

RQG – 154 – Red String and Hive Minds

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 154 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

HELEN

And Helen Gould

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Cell Sidebottom

HELEN

And Azu

ALEX

And complete sidebar, I've realised how dark it is with the temporary replacement bulb we've got in the studio.

LYDIA

It's spooky. Woooo.

ALEX

It's real kind of moody like western boudoir vibes.

BRYN

I am finding it very romantic.

BEN

If I go quiet halfway through the episode it's because I have fallen asleep.

ALEX

Yeah, it's more of a recording saloon.

LYDIA

If I go quiet it's because the rose between my teeth has made it too difficult to speak.

ALEX

So, we are going to be picking up broadly speaking where we left off, which is having to all intents conquered the Shoin Institute and being placed in a holding cell so that you can do your standard decontamination which is wait and see. You have all gotten real drunk and had bit of sharing, had a bit of caring but I'm not going to pick up with you continuing to be drunk, the earliest I want to pick up is the morning after.

HELEN

When we're all hungover.

ALEX

However, if people want to skip further ahead that's fine but I am interested in the morning after if people are willing.

BEN

Oh, no.

HELEN

With Zolf hungover.

BEN

No... no, I had a real intrusive 01:32 ??, who slept with whom.

(everyone laughs)

LYDIA

No, we can't do this, we can't do this to the fans.

ALEX

There's a pile of clothes at the bottom of the stairs but we don't know who they are.

(everyone) Woooh.

LYDIA

And there was only one corridor!

(everyone laughs)

BRYN

Super awkward.

(everyone laughs)

ALEX

Right. With that in mind then, I am going to jump to the morning after so to NPCs out of the way. Barnes is still up the stairs in the stairway, making a mess of his spine for no real reason and Carter is still face down where he was left.

LYDIA

Aw.

HELEN

I'm going to go and check on Carter to make sure he's still breathing.

ALEX

Give me a heal check.

BEN

He's dead!

ALEX

That is such a bleak twist.

HELEN

Oh, dear.

ALEX

That is such a bleak twist.

HELEN

That's an 18.

ALEX

Probably be fine. You consider turning him over and going, "Actually, he's probably better like this."

HELEN

I'll put him in the recovery position.

ALEX

You make a point of angling his head into the corner as opposed to into the room so that...

HELEN

Oh, yeah, naturally.

ALEX

...if things happen, they're happening away from the team.

HELEN

I only want him to be covered in sick, I don't want all of us to be covered in sick.

ALEX

Absolutely, absolutely, he'll probably be fine. He might be slightly dumber the amount of alcohol he must have taken in.

HELEN

Oh, well. (laughs) It's Carter!

(everyone laughs)

ALEX

Yeah, but think about it in terms of percentages, he's not got a lot to lose, that's like 60% gone.

BEN

I'm still asleep. I'm sleeping late.

ALEX

That makes sense.

BEN

I drunk a lot.

ALEX

What else have you got to do?

LYDIA

Cel snores in the hammock.

ALEX

I'm enjoying that my insight into the morning after is exactly what I expected which is, "(sighs)".

(Laughter)

BRYN

Hamid feels okay, Hamid is actually very sensible and only had a couple of glasses of wine.

ALEX

Booo.

LYDIA

Booo.

ALEX

And it was really good wine as well.

BRYN

Yeah, yeah... but, Hamid is going to get out a piece of chalk and start writing on the walls.

ALEX

What?

BRYN

It's time to create a conspiracy board.

(everyone laughs)

HELEN

I'm going to come and watch because I have a very high constitution so I probably feel okay.

BRYN

Yeah, that's right.

ALEX

Yeah, that scans.

HELEN

Yes, it does.

ALEX

Like, hangovers are directly proportional to your con modifier, people.

HELEN

Where is my con-modifier?

LYDIA

(laughs) Cel is sleeping through the hangover and is cuddling the bottle of elvish mead.

HELEN

Ooh, yeah.

ALEX

Did Cel drink the elvish mead?

LYDIA

No.

ALEX

Cel just now has the elvish mead.

LYDIA

Yeah, they're keeping it.

ALEX

Yeah.

BEN

I have a much higher con-mod than Azu does.

ALEX

And you said you were more hungover.

BEN

No, no, I'm just... I'm just making a point to Helen, you know.

HELEN

That's fine. 04:02 ??.

ALEX

If you'd like, you can give a bunch of knowledge checks that other people could do better.

BEN

I did enjoy listening back through.

(laughter)

ALEX

You came out so much worse and I'm so happy about it.

(laughter)

ALEX

Okay.

BRYN

So, the four headings, one on each wall.

ALEX

Gotcha, okay.

BRYN

Simulacrum.

ALEX

Yep.

BRYN

Infection.

ALEX

Mm mm.

BRYN

Mr Ceiling and Squid??.

HELEN

Is it Squid like question mark?

BRYN

With question mark, yeah.

HELEN

Aw.

BRYN

Do we know... do we know it's a Kraken, did we work that out? I can't remember.

ALEX

Yes.

