These are not mutually exclusive things for me.

BRYN

The kindest of murderers.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

Oh I just, I'm focussed, I can just get on board with that level of focus, you know?

HELEN

Well just, like, this is why I try and cast detect evil.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Oh, what, just to make sure the people you kill deserve it?

HELEN

Yes, Ben!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Foam at the mouth, axe in mid-air, aaarrgh – oh, hang on, sorry, sorry, ping!
Nah, go on, can't find...

(Group laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

?

You're just neutral so...

ALEX?

I can't believe you're being Judge Judy and executioner.

(Group laughter)

BRYN?

Such a good line.

ALEX

So also we are very much in a weird energy again, because that's just how we're rolling at the moment!

BRYN?

I'm so hungover!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So, picking up though on where we left off. What was horrible is watching my big beefy boy not quite manage to kill anyone.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN?

(deep voice) I'm the only beefy boy here.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I did add it in, I did explicitly say lanky more than beefy, didn't I?

BRYN

That's true.

ALEX

Gangling, in fact, with the extra elbows and stuff.

LYDIA

And bulbous.

ALEX

Oh, bulbous, bulbous was the word I used.

LYDIA

Like unto a bulb.

ALEX

Like unto a bulb. Speaking of which...

(Group laughter)

Said gangling creature like unto a bulb within the underwater facility within which you are currently all extant, it has collapsed, leaving you all in a boss-shaped, like obviously boss-shaped room. I am going to do one thing which this will all pick up on which is, I'm going to skip past them eliminating the remaining blobs, for one simple reason. I think every single party member including Skraak can one-hit kill them.

BEN

Kill the goo!

ALEX

Because you know what happens if they get you anyway, I can reveal it now.

LYDIA

What?

ALEX

They just make you stand still and laugh.

BEN?

Is there cement? A little cement.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

They just make you stand still and laugh.

LYDIA

Oh that's so nice!

HELEN

Aww. That's actually, that would actually be...

ALEX

You would have all been.

BEN

I think the plan was, while being punched by, you know...

ALEX

No, the ideal would be one of you – (whispers) Azu – would have definitely been killed whilst everyone else laughed, but...

HELEN

(screams)

ALEX

Here we are!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

(general uproar)

We have...

HELEN

I don't even respect your craft! I have, I can't believe that you were like, oh, didn't take anyone out, you were looking at me!

ALEX

Oh yeah.

HELEN

You were aiming – you aimed that terrible bulb monster at me specifically!

ALEX

Everyone gets a chance to shine, OK?

HELEN

No! I didn't even shine! Hamid had to kill it for me!

ALEX

I said everyone, not necessarily every time!

GIRLS

Oooh!

ALEX

Speaking of which. You're inside a large domed room, standing up above – I'd love to say the word corpse – shattered remnants of a thing that never should have been.

BRYN

Jumble sale.

ALEX

Jumble sale! Better, much better!

BEN?

Junk yard.

ALEX

So, as it stands...

LYDIA

No no no, junk yards might have things that still have some purpose. We're talking about...

ALEX

So you have...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

Like, back of the primary school...

BEN?

Ah... (laughs)

LYDIA

Sponsored by the local estate agent, I'll tell you about that...

ALEX

You know what, I said I'd start and then I have to say this anyway, I actually went to a jumble sale recently. Turns out, jumble sales in a post-internet world, you know where eBay's a thing? Much sadder affairs than they used to be. I remember them being much more joyous and full of actual things! Now it's just people that don't understand how the internet works.

LYDIA

Aww.

ALEX

It has a new sad element to it, not good! Also lots of stolen power tools, but that's a story for another time!

(Group laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

Like, literally a mound as big as a car of stolen power tools. That's a, that's a thing!

But moving on. You are now facing a "jumble sale" in the middle of this large underwater facility, having just, *just* dispatched the last of the things.

LYDIA

Oh, goodies!

Cel wants to, I assume it would be a craft alchemy, see if there are any valuable bits?

ALEX

No, that would be a perception to search the body.

LYDIA

OK.

ALEX

Craft alchemy would be to identify like....

LYDIA

Because I'm looking for the alchemical bits.

ALEX

From what is salvageable...

LYDIA

OK.

ALEX

Like, what's good, what's not.

LYDIA

I mean, they're a bit distracted so they only rolled a 17.

ALEX

17, OK. I'm going to give you the bad news first. Dragony
McLookatmydragonbreath has pretty much rendered the thing into a paste.

BRYN

Is everyone, is everyone OK?

ALEX

Most...

HELEN

No.

ALEX

Most of it's gone.

LYDIA

Mm.

BEN

I think, I think we're...

ALEX

Good news?

LYDIA

Ooh?

BEN

Alive.

ALEX

With one notable exception.

LYDIA

Ah!

ALEX

The brain orb appears completely intact, though extremely sooty.

LYDIA

Unplug it.

ALEX

There's nothing to unplug. It's literally like basically freestanding amidst the pile of garbage.

LYDIA

OK. Just going to hold that under my arm like a bowling ball.

ALEX

It is, the ball itself is about the size of your torso. The brain inside is quite small, the bulb itself quite large. Maybe even the size of Azu's torso. It's hefty.

HELEN

Does anyone... oh, OK.

BRYN

What do you need, Azu?

HELEN

Who else is hurting?

BEN

Er, I'm, yeah, a little bit. Cel? You doing OK?

LYDIA

Er, what? Um, yes!

HELEN

Are you sure? I think you got, you did get hit.

LYDIA

Stumbles away from the...

BEN

Right.

LYDIA

More, yeah, I mean, Cel is down to six hit points.

BEN

Allow me, I can do it quicker.

BRYN

Skraak, are you OK? Skraak?

ALEX

Skraak has currently scrambled down from the balcony, run up to Azu and is kind of tugging on Azu's armour.

HELEN

Hello.

ALEX

Skraak! And holds out the health potion that Hamid gave him earlier.

LYDIA

Awwww!

HELEN

No, you should, you should keep that!

BEN

No, don't use it at all. Come on, Hamid, are you all right?

BRYN

I'm fine.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

I think Skraak pulls a face at Ben's character. I'd love to say Zolf, but no, Skraak explicitly pulls a face at Ben's character.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

He pulls his face out into the portal.

ALEX

It matters to me.

BEN

Weird. This is just weird.

ALEX

It matters to me.

BEN

Everyone gets 17 hit points back.

ALEX

Including Skraak!

BEN

Yes.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

Nice.

BEN

Well, unless Skraak is undead, at which point I kill Skraak.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Skraak leaves the room for an unexplained reason!

(Group laughter)

Canonically, Skraak is not, just FYI, Skraak...

LYDIA

Skraak is not?

BEN

Yes, because if Skraak...

LYDIA

What? He is unbeing!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Genuinely, if Skraak was undead, I've just killed him.

ALEX

I know! That's why canonically Skraak is not. I believe Skraak may have healed one hit point, which is the entire damage Skraak has taken since the start.

HELEN

Does anyone need any more healing? I mean...

BEN

Yeah, I could use a little bit but...

LYDIA

I mean, I guess I'm kind of, I'm not at my best?

HELEN

Come over here.

BEN

Right, I'll go over there.

LYDIA

Thought you'd never ask!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

I'm going to...