BRYN

Okay, I'll probably write Kraken then.

ALEX

Well, Zolf... I mean, it was written and Zolf was like, "Yeah, I know about Kraken."

BRYN

Okay, I'll rub out Squid and write Kraken when I think a little bit harder. So, yeah, basically, I'm going to start probably listing questions as much as answers.

ALEX

Yeah.

HELEN

What are your questions?

LYDIA

Mmm.

ALEX

What do you buy?

LYDIA

What are you selling?

BRYN

So, we know that Edison designed the Simulacrum... no, we know that Tesla designed the Simulacrum but Edison built it. We know that it was capable of self-producing but we also know that someone had a factory churning them

out. Now, we don't know who was running that factory. We think Cult of Hades so that will be on there with a question mark.

LYDIA

Wasn't it...the person who he would have been Byron's son?

BRYN

They may be Wellington.

LYDIA

Yeah, but...

BRYN

So, I'll put... and I'll put like Wellington with a double question mark.

HELEN

You've remembered so much stuff, Bryn. Like, Azu's like, "What?"

BEN

Oh, this is great because, obviously, 05:26 ?? dead so I don't have to remember anything again.

HELEN

(laughs)

LYDIA

Hey, you know what, so...

BEN

You've got it even better, yeah.

LYDIA

It's great.

BRYN

The other thing is we don't know where those Simulacrum would potentially being going to be shipped to afterwards. So, I'll write something destination/receiver?. The other thing we know about the Simulacrums there was kill switch. Tesla designed a kill switch and we found the partial design for that in the Cairo vault. We believe a cleric of Hephaestus started working on it but that person seems to have disappeared. That's probably everything under the Simulacrum for now. Mr Ceiling. So, that's designed by Henri, technology shared with Shoin. Did other instances get founded or started? We don't know. We know the one under Paris was thoroughly destroyed.

BEN

Energy source stuff?

BRYN

Yeah, I'm wondering... that's going to go somewhere. I haven't worked that out yet really.

BEN

06:22 ??.

BRYN

Yeah. So, Infection, again, some questions. Where did it start? What is the mechanism? What is the goal of the infected, is one of the big questions Hamid has. Cause he know. Again, we've been away, we don't know this.

HELEN

We just know bad, we don't know what they're actually doing.

BRYN

Yeah. Yeah, what is the goal of the infected? How much coordination do they show? What are their tactics? How is Shoin involved? What did he do? What did he do to...

ALEX

Do you want a pen and paper to write these down so that we have your list of questions?

HELEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Well, maybe. I mean, honestly... I think... I think I've got a lot of it in my head. I've been thinking about this for a while. In terms of a beginning of a session because Bryn has spent the last couple of days being like, "Right, what I need to remember to start this session?"

BEN

You prep, well done.

LYDIA

Yeah, you really did. I was just like... "Ha ha."

LYDIA AS CEL

"Yay, see you my friends. Yah, I'm going to have chips."

HELEN

I love you, Bryn.

BRYN

I've got so invested in this at this point. I am [beep].

HELEN

Wooh.

LYDIA

It's not we're not invested in the game.

BRYN

No, I know.

BEN

We're just not nerds.

BRYN

I'm completely obsessed, like a big old nerd.

BEN

We're the jocks of roll play.

BRYN

Yeah.

LYDIA

(laughs)

BRYN

We're the cool kids.

ALEX

I mean, we are reaching the point where you're all powering towards The Dream, which is a game that's been running so long you've now played like most games that will ever exist, which is weird.

BEN

Oh, no, apart from like the big, the 20 year ones.

ALEX

Oh, yeah, like the truly enormous, enormous ones but they're few and far between.

BRYN

What else does Shoin know? We know he severed the corpus callosum to prevent transfer from one side to the other but it seems like because he's had direct contact and might still not be completely infected, he might know a lot.

BEN

"Eeer, he knows how to be a butt", says Zolf.

(everyone laughs)

BEN

Like clambering up having just woken up.

BRYN AS HAMID

Thanks, Zolf.

BEN AS ZOLF

That's a big list of questions.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah, I just... I really want to... there's so many things we don't know but I think that probably amongst the people in this room we've got a lot of answers and we've still got all of the paperwork from Shoin that we could go through and if Wilde has any answers he probably won't give it to us until we're out of the week I guess. But, you know, I just think it's worth working out what we already know and what we still need to know before we charge off on the next urgent quest.

BEN AS ZOLF

Makes sense, we've got time.

BRYN

So, under the Kraken, how were they communicating? How were they controlled? Did we disrupt/destroy that? What was Shoin's goal? Were they responsible for the weird weather things? Probably, yes.

LYDIA

In brackets..

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Like, you're handwriting is neat as well, isn't it?

HELEN

Oh, I bet it is.

BRYN

Hamid's is pretty neat, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALEX

Like, if you're looking at a banking ledger, just with nice cursive, all of the margins perfect.

HELEN

Azu's been putting little doodles beside each line.

BRYN

Yep, works for me.

ALEX

Little Kraken.

09:08 ??