BRYN

Hamid stops being invisible.

Boo!

BEN

Oh, you were just talking, weren't you?

LYDIA

Cel is also still, er, has massive bat... fangs.

?

Rawrrrr!

ALEX

Oh yeah, you're still....

LYDIA

Another hour of this!

(Group laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

OK. I'm going to a Lay on Hands on you and a Lay on Hands on you...

ALEX

That's Hamid and Cel.

BRYN

No.

HELEN

No, that's Zolf and Cel.

ALEX

Oh, I misread the thumb.

LYDIA

Cel feels leathery.

HELEN

Which is 46...

LYDIA

Ooh!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

I need a couple more. Thank you. (rolls)

BRYN?

We don't want your dice.

HELEN

Your dice are rejected.

LYDIA

Ooh!

BRYN?

Solid.

HELEN

I can't count, suddenly.

BRYN?

18.

HELEN

OK.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

I liked it better when you rolled low.

HELEN

OK. And then one for you.

ALEX

These inferior healers have to do it one at a time!

BEN

No no no no no! Lay on Hands is great, but just not for mass healing!

BRYN

14.

HELEN

You get 14 back.

BEN

Thank you very much.

ALEX

Oh, OK! You're actually, yeah, you seem to be out of your slump, finally!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

I'm now out of my Lay on Hands. Also, Zolf and Cel, if you were deceived, enfeebled or poisoned, you are no longer any of those.

ALEX

No, I am going to announce things to audience for people who are tracking, because it's just going to be easier. We have decided to level between sessions because, let's be honest...

LYDIA

It takes ages!

ALEX

You earned it! However, I'm going to be a little bit mushy about it because I don't...

BRYN

Pretty sure we're basically level 10 by now.

ALEX

I don't like – oooh, I can take 'em away!

(Group laughter)

Negative energy is a thing, Bryn! It hasn't been for you, but it will be!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

I know, I see it in this room!

BRYN

(laughs)

BEN

I, eeehhh!

LYDIA

Eeehhh!

BEN

I can prepare restoration so (blows raspberry).

ALEX

Kill the cleric first.

LYDIA

No!

ALEX

I mean, yes, that's...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

That's the rule.

ALEX

Absolutely.

BEN

If there's a wizard you kill the wizard, if there's a cleric you kill – yeah.

ALEX

Yeah. So...

BRYN

Alex, if I get to level 11, that's when I get wings. Just so you know. There's some really good art of Hamid with wings, and...

LYDIA

Yeah!

BRYN

You know how said it would make everyone if it never happened!

ALEX

I really want it not to happen!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

So, everyone has levelled...

LYDIA

Cel's flapping around, just happily flap flap flap.

ALEX

But, as I have said before, I am going to be a little bit mushy with it, in that, for the sake of speed we've already tallied up a bunch of like the core stats and so on, I am going to tell people now, if you have picked new spells...

BEN

Mm-hm?

ALEX

And other big shiny bells and whistles...

BEN

Mm-hm?

ALEX

Those aren't going to trigger until you've actually had a rest.

BEN

Rude! Rude.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

So.

BEN

I wanted to planar shift out of here.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

You'll have to wait to do it until...

ALEX

That's the reason I'm forbidding it, until you rest, Ben.

BEN

Wait, everybody, sleep for eight hours and we'll planar shift out of here!

HELEN

Do I still get my extra mercy?

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

So by big bells and whistles, I'm going to allow you that one. I'm talking more like planar shifting away! Specifically! There's a reason that you haven't been levelling past this dungeon yet, because it's a bloody nightmare!

BRYN

Let's go say hi to Hades!

ALEX

I played a campaign where people did that and they waited till the heat death of the universe, because he was a very busy god! OK. What are you doing now?

BRYN

I'm going to investigate the rest of the weird organ console. So this creature ripped themselves out of the organ console...

ALEX

So. In combat, to your eyes, it looked like they ripped themselves out. No no no no no, this was not a case of the console...

BRYN

Sure.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

Like, reforming itself. This was a thing that was built into it.

BRYN

Yep.

ALEX

It appears to be, to your eyes since you're not an engineer of this kind of thing – I want you to imagine like the biggest iPad dock imaginable? That, I guess?

BRYN

Sure, and there's the two columns filled with bubbling liquid.

ALEX

Well...

BRYN

Now that I'm half-full, right?

ALEX

Half-full, now.

BRYN

Now that I've seen the brain in the orb in the centre of this machine.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Brorb.

BRYN

I want to investigate these columns more closely, because I think they might be the same as the columns full of nutrition jelly and brains that we saw...

ALEX

OK.

BRYN

Under a certain landmark in Paris.

ALEX

Understood. I'm not going to get you to do a check. No.

BRYN

Ah.

ALEX

They are *bright* green. The ones underneath Paris were not. Like, these are like lurid green. Also, if you remember, you did detect magic in this room?

BRYN

Oh yeah.

ALEX

You didn't detect the weird combination of necromancy and other stuff...

BRYN

Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

Which did characterise Mr Ceiling.

BRYN

Yes.

ALEX

Because Mr Ceiling was like necromantic plus enchantment plus a little bit of...

BRYN

Plus divine.

ALEX

Of divine, yeah, which is weird. This does not have that. This is purely mundane.

HELEN

So you just mean like brains, and putting them in vats.

ALEX

There's no – did I say there were brains in those vats? I don't think I said...

BEN

Well, there's a brain in an orb!

LYDIA

There's one...

BEN

There's a brorb!

HELEN

(laughs)

ALEX

Brorbs and brats are not the same thing!

(Group laughter)

BEN

I don't like what I've started.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

Cel is gonna like be trying to move the borb and just be like:

Shoin! Shoin, you in there?

BRYN

(laughs)

ALEX

She's just rolling it round.

LYDIA

In multiple languages, like trying to look in and...

ALEX

So. The brain within the orb...

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Has a couple of like, basically electrodes upon it, we'd recognise them as that, running out to – there's some apparatus built into the orb. Not much. Like there's some...

LYDIA

Little hands.

ALEX

Basically, there appears to be like a dock for it to plug into the rest of the stuff at the bottom. There might be space for little feet and something, but we're not talking a lot. Like, big orb!

HELEN

It's not going to walk off.

ALEX

Big orb, not itty-bitty living space! There you go.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

So, what do we do with...

LYDIA

I don't know how you're going to question him.

BEN

Yeah, hang on a minute. This is some Mr Ceiling stuff, I say, looking at Hamid.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

It does look a bit like that. I found some...

LYDIA

Is my English failing me here?

EVERYONE

No.

HELEN

Er, there was a... Brain...

BEN

Brain-based... intelligence underneath Paris, one of the reasons, yeah, it was a...

HELEN

I think they smashed it.

LYDIA

OK!

ALEX

Can everyone give me a perception check?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Yes. (rolls) Yay! It's a nat 20, starting well.

BRYN

Wait, are we using our new checks?

ALEX

Yes, like I said.

HELEN?

Better be, because this is the only thing I've got...

BRYN

Is it basically passive, yes, activated, no?

ALEX

Bingo!

LYDIA

28.

HELEN

OK. 21.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

29.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

That face!

ALEX

Now that you're all looking at it...

BRYN

27.

ALEX

You notice that one of the hemispheres of the brain is riddled with blue veins.

EVERYONE

(gasps)

ALEX

Only one of the hemispheres.

BEN

Oh wait, so – eurgh.

BRYN

Eurgh!

(Group laughter)

Don't like any of that!

HELEN

Should we just take this back to Wilde...

BEN

No, oh no, we destr – we need to get rid of this now!

BRYN

Well, surely we need to find out more about it. As long as it can't...

HELEN

We can't touch it, so...

BEN

All right, well, look, yeah, sure, all right. But can somebody do some examinations on it without going in, without breaking open that hole?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

I mean, I can *look* at it, but I'm not really a...

ALEX

Can you give me a knowledge engineering?

BEN

Yeah, that was a genuine question, not like an expectation.

LYDIA

(rolls) Er, 14.

ALEX

14. Things that you know with a 14. This thing's pretty self-contained?

LYDIA

Mm.

ALEX

Short of maybe putting some explosives in there to like explode himself, you couldn't really fit much in there. It's not going to be walking away, it doesn't really have space for any big, elaborate surprises in there. You do think that you could probably rig it up? Like to connect to stuff? However, that traditionally is where problems can come, unless you, think AI in a box. It's fine

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

to have the brain in an orb, and it's fine to maybe attach the brain in an orb to a speaker, at a push.

LYDIA

Mm.

ALEX

Plugging it into anything else, you're asking for it to take over the radio and come and get you!

LYDIA

Cel explains this but at much longer length.

ALEX

Sure.

LYDIA

But...

BEN

Right.

LYDIA

But also points out that, like:

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

I mean, really, if you were to, if I were to design this, I would put in like little retractable legs so that at least, even if your whole body is you know just...

BEN

Then I've got say I'm really glad you didn't design this. Because, look, just to be very clear, we still don't know how this stuff spreads. Like, people go in, they come out wrong. Like, we do not know how this happens.

BRYN

I found a bunch of paperwork.

BEN

Right.

BRYN

In the study. I didn't have time to go through it all, there might still be more there.

BEN

I mean, in Japanese?

HELEN

Well, should we...

BRYN

Oh, I don't even remember what language... Oh, it wasn't in Japanese, because you said I could understand it.

ALEX

Well, to go into more detail now you've got time to think? There was a combination, most of the stuff you were looking at was actually in English. However, good tracts of it were in Japanese as well. But also there was some French in there, a little bit of Czech...

BRYN

It's a mix of languages. I don't speak Japanese, but I spoke the others, but also I was able to recognise some of it, because it references some of the work we've seen before...

ALEX

The stuff that was most familiar? Was also in the most familiar languages.

BRYN

Yep.

ALEX

Shocker.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Right.

BRYN

So, you know, there were some similarities with the Francois Henri research we saw, and even with Liliana's on power sources.

BEN

Hang on a minute. Have you still got that notebook?

BRYN

Yeah.

BEN

Right, well, let's have a look at the – oh, god, it's so long ago! The little paper...

ALEX

The squid ink? The squid ink?

BRYN

And the, yeah, the message.

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Yeah, here you go.

BEN

Right, I'm going to get it out and look at it, and see if like there's any handwriting similarities, paper quality similarities, like, we got this thing to say like, ah man, you know, Japan is a place we want to go so...

ALEX

Do you have any relevant skills? I can give you some info anyway, would you have any relevant skills?

BRYN?

Linguistics to recognise handwriting, I think?

ALEX

OK.

HELEN

While this is happening, Azu is going to just go and sit on the floor.

ALEX

An acceptable response to the current situation.

HELEN

Yeah.

BEN

What skills would you be looking for? Like, I don't know, I have a bunch of stuff but...

ALEX

Certain knowledges, linguistics, basically anything that's paperwork-related, I can give you some extra stuff.

BEN

Oh, I actually do have linguistics! Oh!

ALEX

Linguistics would be real useful.

BEN

Yeah, great, I actually did put a rank in it! That's 12.

ALEX

Yeah, it's probably the same hand. It's a bit hard to tell because the writing on the more recent documents is, there has been a fundamental shift in the way that they are writing. Like, it's gotten significantly more erratic and the spelling...

BEN

Right.

ALEX

Like, you can say, even if you don't speak Japanese, that's character's clearly meant to be that character, that one's wonky.

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALEX

So you think it's...

BEN

It's bad handwriting.

ALEX

It's probably the same person, assuming for instance that Shoin has completely gone off the deep end.

BEN

Yeah, so it's in Japanese, the message?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

So.

BEN

The original message.

BRYN

We had it translated at one point.

BEN

Oh, OK.

BRYN

But I think it was, yeah.

ALEX

So, other things that you know, I'm just going to run through it.

BEN

Great, because it's been a year and a half for Zolf and, it's so very long for us!

ALEX

It's fine. I'm not even going to bother digging up the original note because it's buried in an archive somewhere!

(Group laughter)

Things that you're prob... you, it might be the same ink. I mean, ink's kind of hard to tell unless you do a full analysis.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

It's the right colour!

BEN

Ah, black!

LYDIA

Cel peers over your shoulder.

ALEX

It's the same ink. It's like, you just get that for free. It's definitely the same ink.

LYDIA

Eh, cool! They're written by the same person!

BEN

Right, oh, is this...?

LYDIA

Well, it's at least the same, the same ink, that's er...

BEN

Really? Great.

ALEX

And in terms of...

BEN

What – wait, hang on a minute – what does this say?

And I'll hand Cel the Japanese, because they can read it.

ALEX

Er, can you please give me a knowledge alchemy? Oh, actually, I'll let you pick – knowledge alchemy or knowledge engineering. Sorry, craft alchemy or knowledge engineering, whichever you prefer.

LYDIA

Craft alchemy, definitely.

ALEX

Then go for it!

LYDIA

So much alchemy! (rolls) 27.

ALEX

You understand *most* of it. There are a couple of bits that you don't, even with a 27, but you can take an educated guess that they are because they are things that have not been discovered elsewhere.

LYDIA

Ah.

ALEX

And they are like self-contained knowledge, you know, things like, you know when people use like, oh yeah, it's an SOP and you're like, I don't know what that acronym is, like I don't, I have no frame of reference for this. So there's a bit of that. It is a piece of correspondence between François Henri...

LYDIA

Mm?

ALEX

Who appears to be a French gentleman. And Yoshida Shoin.

LYDIA

Mm-hm.

ALEX

It'll be about three years old, this correspondence, and the correspondence itself is – this is from the notebook specifically – it is talking about major breakthroughs in terms of the fluidic systems and that François, you know, his help, his work has been really, really instrumental, very very helpful, and then it starts going into a lot of stuff that you know isn't alchemy, where it's like, Ah yes, we've had big, big leaps in terms of semiotic transference and their semantic systems are just, they're really going, and the organic growth methods are definitely the way to go forwards. In terms of...

LYDIA

Nice potatoes!

ALEX

In terms of distributed synth – like, I'm literally giving you the occasional phrasing but like...

EVERYONE

Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

In terms of distributed synthesis, the organic model is *far* superior – semiotic transference is at about 86% and we really think that we're probably going to be able to not only establish the transfer but probably duplicate it.