BRYN

I've got a whole selection of chalk colours as well.

LYDIA

(laughs)

BEN

Is there Shoin that's just a circle with a brain inside?

HELEN

Yeah, and, of course, Azu wasn't there for Mr Ceiling so just put a smiley face.

(everyone laughs)

ALEX

I mean, pretty close.

BEN

Broadly, yes.

ALEX

That's what I imagined.

BRYN

Yeah, and probably then I go back to the Mr Ceiling wall and write about the power source and be like, was it successfully miniaturised? How was it modified? Is it present in other places? Because we don't know that for sure but we think, because I think that is a separate thread and is actually one of the things that probably links some of these different walls. Now, what Bryn has been saying is not necessarily exactly word for word what Hamid's been writing. I just want to create the, you know, create the impression of what's going on.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BRYN

Like, you know, we've got as big... basically, it's a huge mind map of all the kind of questions and answers that we have and it's for the team to brainstorm on and work out happens next, we know, what we don't.

BEN AS ZOLF

But don't forget about the seed.

BRYN AS HAMID

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. But we... we don't really know anything about that apart from the fact that it's probably related.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, but what I'm thinking is...

LYDIA AS CEL

What kind of... what...

LYDIA

Cel's woken up.

ALEX

We're doing a plan.

BRYN

I hand Cel a glass of water.

LYDIA AS CEL

Aaaw, thank you, little buddy. Thanks. So, was there a mysterious object that I.. what? Because, I mean, I might...

BEN AS ZOLF

Got a seed.

LYDIA AS CEL

Oh, okay. I'm not really a biologist.

BEN AS ZOLF

No... yeah.

BRYN AS HAMID

It's weird, it's sort of metallic as well. I mean, you can have a look but we still never really worked out anything about it.

LYDIA

The sort of thing... like could I roll a Knowledge alchemy?

ALEX

Only knowledge nature.

LYDIA

Oh. Okay, yeah, I've got a lot of that.

ALEX

Roll knowledge nature. You might be the only character it's physically possible to get any info from and certainly in this room.

LYDIA

Yeah, I think it is of course the time that I roll a three.

ALEX

I mean, that's what I'm hoping for, I'd rather you didn't do well.

LYDIA

A two. (cheers)

BRYN

Which gives you...?

LYDIA

A 14.

ALEX

You've seen anything like it before.

LYDIA AS CEL

I've never seen anything like it before, which, in fact, is quite a lot of information because I have seen a lot of things.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, we were going to get spell barred with the sea bank up there. See, I think, I don't if that's related to the infection either because I've always been maybe suspicious that it's some kind of weird actual plant. Because it's not magical. It can't be magical cause, you know, you lot get done by it.

HELEN AS AZU

Mmm

BEN AS ZOLF

So, maybe it's... it is actually natural or something weirder. Inter dimensional or something weirder? Inter planer? I don't know.

ALEX

Give me a second, planer shift, comes back, no its from here.

(everyone laughs)

BEN AS ZOLF

No, no, no, leave, come back, covered in blue veins. I know we're okay now.

(everyone laughs)

BEN AS ZOLF

Now, join me.

ALEX

Sorry, that tickled me so much.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah, I think the best guess is some sort of combination. Like, what are the things that has marked out all these we've discovered? We've discovered. Well, you know, Francois Henri and Tesla and Shoin, they were all kind of

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pushing the boundaries of knowledge and combining like magic and technology and biology in ways we haven't really seen before and so...

LYDIA AS CEL

I mean, how do I subscribe to the newsletter?

HELEN AS AZU

Well, this is the newsletter.

BRYN AS HAMID

I mean, this is the newsletter.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah. I mean, go to Europe, you'll see what happens.

HELEN AS AZU

Don't go to Europe, I think we need you here.

LYDIA AS CEL

Oh, okay.

BEN AS ZOLF

Like, also, the point was that it's very, very bad. The point I was trying to make is they are pushing the boundaries of science and nature has ruined everything.

HELEN AS AZU

There was a book about that once, wasn't there?

LYDIA AS CEL

Is it one of these passions things?

BEN AS ZOLF

Oh, no, they don't deal with that kind of stuff. No, they're lighter.

BRYN AS HAMID

You mean the story of Dr Frankenstein?

HELEN AS AZU

Yeah. Made a weird person... and then was really mean to them for no reason.

BRYN AS HAMID

I mean, it was a bit of a strange story though. It's like, you know, like, we know what happens when you resurrect someone and just doing it without magic doesn't really change it, right?

ALEX

Interestingly, you stumble on a piece of world law I didn't think you'd stumble on.

(everyone laughs)

ALEX

Who would... who would...

BRYN

There's no knowledge literature, Alex.

ALEX

No, I'm just... I'm just... yes, I'm just going to have to give you all some info and let you decide whether your characters know this, okay?

BEN

I've already established no.

LYDIA

Mine doesn't, no.

ALEX

Yeah, that's fine. This... genuinely, I can't believe this has come up. I'm really happy.

BRYN

You look so pleased.