LYDIA

So the tricky thing is, in game, working out how of much Cel could explain before Zolf found it too boring.

(Group laughter)

Because, like...

ALEX

I mean, ultimately, I think that's Ben's choice.

LYDIA

It is the sort...

ALEX

For how bored Zolf gets.

LYDIA

It is the sort of thing where they'd be like well, we're not understanding what this is, this isn't useful, because it isn't.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

Hamid will listen intently.

BEN

I mean, also, I've...

BRYN

I took linguistics so I do understand what semiotic transference is.

HELEN

Azu has checked out.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Ben's a bit wobbly, to be clear, but...

ALEX

What's your knowledge religion, actually?

BEN

I hope I've got some! Yeah, I've got a rank in it.

ALEX

Can you give me a knowledge religion, because you may have an additional insight.

BEN

(rolls) Oh, that's a critical fail. Well, a 1.

ALEX

Then you don't have an additional thing.

Just hate gods!

(Group laughter)

BEN

I'm done with you!

ALEX

They get in the way of all my good works!

LYDIA

Yeah, so Cel sort of explains this and is like, Zolf it's François and read that, like he seems really...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Yeah...

LYDIA

Really smart, really er...

BEN

Well, he's dead now.

LYDIA

Oh. Oh. Oh well, you know, that's... hmm.

BEN

Like most of the people who get involved in this. Er, yeah, so it looks like this is related to the Mr Ceiling thing you were saying.

I've gone really London, for some reason!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Hamid, can you give me a knowledge arcana, for an additional insight?
Because you've got a bit more experience on that angle.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

Yeah.

BEN

I also have knowledge arcana!

LYDIA

I also have knowledge arcana.

BRYN

(rolls) 18.

ALEX

I'm trying to (whispers) distribute the knowledges, Ben!

BEN

No! I want all of the rolls. No sharing! It's Ben-time!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

18.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

18?

LYDIA

I mean, I have 17 in knowledge arcana.

ALEX

I'm giving it to Hamid specifically...

BRYN

Hamid, because he's specifically studied these areas.

ALEX

Because Hamid also has the insight in that he'd read all of the notes that Sasha and he burned, amongst other things. So in there, you notice that the – again, you're no expert. François does seem to be a lot of like outside in, like taking stuff that's spread out and bringing it into one place? This one seems to be kind of focussed on the opposite, taking things from one place and spreading it out. That's a big abstract take away what you want.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

We're cracking this conspiracy wide open!

BEN

Shoin has literally uploaded himself to the Matrix, I'm now basically convinced in what that...

HELEN

Oh my god!

ALEX

And, you know what, I'm going to take a break whilst Ben's face continues to twitch!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And welcome back.

BEN

So, and a bunch of this paperwork is about, like, the circulatory system, and I was like, you know you said that the infection shows up in people's veins!

ALEX

Ooh, anyone have knowledge heal?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN?

Yes.

LYDIA

Yeah!

HELEN

Yes!

ALEX

Alex is spreading out the knowledges! Alex keeps saying this.

BEN

Sorry. I will – yes, Azu, please.

ALEX

What's your heal?

BEN

11.

HELEN

13!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

Woooo!

(Group laughter)

BEN

Wow! I've just got a double bird!

ALEX

This is what happens when Ben tries to steal other people's projects!

(Group laughter)

BEN

You said, does anyone have knowledge heal and I said yes.

ALEX

He said looking!

BEN

I answered your question in good faith!

ALEX

He said looking meaningfully to Helen, knowing she had the highest, because he checked this before we played today.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

(laughter continues)

Spreading out the knowledges, Ben! Spreading out me knowledges!

BEN

(muttering) Should have been specific.

HELEN

Did you hit your head?

ALEX

He's just weary with us!

LYDIA

What's that negative energy!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Give me the roll, Helen.

HELEN

OK.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

And then fudge it so that Ben can *really* get salty!

BEN

You might have a good heal check but I'm still better at healing than you are, so you know...

BRYN

Oooh!

ALEX

Actually, in universe, you have pushed the very boundaries of medical science repairing Sasha up, don't forget.

BRYN

Ayorr...

BEN

I did so well.

ALEX

And the only one who knows that is Zolf!

BEN

She was only slightly dead.

BRYN

That's one for me.

HELEN

That's a 29 on a heal check.

ALEX

Ooh, 29, great.

BEN

That's all right, I get it.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I have a couple of info dumps for you.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

OK, the first is, he starts talking about circulation, you have a look at the paperwork. I mean, yeah, if the humanoid body was massive – like, he's

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

talking about circulation but, like, the scales are all wrong. Like, that's more circulation than you can fit in a person! Or even like ten people.

BEN

You know mate, your problem there, you've got too much blood!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Now that's a madness for you!

BRYN

There's someone, there's someone like a balloon, like...

(Group laughter)

BEN

No. Nineteenth century medicine. Ah! The problem is too much blood.

BRYN

Yes.

BEN

I prescribe: leeches!

ALEX

And also, because you're all quite high, I'm going to allow you an insight on the brorb, a little bit.

LYDIA

Oh good.

ALEX

But specifically the brain within the orb, not the accoutrement around it, because that's just getting in the way of the...

LYDIA

It's from two different heads!

HELEN

(gasps) Are they?

ALEX

No. However, you do know – Alex is checking his biology one last time to make sure he does have it right and didn't put a typo in...

LYDIA

Has the corpus collosum been cut?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

So you notice...

(Group laughter)

Ahh! Getting ahead of me a little bit here!

(Group laughter)

The first things that you notice: the left hemisphere is the one that's covered in, in veiny bits. OK?

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

Which you know a lot of people have started doing research saying that that's actually kind of more like your logic thinking bit.

HELEN

Mmm.

ALEX

And then the right hand side is your more creative bit. You also notice there's definitely damage between the two.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Oh, is that, those are the little, the little...

LYDIA

That's the...

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

There are cords that connect to...

ALEX

It also looks like, and again this is kind of your first interaction with it...

LYDIA

Pretty sure it is.

ALEX

It looks like the blue has come from the outside in, not the inside out.

LYDIA

That's a relief.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

HELEN

OK. You said veins. This is too much volume for veins. This is...

BRYN?

What?

HELEN

This is, if you put this much liquid into a normal size person...

ALEX

It's just there's too much branching, more than anything else.

BRY#N

Hang on a minute. I mean, given the, look at the four of us, what's a normal-sized person?

HELEN

No, I mean, you'd have to have, like...

BEN

Like a giant squid?

HELEN

Oh no.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Yeah!

LYDIA

Or like, that giant thing?

BEN

It's how make the squid. Yeah!

HELEN

Or...

BEN

Oh, I'll give you that.

BRYN?

Although that's...

HELEN

Something very large.

BEN

How organic is this, or was it like a big clanking robot?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

The jumble sale?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

I mean, it is a rattly clanky jumble sale. There was...

BEN

So there's not... organic?

ALEX

No organics in it beyond the brain.

BEN

So it was an animated, like, object.

ALEX

There was – it was a table with attitude.

LYDIA

Constructed thing.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

So, yes.

LYDIA

Construct!

BEN

If this was in a humanoid-shape body, how big would that body be? Can you work that out?

ALEX

OK, Alex – you will be able to, Alex has to figure this out.