ALEX

I'm really happy. I figured that I had given up on it every being mentioned.

HELEN

Aw.

ALEX

This book was recently published, it's not a very old book. It was doing quite well. Obviously, most book sales kind of collapsed about a year ago because of various reasons. So, it, in this world at least, never really gained the attraction it should have but it certainly was well received initially, and you are correct, generally speaking, it was considered an interesting flight of fancy that was ultimately pointless work.

(laughter)

LYDIA

Oh, no.

ALEX

Basically, the critics said, "It's well written, it just doesn't really have anything to add to the field of theology or science. We're not really sure why it was written." But, yeah, it is a book, it is existing, the same author, who is still alive. That's known knowledge. There you go.

BRYN AS HAMID

I mean, Zolf, you might know the answer to some of these questions already.

So...

BEN AS ZOLF

I might well. Allow me to answer them for you.

BEN

Alex, what do I know?

ALEX

I need you target these questions...

BEN

I don't know.

ALEX

No, as in like, I cannot memorise the entire list that Bryn has memorised.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

I need... I need some kind of guidance otherwise I can just turn this screen around.

BEN

I mean, that would be really helpful.

LYDIA AS CEL

Mr... Mr Smith, the people that turn blue, right?

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah?

LYDIA AS CEL

I know it's like a difficult topic, but those questions... how do they seem to communicate? What... what do they seem to want?

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah, what are their tactics and goals?

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, allow me to explain.

BEN

Alex.

ALEX

There is a call from up the stairs slightly, I might be able to field that one.

BEN AS ZOLF

Alright, feel free.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh, you're awake.

ALEX

Barnes comes down looking both hungover and neat in the way that some people are...

HELEN

No... where like they've done that, the cold shower thing and are very viciously being like, "I am not..."

ALEX

The collar is very tight.

HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

It doesn't need to be but it is.

ALEX AS BARNES

Out of all of us, I've probably had the most combat experience with them although a lot of the shorelines have been stormed and traffic's been difficult, we did have a couple of naval engagements before I jumped off. You want to know about coordination?

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, everything you can tell us really. It's all going to be useful for working out what are next steps and our next questions are.

BEN AS ZOLF

Remember, they've been here for the last 18 months.

BRYN AS HAMID

They literally know nothing.

ALEX AS BARNES

Their organisation is effectively absolute. From a distance I have seen people coordinating in a way that is not possible.

BEN AS ZOLF

Something about gestalt and hive minds, stuff like that.

ALEX AS BARNES

I mean, a lot of people that, it's a bit beyond my pay grade but I can tell you that I've seen people throwing something behind their shoulder to get caught by someone that wasn't there who then came, opened the door to catch it kind of things. Tactically speaking, they are very keen on taking prisoners. They very rarely go for the kill. They try to avoid direct conflicts where possible. They only attack when they have overwhelming odds in their favour. They normally strike to wound.

BRYN AS HAMID

Their goal seems to be what, just relentless expansion?

BEN AS ZOLF

Propagation.

ALEX AS BARNES

As far as I can tell, the only thing that I can tell you is if you wanted to capture every single person, this is exactly how you'd go about it and they are very good at it.

HELEN

They're like parasites?

ALEX AS BARNES

It's hard to say.

LYDIA AS CEL

Do people seem to degrade as they... as they go blue veined or...?

HELEN AS AZU

Yes, are they dead?

ALEX AS BARNES

I don't believe so, no.

HELEN AS AZU

Okay.

BEN AS ZOLF

I mean, Shoin's almost proof of that.

ALEX AS BARNES

I mean, they're capable of both speaking and I have it on good authority that they have access to the memories that they had before.

BRYN AS HAMID

And the magical abilities we've heard. They don't lose their magic after being infected, even paladins. I mean, that seems to be one of the weirdest...

ALEX AS HAMID

I've heard it's a bit more... I've heard it's a bit more complicated with paladins. Certainly in the Archaean side, yeah, they're still casting fireballs.

HELEN AS AZU

How do you mean complicated with paladins?

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, it's about their connection of god rights if you're taken over by somebody else, where does the infection go?

ALEX AS BARNES

Basically, that, you're starting to head out of my area of expertise. From what I gather it's not as straightforward as you're taken over by blue veins and suddenly you're still an evil paladin.

BEN

Hey, Alex, can I make a knowledge religion having been the same theatre as Barnes but also am a cleric?

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

I think I have bad knowledge religion.

ALEX

You do.

BEN

I think it's it's five.

LYDIA

Knowledge bad religion.

BEN

I know I rolled a two so sod it.

LYDIA

It's going to be a pattern.

ALEX

No, no, no, I can give you some anyway just by virtue of exposure.

BRYN

Seven.

ALEX

Which is you're pretty much on the money with what you just said in character, which is that if you're looking at something that is either affecting

the mind or replacing the person in the body and stuff like that, your agreement is between your god and you. So, you know that there hasn't really been like huge swathes of paladins sweeping across the landscape as massive combat tanks, that's not been happening. The issue is you haven't seen any of it directly, you have heard rumours that there may have been a couple of cases. Unfortunately, the rumour mill is in overtime because misinformation is...