HELEN

It's like, 60 foot, you said that it was like ten times the...

ALEX

Yeah. It doesn't really work like that. By volume, you're talking like, maybe a redwood tree?

BRYN

Good grief.

ALEX

But, however, also the circulation doesn't look right. It doesn't look right for a creature.

BEN

So it's not humanoid at all, whatever this is in.

ALEX

It's like you took a giant, like an actual like a fe-fi-fo-fum giant, right?

(Group laughter)

Smashed him into a pancake without messing around with the circulatory system, and spread it out as wide as you could.

HELEN

So it's like skin.

ALEX

It's closer to like an enormous fungus.

HELEN

I say that. I say it's sort of like...

ALEX

But it's definitely a circulatory system because it's got valve markings and so on, it's...

BEN

That is deeply upsetting.

BRYN

Yeah!

HELEN

Also the brain, the blue veins on it, have like got in somewhere and then spread rather than...

BRYN

Right.

BEN

So we think this brain is Shoin, right? I mean that's the only logical...

BRYN

No, no, it's...

LYDIA

So he was, er...

LYDIA

Cel was translating most of everything Shoin was saying.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LYDIA

So, they may not have made it completely clear how much of it was arguments with the 'shut up, shut up, shut up' so Cel explains this.

Like, the whole way through, there would be like, oh, I'm a big puzzle master, ha ha ha! I'm master of the puzzles.

And then it'd be like, shut up, shut up, shut up, and now, I know that's how most of us feel inside of our heads most of the time, but not usually out loud!

So I thought maybe that was a clue and that there would actually be several people here, but no. But maybe if the veins are like a person and then they could be saying shut up, shut up all the time.

BEN

Ohhhh.

BRYN

Oh.

LYDIA

Or they could be saying something and he could be saying shut up to them.

BEN

Right, and...

LYDIA

[unclear 0:27:18] power struggle?

BEN

Yeah, you said the connections between the emissaries had been severed?

HELEN

Well, it's damaged. It's...

BEN

Right, which could, yeah...

ALEX

Information for Zolf, just, for free! Like, you, no knowledge is required for this...

BEN

Oh, thanks, am I allowed?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Er, yeah, you are! Yeah, you are allowed on this one.

BEN

Oh, thank you so much! Thank you.

ALEX

You will now just take it away, just for the pleasure.

BEN

Thank you! So much.

ALEX

You've never heard of anything like this tied to any of the blue vein stuff.

People are either, they're veiny...

BEN

This is some weird gubbins.

ALEX

Well, there are three stages. There are, you're just a person, like a normal person. You're in the sneaky pre-veiny stage where you've got to wait and

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

then they're either veiny or they're not. Or they're veiny, they're not the person that they were. This is...

BEN

Right.

ALEX

Noooo, no, no reference for this.

BEN

So this is something new. And I don't know if it's either an experiment or maybe it's some sort of preventative, like they got infected and had to do something to stop it, or if they were mucking about and seeing, or they invented the damn stuff, like, I don't know. What I think in retrospect is we should take the orb, if it's sealed, Cel, right, yeah?

LYDIA

Um, yeah. It has a power thing here. I'm just wondering whether the infection happened before they took the brain out of the body or...

EVERYONE

Yeah!

LYDIA

After.

BEN

So what I'm thinking is, we take it back. You build some sort of speaking apparatus and we (whispers) ask him.

LYDIA

(whispers) I can absolutely do that.

HELEN

OK.

BRYN

Yeah, we want to keep it isolated though.

BEN

It's already isolated itself.

BRYN

Well, yeah, that's...

HELEN

Should we look around a little bit as well?

BRYN

Well...

BEN

I mean yeah, but I am pretty keen to get out of here when we can before we get (whispers) attacked by that giant squid!

BRYN

Well yeah, but that's a question, is the giant squid related to Shoin, was he controlling it, what, can we work out – Cel, you'd be the best placed to do this, but...

LYDIA

Mm-hm?

BRYN

Can we work out what else this console thing was connected to? What was he controlling from his little brain orb?

LYDIA

It looks like it's going to mix together different potions. These are all alchemical symbols.

BRYN

Oh right!

LYDIA

So as he was playing the, like, I don't know what this is supposed to look like but...

BRYN

Well, it sort of looks like a pipe organ. A little bit.

LYDIA

Oh cool. OK!

BRYN

It's like a musical instrument.

LYDIA

So they, by pressing all of those buttons then things will mix together and then you would get, like, (musical plopping sounds) and there would be a little kind of potion, and it's like, have you heard of 3D printing?

(Group laughter)

BRYN

What?

LYDIA

It's, it's very, so you tell, you try and tell a...

BRYN

3D as in three dimensions?

LYDIA

Yes! So it happens...

BRYN

What do you mean by printing? Like, where you're producing the...

LYDIA

You tell a coral where to grow and very slowly it forms a shape.

BRYN

You mean like, oh! Yes!

BEN

Like sculpting.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BRYN

But printing is how they make books, you know.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

Right.

BRYN

The printing press, and then – 3D is a...

LYDIA

You do that over and over and over and over again.

BRYN

And you just build up layers. That sort of makes sense, yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah, mostly I do it by telling small microorganisms where to go.

BRYN

That sounds really cool!

LYDIA

But I think you could mash up just about anything and then push it down – you could do it with wood, you do it with hair, you could do it with snow, though that wouldn't last very long...

BRYN

It sounds pretty...

LYDIA

Ice – I tried, I made a very, very nice thing last winter for the ice sculpturing contest, yes.

BRYN

Cool!

BEN

Right. So, should, let's maybe stay on target here.

BRYN

But it's still useful to know what Shoin was controlling, and what was able to control it. We don't want to be attacked by the squid because it...

BEN

No, no. That's the target, let's stay on that target.

LYDIA

Cel just gives it a look and a think.

BRYN

Yeah.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

A look and a think.

ALEX

Gives what a look and a think?

LYDIA

Gives the wider mechanism that the [unclear 0:30:32]

BRYN

Was the brain connected to anything else?

LYDIA

No, no, no. I know, where's the fluid connected to?

ALEX

Oh, the fluid that pumped out?

LYDIA

Mm.

ALEX

OK, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll let you do an engineering check for that, this is just...

BRYN

I also have a quick rules question. That was a 10 you rolled. About the previous week. Hamid was in this boss room before the rest of the party got there, and Shoin was speaking and I was interacting with him.

ALEX

Mm-hm?

BRYN

Was he not speaking Japanese at that time?

ALEX

No.

BRYN

OK, good. Because I...

HELEN

I think he did swap languages at some point...

BRYN

Oh, OK, I thought maybe we'd forgotten that...

HELEN

Because I remember you...

ALEX

It was explicitly brought up. Yeah, Shoin swapped to English at some point.

BRYN

Excellent. OK.

LYDIA

22.

ALEX

22? As far as you can tell, some of it was used in some kind of activation method for the big robot. So the robot wasn't pumped full of it, maybe some kind of catalyst. However, it looks like it's also been syphoned off elsewhere.

LYDIA

Mmm...

ALEX

Like, not in this room, downwards specifically, but again if he's got something that's used for catalysing reactions, it makes sense that you'd try and use it for more than one thing? That's as far as you're going to get with that check.

LYDIA

Mmm...