BEN

A couple of cases of ...

ALEX AS BARNES

Oh, a couple of cases of blue vein paladins going around the place being paladins, and blue vein clerics being clerics but you haven't seen it directly.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah. So, like the thing is... and, basically, like, what I done is you don't have to take it from a god, right? So, they can be taking it from whatever faith... it could be that this thing, whatever the source of it is it's own powerful entity.

HELEN AS AZU

They transfer their allegiance.

BEN AS ZOLF

Maybe, maybe.

ALEX AS BARNES

I mean, could the... could the thing itself be a god?

BEN AS ZOLF

No, that's what I'm thinking.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, maybe a god, maybe something, as said, extra planar. We're really you know, beyond the pale here of like...

ALEX AS BARNES

Trying think looking around, in terms of Krakens, so you're all saying that these storms have been due to the Krakens.

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, it's a possibility. I mean, it's a question not an answer.

BEN AS ZOLF

Look, whenever we've been going around looking at weird weather patterns, there's always been some indication of something of Kraken, right?

ALEX

No, it... it made sense, it was crazy but it made sense.

BEN AS ZOLF

Also, when we took out Shoin, storm's gone.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, I know.

BEN AS ZOLF

For the first time in months.

ALEX AS BARNES

I did notice that.

BRYN AS HAMID

And, I mean, there's historical stories of Kraken is that they did have some relation to storms and bad weather. I mean, you know, that's a...

BEN AS ZOLF

Not even stories, it's a fact about the creature, that's what they used to do. That's how they work.

ALEX AS BARNES

What that says to me then he has made a lot.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah.

ALEX AS BARNES

This hasn't affected one two harbours, this is...

ALEX AS ZOLF

We saw it in Dover.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, this is entire course line. Yeah.

HELEN AS AZU

How many are we talking about?

ALEX

Sorry, you can see Barnes just a little bulb going on... go on his head there.

BEN AS ZOLF

We saw a tentacle. Did we see it? We did see a tentacle, right?

HELEN AS AZU

Yeah, we did.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, yeah. We saw a tentacle.

ALEX AS BARNES

That's been a long time as well.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, didn't know what it was...

ALEX AS BARNES

So, he's making these things a long time.

BEN AS ZOLF

But at the same time is a Simulacrum. What the Simulacrum's done, that's like the... probably the zenith of whatever they were up to. All this kind of stuff is probably a precursor. You know, it's easy to make something great and huge because you've got a lot to work with.

ALEX AS BARNES

You've got big, big like gears and that.

LYDIA AS CEL

I wonder how many like... you can maybe split... cause Kraken are quite rare so like but I wonder if you... if you took a little bit of a Kraken and you turned it into a cyborg Kraken, cyborg...

ALEX AS BARNES

What's a cyborg?

LYDIA AS CEL

It's a word that I just made up. I really like it. It's means thing that is both biological and robotic, and robots are the thing that these told me about...

BRYN AS HAMID

It's a check, it's a check word.

BEN AS ZOLF

Hang on a minute, does that mean I'm a cyborg?

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

Okay, fine. Alright.

LYDIA AS CEL

It's a compliment.

BEN AS ZOLF

I'll...

ALEX AS BARNES

I prefer mechasquid.

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah, how many...?

BEN AS ZOLF

Alright, I'm not a mechasquid.

ALEX AS BARNES

Well, no, that's what I meant. That's a better... that's why mechasquid's a better name.

LYDIA AS CEL

But if you had more legs you could be.

(everyone laughs)

ALEX AS BARNES

And the point is...

LYDIA AS CEL

And I think that could be on the table.

BEN AS ZOLF

I don't want more legs but also, the point is, the point that Cel was making is that's a generalised term for it so I can be a cyborg and they can be a cyborg but I can't be a mechasquid because I'm not a squid.

LYDIA AS CEL

I mean, but you could be if you really wanted to be.

BEN AS ZOLF

I don't want to be a mechasquid.

LYDIA AS CEL

Okay, well, that's fine. Just be clear about that because...

ALEX AS BARNES

We'll table mechasquid.

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah, we will table that but, what I'm say is...

BEN AS ZOLF

Put it under the table and stamp on it.

LYDIA AS CEL

If you had one kraken...

ALEX AS BARNES

With your cyborg legs, yeah?

LYDIA AS CEL

If you had one kraken that itself had cyborg legs, you could say, for instance, take some of its own legs

BEN AS ZOLF

No, I don't want to do that.

ALEX AS BARNES

They would be too small.

BEN AS ZOLF

Look, I still don't want to... I don't want to. They're bad enough in the sea I don't want them coming up the land.

LYDIA AS CEL

But the point is, that kraken have lots of legs and so what if you could split the kraken and they like were... like cause there weren't that many kraken around but in order to make enough kraken that they were on along the seashore, you could split a kraken and make the rest of it.

ALEX AS BARNES

And get a like a demi-mechasquid.

LYDIA AS CEL

Exactly. So, there's only maybe one original...

HELEN AS AZU

Like with worms.

LYDIA AS CEL

Exactly.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, maybe. Well, it says, you know...

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah, you could start with one dead kraken...

BEN AS ZOLF

And build more of them.

LYDIA AS CEL

And make more of them yes.

ALEX AS BARNES

But you'd need... you'd need two krakens for him to have a baby.

LYDIA AS CEL

You're not...

HELEN AS AZU

That's now how **21:38 ??**.

BEN AS ZOLF

Come on, man.

BRYN AS HAMID

He's not breeding them, he's making them.

HELEN AS AZU

He's making them.

BEN AS ZOLF

He's a mad alchemist, he put his brain in a ball.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, let's...

LYDIA AS CEL

And, honestly, cloning things is not actually that difficult.

BEN AS ZOLF

Alright, I'm lost again, sorry. Cloning?

LYDIA AS CEL

Cloning is when you have one thing and then you want another one that's exactly like that. Like, if you have a really perfect cup of tea...

BRYN AS HAMID

Like an illusionary duplicate?

LYDIA AS CEL

Yes, but it's not an illusion.

ALEX AS BARNES

Or like a demi-mechasquid with like two mums that are the same mum, or two dads that are the same.

BEN AS ZOLF

Okay, Barnes...

LYDIA AS CEL

So, actually, that is one of the mechanisms by which that you can do it. So, by which...

ALEX AS BARNES

I'm so lost.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, maybe you should get another couple of hours of sleep because...

HELEN

Barnes turning into Ed.

BRYN

Yeah, it really is.

ALEX

Genuinely, Barnes is just so far beyond... he genuinely just checks out and goes "Fair enough." Heads back up the stairs.

LYDIA AS CEL

Don't worry, I often actually get that response from people who've had plenty of sleep.

ALEX

Barnes is very smart in very specific ways.

BEN

Yes.

BRYN AS HAMID

I mean, this was just my kind of summarisation of the situation we find ourselves in and the extant questions we have and some of the knowledge we have but, obviously, you guys, you all feel free to add to this and this was to generate discussion as much as anything else.

BEN AS ZOLF

No, you seem to have covered most of like the core things that we've got.

ALEX AS BARNES

The rubbish you spot in lies.

ALEX

Comes from the corner.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yes, that's true, and no sense of embarrassment hence the fart I did.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh, that was why.

BEN AS ZOLF

Did I never explain that?

HELEN AS AZU

No, you just... you just did that.

BEN AS ZOLF

Ah.

(laughter)

BEN AS ZOLF

Right. No, that was...

BRYN AS HAMID

That makes a lot more sense.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, that was...

HELEN AS AZU

Okay, there was... okay, there was a reason for that. Alright.

BEN AS ZOLF

So, for the entire time we were in the academy you thought I just...

HELEN AS AZU

I just you... yeah.

BEN AS AZU

Cool.

BYRN AS HAMID

I mean, I assumed there was a reason but...

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, great.

BRYN AS HAMID

I thought it might have just... anyway.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, they're not great at... how do I put it? They have...

BEN AS ZOLF

I'm just going to go curl up into a tiny ball and disappear.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh, no, it's okay.

LYDIA AS CEL

Really, do you... what spell is that?

BEN AS ZOLF

No, that's very bad for me.

BRYN AS HAMID

No, he's embarrassed but that's a good sign.

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah.

(overtalking and laughing)

ALEX AS BARNES

They seem to be... like, they have all the memories and stuff, but they don't really seem to like get conversation as a thing.

BEN AS ZOLF

Mm, they are quite, you know, very literal.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, like you're talking to a person you have known and they know all of the stuff, which they...

BEN AS ZOLF

I thought they'd read it, right?

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, yeah.

HELEN AS AZU

But if you ask them how they feel about it they don't know.

ALEX AS BARNES

Yeah, they'll make it, they'll lie.

LYDIA

This is something that Cel wouldn't know because Cel was not with Mr Ceiling but Cel has plus six intelligence, Cel is smarter than I am and there's a lot of stuff written on the wall, which might be things like...

BRYN

I also told a lot of the story last night.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, you do it, yeah.

BRYN

Before the really heavy drinking started.

LYDIA AS CEL

So, like... can I just... you say very very literal, that was a thing that you... you said about your Mr Ceiling friend.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, yeah, he was quite literal.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah.

LYDIA AS CEL

So, is... so, you think that they are... they're the same mind, kind of thing?

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, I mean, Mr Ceiling was sort of a hive mind and there's a reason that we think this might be connected.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, no, he wasn't a hive mind.

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, there was lots of brains in there all thinking as one brain.

BEN AS ZOLF

No, no, but it... yeah, but it was one entity like cells in a body not ants in a hill.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah.

HELEN AS AZU

Do you think there was another one?

LYDIA AS CEL

I really should take a different name, I'm hanging out with 24:56 ??.

(laughter)

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, they said they were building one under Cairo, I think we put paid to that.