BEN

Any joy?

ALEX

I mean, this is you looking at a UFO, as a plumber, going, "I reckon I've figured this out."

LYDIA

Yeah, but Cel *would*.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

This is a thing I am factoring in, which is why I'm not just telling you no.

BRYN

Cel is so far beyond the upper limit of human intelligence...

ALEX

(laughs) Oh yeah.

BRYN

That they might as well...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

LYDIA

Yeah! So the thing is, they are still capable of rolling poorly.

BRYN

Yeah, true.

BEN

They are the UFO!

LYDIA

Yeah. So, Cel's looking at this and kind of:

So I think... So this is a catalyst. It's not like this was gone in and it's powered the hydraulics, this is possibly analogous to a battery. You know? So maybe there was a, storing energy in there somewhere, and this was used...

BEN

A battery?

BRYN

Like a transfer of power.

LYDIA

Quite possibly! But also maybe just to have a really cool light show, because sometimes, like, I have worked with alchemists before, where you're trying to

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

work out exactly, backwards engineer exactly why the reaction, and they just added a re-agent to make it sparkle, because it's cool, you know?

BEN?

Right. So...

LYDIA

But you've always got to take that into account.

BEN

So this was all used to make that. (I'm pointing at the robot.)

LYDIA

There's, it's, some of it's going somewhere else. Possibly to power something else, but that's...

BEN

Where is it going?

LYDIA

Down.

BEN

That – well, we need to go down, then. We need to see where that goes. Because this might not be, you know, we don't, if we ain't got to the bottom of this, I mean, literally...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

There is a sudden loud mechanical noise that I'm going to replicate which is a (hissing mechanical sound). As you all look around to see what it is, you see that one of the chairs, the one, one of the ones furthest from the big throny one, has suddenly just, big, like, clamping arms have come out the side of it and it's straightened out and it's made as if it's to, a slide with a hole at the bottom of the chair like, you know, like slide down kind of, deposit a person style.

BRYN

Do you think he can hear us?

ALEX

Skraak crawls up from under the table.

HELEN?

Oh! Oh well done.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Right.

BRYN?

Good work, Skraak!

ALEX

(as Skraak) The mechanism!

BRYN

We didn't investigate the, the body either.

BEN

Er, right.

ALEX

Goes down.

BEN

No right – yeah, OK.

BRYN

I might have to explore that in a little while, Skraak.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Have a look at the body then. Although I assume it's just...

ALEX

Skraak.

BEN

One of the party that, you know, died.

BRYN

Yeah, but...

HELEN

I'll go and look. I'll go and look.

I'm going to do a heal check on the body, I guess.

ALEX

No, there's no body, what I'm saying is that the chair has...

BEN

No, no, no, we're talking about the cleric that's...

ALEX

Oh, the one that exploded into pieces?

EVERYONE

Oh yeah!

ALEX

Woah, big reaction, people! You can examine the body, it's going to take you long, though, because you've got to keep walking back and forth across the room.

BEN

Ayorr!

HELEN

All right. OK.

ALEX

I'm not joking. You could, you are actually just going to have to, like...

BRYN

It was plugged into something, like what was it plugged into, like I still don't understand, like, how Shoin was talking to us through the rest of the complex?

ALEX

This is all fine. I am happy to answer these questions, as long as you, like, focus on...

BRYN

I mean, I still think there's a lot to work out here, is what I mean.

ALEX

Sure! Sure, sure.

LYDIA

So my thought is that the... borb – like the word, by the way – when it was connected to the, like, borbatronics...

ALEX

We are the borg, you will be assimilated!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Bring us your seeds!

LYDIA

But, like, it's like a double dock system, like the brain was docked and the body was docked into the seat and then from that he could control everything!

BRYN

Right. Can we control it?

LYDIA

Engineering?

BEN

No, a brain in an orb?

BRYN

No I mean, he must have been giving orders to all the people back in the base, there's still a bunch of kobolds who are trapped there and, you know, basically enslaved, like there's still a lot...

BEN

All right, well, we'll go back to the base once we're out of this... stay on target!
The kobolds aren't important right now!

BRYN

We might be able to issue an order, is what I mean. We might be able to fake being Shoin!

HELEN?

We could tell them...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

We could say, stop drugging the kobolds and stop, and lay down your weapons, I mean...

BEN

All right, well you work...

BRYN

We don't know what the capabilities are, is what...

BEN

You work on that. Azu, you take that half of the corpse and I'll take this half.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

Are you sneaking extra checks in?

BEN

With little bits of clerics? We could both do it anyway!

ALEX

Yeah, I'll allow it.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Oh, hm, rubbish.

HELEN

20.

BEN

13.

ALEX

OK. It's been there a while. You aren't able to determine cause of death, because it did explode. However...

BEN

But not explosion importantly.

ALEX

It is desiccated, meaning it was sat in that position for a long time.

BEN

Mm-hm.

ALEX

You also, as you're examining – carefully, I might add – see what appears...

HELEN

Yeah, I don't want to be touching it.

ALEX

No, that's fine. It appears to be positively riddled with the dried remnants of blue veins, subcutaneously, exactly as you'd have expected.

HELEN

(gasps)

BEN

Right, as soon I notice that I'm like, get away from it!

HELEN

Why, what?

BEN

It's, it – veins.

HELEN

Oh!

BEN

It was infected.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

None of you were touching it with bare hands or anything like that? No, not expecting saves but...

LYDIA

Even though my hands are basically bare (bear??) hands.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Right, OK.

BRYN

You have the right to bear arms!

(Group laughter)

And you've taken that right!

LYDIA

I'm exercising it!

BEN

OK, at this point, let's do what we need to do here and wrap up. I want to get out of this room and away from that.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

Oh. Oh, yes! Then, OK, let's...

HELEN

Do we go down...

BEN

Let's see if we can work out what other things this console can control.

LYDIA

Can you send, you have lights, right?

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Can you send the lights down the chute and we can look at what's in the space that's underneath this table?

ALEX

Skraak, no, no, no! One!

BRYN

No don't!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

Skraak disappears under the table. Like, just...

BRYN?

Skraak, are you OK?

LYDIA

Little buddy!

ALEX

It has sort of like struts and so on, so he literally just disappears under the table and you start hearing the sounds of things breaking.

HELEN

Ooh! Azu's going to go and like look down there.

BRYN

We should still see if we can work out what other capabilities this console might have. It still might be the – you know, if this is where Shoin was based, if this is where he was issuing orders...

BEN

All right.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

We still might be able to work out...

BEN

OK!

BRYN

What else was going on in this entire complex.

BEN

Cel, would you mind having a look?

LYDIA

But yeah, another look? Yes, I can, I can...

BEN

Thank you.

LYDIA

I can do that, yes.

ALEX

So.

LYDIA

Has another look.

ALEX

I am, no, it's fine, I'm going to allow this as completely separate, because you're looking for completely separate things. I need a knowledge engineering specifically for how does this interact with...

LYDIA

The stuff.

BRYN

I would like to assist.

ALEX

Er, I will...

BRYN

I do not have knowledge engineering, but I did spend an entire week studying Mr Ceiling's controls of the Mr Ceiling facility. And I gained enough knowledge of that to be able to shut him off.

HELEN?