BRYN AS HAMID

And maybe London. I mean, they were talking about starting more incidences. We don't know... we were never able to find out if that actually happened or not.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah.

LYDIA AS CEL

And you said that it...

BRYN AS HAMID

We asked... we asked for it to be investigated further but we didn't... we weren't...

LYDIA AS CEL

You said that the riots started in London?

HELEN AS AZU

Mm mm.

LYDIA AS CEL

And... and...

BRYN AS HAMID

And that was the precursor to the infection. Do we know when... when did the infection start?

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, it was.

BRYN AS HAMID

In London, was that the first place it was seen.

BEN AS ZOLF

Allow me to tell you. Alex?

ALEX

No one knows, here's the info that you do have. The riots started, as far as you personally believe, or at least have the info so it would be reasonable to assume.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

I don't like telling characters what they should believe. In Other London, riots started that spread to London that then spread to Paris and then started to move throughout Europe. It makes sense that it started from Other London. However, the rumour mill is quite strong but given your info that would be a reasonable assumption, certainly London.

BEN

Yeah, what I just said.

BEN AS ZOLF

So... see this is the thing, right, like the best thing to do, go back to the source to London. But because we've got no way to protect ourselves and we don't know... like we don't know anything about it, if we go there it's just a death sentence.

BRYN AS HAMID

We don't know what the mechanism of infection is even.

BEN AS ZOLF

No, we don't if it's... it could be magical, it could be airborne.

BRYN AS HAMID

Could be we were around that corpse.

ALEX

I can give you some info, not about the mechanism but certain facts that you can draw on.

BEN

Okay, great, yeah.

ALEX

Exposure all but guarantees infection to a degree. Like, if you're in that presence, it's highly likely that you're infected. Number two, there have been cases of mass infection where it's believed there were no blue veins present, like at Ground Zero.

BEN

Yeah, yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

It's the thing like, it is weird and like, yeah. So, this is why we're doing this cause it's very worrying although the body has been dead a while and if any of the live hosts then it can be 26:52 ??.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah.

ALEX

Oh, yeah, that's a good point. People have been able to mess around with blue vein corpses...

BEN

And not be infected.

ALEX

And not been infected.

HELEN

Aaaaaw.

ALEX

That is a recent development.

HELEN

Oh my god, I thought one day you were just going to turn around and be like, “Yep, campaign over.”

ALEX

No.

BEN

So, it’s going to be a development we will get very recently if we’re wrong.

ALEX

Within the last couple of months, you caught wind via Wilde that they have successfully started doing autopsies without infections.

BEN AS ZOLF

So, that's the work in theory, we are going to be testing whether that's true or not, fortunately.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

But, yeah, so.. but, also, that's the thing like, is it... because we don't know what it is, is it a fungus? Is it spores? Is it a disease? Is it magical? Is it like a mind altering affect? You know, we actually don't know. Like, because spells can...

LYDIA AS CEL

None of these are really mutually exclusive here.

BRYN AS HAMID

Yes, it's a combination of all of them.

LYDIA OF CEL

Mind controlling magical fungus.

BEN AS ZOLF

We could have got it by talking to Shoin, because a spell, you'd speak words to impart your will on the mind of another as well you know, so you can,

theoretically, like transmit something like this if it were the right kind of thing, like a mind altering affect, through words, which I'm going to call a memetic affect because it's just in my head and... so, I've just invented that.

ALEX

I don't like it. That sounds well involved.

HELEN AS AZU

So, it's a meme?

BEN AS ZOLF

Like a thought virus, potentially.

LYDIA AS CEL

Like when you see a really cute cat and then you have to tell everyone else about that really cute cat.

BEN AS ZOLF

Exactly, exactly.

BEN AS ZOLF

Or if you see someone fall over...

LYDIA AS CEL

Ah yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

And it's great, and then you tell everyone...

LYDIA AS CEL

And then you replicate it.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, and they... they hear about it down the grapevine but you've got to make sure those stories are like less than eight seconds long otherwise people just really lose interest.

LYDIA AS CEL

Right, and easily repeatable.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

HELEN AS AZU

Or when someone has like a good song.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah.

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, like when you get stuck in your head like an earworm.

ALEX AS BARNES

What's an earworm?

BEN AS ZOLF

Not a worm that goes in your ear. A theoretical, metaphorical worm...

HELEN AS AZU

But there are worms...

(overtalking)

BRYN AS HAMID

... go in your ear and steal your magic and stuff.

HELEN AS AZU

Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, no, yeah, those are...

LYDIA AS CEL

Really you should think of a different word.

ALEX AS BARNES

Meme.

BEN AS ZOLF

Meme.

ALEX AS BARNES

What's the difference? We're inventing words.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, well, I invented it, it's called a meme.

ALEX AS BARNES

It's a stupid word.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, I think it's a great word and I think meme is a stupid. So, whatever.

ALEX

"Well, use meme", says Carter.

BEN A ZOLF

Yeah, you would.

LYDIA

You're the sort of person that looks at someone repeated in action multiply and says, "Yes".