(whispers) Gosh.

ALEX

You know what, that's a fair point, I'll allow that. Contextually, that makes sense.

HELEN

The memory on him!

BRYN

Sorry, he worked out there was a big red off button!

(Group laughter)

BEN

That there was literally a big, like, (wak-wak)

BRYN

I give you + 2 by assisting.

LYDIA

OK, so that's...

BRYN

I should roll [unclear 0:37:51]

LYDIA

29.

BRYN

Yeah, I give you + 2.

LYDIA

31.

ALEX

31?

BEN

Ooh, that's a, that's a B/C borderline!

ALEX

Ooooh, yeah, it is, yeah!

EVERYONE

Yay!

ALEX

So, Hamid may have just tipped you over the top by pointing out, in your defence, something that's completely illogical, why would you do that, that's just inefficient, clearly, from your eye, oh yeah François Henri's thing did that.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

Like, the, you know what it was, the lateral movement joystick. It was on the right instead of the left, like – what? What you find is Hamid's hunch is right. This thing probably does connect in with the rest of the complex and you reckon you could jury-rig it, maybe not to accept like inherent orders like, short of plugging yourself into it like finding a way to make your brain talk to it...

LYDIA

Cel is tempted.

BRYN

(laughs) I love Cel!

HELEN

(laughs)

ALEX

You are certainly able, you reckon, given probably half an hour, you would be able to rig something up so that you could speak and it'll come out as close to Shoin as makes no difference.

BRYN

Also maybe just a big red off button here? If there's a big red button, I wouldn't object to pushing that but...

ALEX

There doesn't appear to be a big red off button in this one.

LYDIA

Cel explains all of this while so deep in the mechanism that a lot of the time you can't actually see anything except elbows and hear clanking.

(Group laughter)

BEN

So, what you're saying is, you're going to hook yourself into the PA system?

LYDIA

I'll make a little microphone. I'm not going to plug it into my brain. That would take a little more...

BEN

Right.

LYDIA

Prep work, probably.

BRYN

OK.

LYDIA

Just cause, my brain, it's quite useful...

BRYN

It's probably quite good where it is, to be honest, Cel.

ALEX

Look, you've done brain work before.

LYDIA

I've thought about moving it.

ALEX

You've done brain work before. The problem is, you reach a certain point of brain work and then you can't use the brain you're working on to work on the brain and you get a recursive problem!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

So the problem is I would need one of you to do the operation.

BEN

Wait, no, hang on a minute, hang on a minute, like...

LYDIA

I can *train* you in brain surgery...

BEN

No, no, no no no!

LYDIA

It just takes a while!

BEN

What are we actually going to gain access to? Is it just the speakers?

LYDIA

Yeah!

BEN

Right, well that's, what, there's no *use* in that.

BRYN

No, that's not a lot of...

BEN

So let's, can we turn anything else off from here?

ALEX

You reckon – I'll give you this for free – you reckon you could probably turn most of the place off from here.

LYDIA

(whispers) It's a Unix system!

ALEX

It is just a case of going, well I mean, that cable connects here, so if we cut that cable, that bit turns off. The issue is that you have maybe 50% accuracy as to what you're turning off.

LYDIA

So, um...

ALEX

Because you have to trace the wiring through, you know, 50 kilometres of wiring!

LYDIA

I, it's a relatively basic system in that the wires go to the place where the thing's affected, but the problem is that this whole place is basically a big circuit diagram and so following the wires along, I might be for instance turning off the air filters.

BRYN

Yeah, that. It's too rigorous.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

So best maybe to leave the system functioning as it is?

BRYN

Fair enough, fair enough!

HELEN

I went to look down the chute at Skraak.

ALEX

Ah, OK, cool. So, things that you find in the chute immediately.

BRYN

Right, to be clear, I think Helen is looking for Skraak, who went under the table, not down the chute.

ALEX

Are you looking down the chute or were you looking for Skraak?

HELEN

Oh! Did he go under the table?

ALEX

Skraak has gone under the table. The chute is underneath the chair.

HELEN

Oh! OK, no, I was looking for Skraak because he was making clanking noises...

ALEX

Oh yeah, cool. You...

HELEN

And I wanted to make sure he was OK.

ALEX

No, that's fine. You just see a, you just see a kobold tail just thrashing around randomly. Skraak seems, like, happy as Larry under there.

HELEN

What are you doing?

ALEX

Ah, fixing! Ah ah.

It sounds a lot like breaking.

BRYN

Languages, is Skraak now using English?

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

No. Skraak only speaks Draconic.

ALEX

That is a very, very, very valid...

BRYN

Skraak only *spoke* Draconic.

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Understood Japanese, I thought.

BRYN

Yeah, I suppose.

ALEX

Those are both accurate statements. I need to retcon that, that's a good point. Skraak wouldn't know what you were saying, that's a really valid point. Good catch.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

Skraak is just like, ark, ark a ark ack, Skraak etc.

HELEN

Azu sort of like taps on the table to get his attention.

ALEX

There's a beat. Skraak then repeats the rhythm back to you from underneath the table.

(Group laughter)

Skraak, ting ting, ack ack ack, Skraak ting ting etc.

HELEN

Azu goes around to try and like get eye contact with Skraak.

ALEX

OK, cool. You see a single kind of beady, dragony eye looking at you.

HELEN

She does a thumbs up.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

It winks. Ack ack er acker acker ack, Skraak, ting ting, wink etc.

HELEN

She's satisfied with that.

ALEX

(continues Skraak impression)

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Skraak, I just – in Japanese – I, er, are you available for an internship any time?

(Group laughter)

I just really appreciate your can-do attitude.

HELEN

Ahh, I get [unclear 0:42:07]

ALEX

A large cog is thrown out from underneath the table and just skitters across the floor towards you.

LYDIA

It's a *paid* internship!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Another piece just flies out from underneath in a random direction.

BEN

What is Skraak doing? I'm assuming they know the system well enough for that to be useful, but what are they doing?

HELEN

I couldn't – I can't talk to him.

BEN

Skraak, what are you, what are you doing?

ALEX

Fixing! Fixing!

BEN

He says he's fixing.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN

What?

HELEN

Maybe he shouldn't be fixing it? I mean, he seems...

BEN

More than a one word answer would be amazing, given we're in the middle of an evil lair!

BRYN

What are you fixing, Skraak?

ALEX

Table!

BRYN

What about it?

ALEX

There's too much. Too much table!

BRYN

That's not helping very much, I say to Zolf.

LYDIA

In Japanese again: Is there any way that I can help, buddy?

BRYN

He says he's fixing the table because there's too much of it.

BEN

That makes absolutely no sense.

ALEX

There's a sudden (grinding sounds) like grinding mechanisms and something. A seemingly hidden iris mechanism in the middle of the table opens and then a juddery platform slides into place and the sides of the table judder downwards in two places, making steps. Skraak climbs out.

BEN

So that's what he was doing. Very useful.

BRYN

Good work, Skraak!

ALEX

Too much table.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BEN

Thank you, yeah – oh, I didn't understand that.

BRYN

I did a quick sweep of the study area over there earlier but I never looked through the kitchen or the bedroom bits. There might still be useful stuff here, but I don't know how much time it's worth spending searching?

BEN

Let's have a quick look just in case! I'll take the kitchen.

LYDIA

I would like to...

HELEN

I'll take the bedroom.

LYDIA

Yeah, I would like to see how long the bedroom has been abandoned.

ALEX

That's fine.

HELEN

Mm. Oh yeah!

ALEX

I'm going to start with the kitchen first.

BEN

So that's a 25.

ALEX

The kitchen is fully stocked, like, silly stocked, like, cans to the ceiling stocked.

BRYN

Prepper stocked.

ALEX

Yeah, it's prepper stocked. And anything that can be spoiled is. This has been prepped to the eyeballs and then *left*.

HELEN

Eurgh.

ALEX

For a while.

BEN

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

I'm going to take some stuff that isn't spoiled, because we haven't eaten in a while and I have a bag of holding.

ALEX

There are, there are literally, like, cans...

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

I'm not even exaggerating by using the word can. There are cans.

BEN

I just womp some in the bag.

HELEN

I've got a 23 for the bedroom.

ALEX

For the bedroom? The bedroom was a mess. In terms of how long it's been left, it's *really* hard to tell because there is *no* dust in this room, of any kind. Like, it's basically, like, to all intents and purposes seems to be hermetically sealed...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

BRYN?

Climate controlled, yeah.

ALEX

Climate controlled. So, you know it's been empty, this concludes the things that you're thinking. There is a book on a bedside table beside the bed.

HELEN

What's the book?

ALEX

Which has a bookmark three-quarters of the way through.

HELEN

I open the book.

ALEX

It appears to be a Harrison Campbell novel.

(Group laughter)

One of the...

HELEN

I take the Harrison Campbell novel!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

One of the early ones.

LYDIA

Is it in Japanese?

ALEX

Yes, it is a Japanese printing.

HELEN

Still taking it!

LYDIA

Mm. Collector's item!

HELEN

Yeah! Could be a first edition.

ALEX

You notice...

BEN

I'd know.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So you haven't read all of, like, you've read as much as Zolf could really give you in that time. You don't recognise this one specifically, for what it's worth. It hasn't come up.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

It's got a very elaborate, like, swashbuckler-y cover, like, you know, big flamboyant hat and a rapier and, ha ha! Kind of pirate-y style.

HELEN

OK. I've got to – can I show it to Zolf, I want to see, like, look what I've found!

BEN

Oh, that's *In the Eye of your Love!*

HELEN

Oh!

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

So. It's a rarer printing. It got released, you know it got released in Japan, like you get all this for free, in fact, can I now...

BEN

Obviously. How you dare you even think about making a roll?

ALEX

I'd like to now add a skill to your sheet please.

BEN

Harrison Campbell. Knowledge Harrison Campbell?

ALEX

Knowledge Harrison Campbell.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

You have a flat + 10 modifier.

BEN

This. This massive skill list does not have a blank knowledge.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

Of course it doesn't.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

You know what, you know what.

LYDIA

Craft Harrison Campbell.

BEN

I can have two professions, know how to perform in two different ways and craft three different things, but I can't know something that's not on the list.

ALEX

Well then it's fine, it's profession Harrison Campbell fan.

(Group laughter)

Profession secret head of the Harrison Campbell fan club.

BEN

Secret?

BRYN

I think they just call them Harrifans.

ALEX

Oh yeah, there you go! So genuinely, it is... It's one of the, it's amongst those in the know it's known as one of the lesser Campbells. It's one of his earlier works where he hadn't really found his way into sort of the romance thing? His earlier works are very kind of high adventure, swash-buckler-y, so it's like, I'm a pirate. They mostly had the criticism of being all adventure and nothing else. Like, they read a little bit like, and then he captured the boat and then he took the boat to the island and then he got the treasure but the treasure was haunted so he fought the ghosts and then they got back on the boat but the boat was hot, like he just goes on...

BRYN?

So he write like a breathless eight year-old.

HELEN

Ahh.

ALEX

Yeah, like, it's one of his earliest...

BRYN

Sounds amazing.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

It's one of his earliest works, did very well in Japan, didn't do very well in Western Europe.

BRYN

Right.

HELEN

When do you think it would have been...

ALEX

It's at least six years old.

HELEN

Ah.

BRYN

That. I would like to finish exploring the study. I explored it earlier?

ALEX

Mm-hm?

BRYN

Under duress. In a rush. Now I've got a bit more time, while they chat.

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

Can you give me a perception check please?

BRYN

(rolls) 28.

ALEX

28.

BRYN

Oh, 29 – my bonus increased.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

29 on the study itself. In ascending order of importance, because that's the most tense one: you find some more paperwork to do with the complex itself and to do with the pipe organ, as we'll keep calling it. Definitely the nerve centre of this place. It's genuinely too complex for you to parse, it would take a long time for you to even begin really decoding it. Even Cel, there's just too much.

BRYN

Yep. I will...

Rusty Quill Gaming – 148 – Jumble Sale!

ALEX

It's basically complete blueprints for this place.

BRYN

I briefly show it to Cel, stuff in a bag of holding for later.

ALEX

You see, amongst the blueprints, like I'm just going to give you this for free, you see it's very clear that you are currently stood atop an active geothermal vent. Like, it's very obvious.

LYDIA

Mm-hm.

ALEX

This complex extends a very large amount down.

EVERYONE

Mmmmm...

ALEX

And appears to have large amounts of livestock storage underneath this room. So it goes: thermal vent, livestock storage, this room. You see that there are significant tunnel systems attached to this place, that are like part of the, like there are a lot of mapping of tunnels but it's silly complicated. They appear

natural, but you're no expert. And then, last not but not least, you do find a diary.

EVERYONE

(gasps)

ALEX

Like, it's clearly a diary, it has dates, it's done kind of like, at first glance, it's done in a very, very neat Japanese, bordering on, like, you know when people can get stupid calligraphy where it's, like, ruler-straight and everything's perfectly aligned and it reads more like...

BRYN

Cel! Cel, Cel, Cel! I can't read this but...

LYDIA

Hey buddy!

BRYN

Oh my god, I think it might be Shoin's *diary*!

LYDIA

Oh! Oh my gosh. I always wondered if he was into me!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I'm going to use that as an out. Gauge that as an out. It's a good out. We'll find out next week whether Shoin was into you or not.

BRYN?

Truly the worst cliff hanger this show has ever had.

LYDIA

Yes, but it's, but it's like a lot, you know?

(Group laughter)

Why are you [unclear 0:49:04] at my business?

BRYN

I met this cool alchemist, but I *hate* them, they're rubbish, but...

BEN

The secret diary...

BRYN

I can't stop thinking about them!

BEN

The secret diary of Yoshida Shoin, aged 47 and three-quarters.

ALEX

I love the fact that we have spent an entire episode in a room and basically the feedback I've gotten is, it's a bit much, in't it? A lot going on! Yeah.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

We'll see you next week!

ALEX

Bye!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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BEN

One point of order. If you're out of Lay On Hands, you're also out of Channel Positive Energy, because Paladins use two uses of Lay On Hands to Channel Positive Energy. Unless you have a thing like...

HELEN

That's not in the book!

BEN

It, it, it, it is.

HELEN

Then it's a stupid book, Ben!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Preaching to the choir, Helen! You are preaching to the choir!