(laughter)

ALEX

You know what, on this real, weird now, let's take a moment, have a break and come back **29:12 ??**.

Break

ALEX

And welcome back. Feel free to carry on, this is all interesting. So, I'm astonished that one of you has at least been paying lots of attention, the rest of you have good ideas. So, all...

BRYN

It was Bryn, Bryn's being paying attention.

ALEX

It's true but the rest of you have good ideas.

BRYN

I mean, don't forget I also crowd source it from a bunch of our fans.

(laughter)

HELEN

Oh, yeah, you're the Red Stripe Brigade.

ALEX

Good lord.

HELEN

Okay.

BEN

He's a fraud.

BRYN

Everyone knows a hive mind is the most efficient way to generate ideas.

LYDIA

So recursive.

ALEX

You're...is it high enough? I think Cel should be the only one with access to the fan network.

BRYN

That is 18.

ALEX

Yeah.

LYDIA

That's nothing.

BRYN

I know, yours is much higher. Like I said, yours has gone way beyond the limits of human possibility. Whereas mine is still literally peak human

LYDIA

Cel's intelligence is at a point that it's not always useful.

BEN

Sorry, Helen, we'll just be dumdums together.

HELEN

Yeah. What have you got? I've got 12.

BEN

13.

ALEX

But you're both...

BEN

So, functionally, exactly the same.

ALEX

No, but you're both like real, real hearty, hearty dumdums.

BEN

Our emotional intelligence is very high. Yep, my emotional intelligence is very high.

ALEX

You're very grief stricken.

BEN

No, my wisdom is very high and I'm using that as a 30:17 ??.

ALEX

Okay.

HELEN

My wisdom's alright.

BRYN

Yeah.

BEN

Well, you are charisma based as a caster.

HELEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

You're just so cool.

BRYN

Anyway, so I think we've answered the immediate question about the infection. I think the next task for the people in the room, which is what Hamid is going to propose, is we get out from our Bags of Holding the giant stacks of paperwork we rescued from Shoin's study. And we read his diary while we were still there but we actually have a bunch of like plans and diagrams and stuff so it's time for a studying montage.

BEN AS ZOLF

I mean, it is all in Japanese.

ALEX AS CARTER

We're not meant to be sharing information cause if one of us is infected they'll know what we know.

HELEN AS AZU

We've already been... this is what... we've been doing this for the past hours.

BRYN AS HAMID

But the whole point of this is if.. if someone here is infected, they already know all this because this isn't secret from the infected.

BEN AS ZOLF

But they know that we know.

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, that... it's too late for that.

HELEN AS AZU

But if they're in here with us then we can just...

BEN AS ZOLF

It's called intelligence.

LYDIA AS CEL

They're telepathic as was established.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, so that's it. If we work something out then they know that we know that's worked something cause we'll be there watching them as them.

HELEN AS AZU

Well, we've got to something. We can't just...

BEN AS ZOLF

No, you're totally right.

HELEN AS AZU

I don't even have room to work out, I need to be doing...

BRYN AS HAMID

We can clear this out, you can, you know...

HELEN AS AZU

But then you'll all be in one... I would feel bad.

LYDIA AS CEL

I mean, I can... I can... I can be a mouse

ALEX

You say from your hammock, which is the only way you're fitting in this room.

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

Hang on a minute, why didn't I do this before? Tomorrow, I'll make the place bigger.

HELEN AS AZU

What?

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, I've got... I can work with stone. Not cause I'm a dwarf, because I'm a cleric, or if any of you get a bright idea about mining, right?

ALEX AS CARTER

That's actually a really good idea.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, I can't believe I hadn't thought of it before.

ALEX AS CARTER

That's a really good idea.

HELEN AS AZU

What do you mean you could make the place bigger?

ALEX AS CARTER

Why did we build... oh, god. Yeah.

BEN AS ZOLF

I can magically mould stone into other shapes like bigger ones.

ALEX AS CARTER

I don't think...

LYDIA AS CEL

Does it have to be the same amount of stone though? What are you going to do with the excess?

BEN AS ZOLF

Oh, it just kind of goes away. It's magic.

HELEN AS AZU

You can make stone into any shape?

LYDIA AS CEL

I'm so much more happy with engineering.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, didn't ask... yeah, where does all the energy from the fireball come from? You know, it just come from...

ALEX AS CARTER

Magic.

BEN AS ZOLF

Magic.

LYDIA AS CEL

No, that comes from I thought another plane and there was balance in the air.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, maybe I send a stone to another plane.

LYDIA AS CEL

That's all I wanted to know.

ALEX AS CARTER

Honestly, if you just...

BEN AS ZOLF

I don't know, maybe.

BRYN AS HAMID

I mean, that's quite likely. I mean, the magical theory is that there's an elemental plane of stone and an elemental plane of fire and you summon it from there and but could also potentially banish back to there. I mean, that seems quite a complex mechanism for a spell like that to work by?

ALEX AS CARTER

As fun as this is, you're all being really loud. What's... what's next so that we can get this done?

BRYN AS HAMID

Well, I think we should just study this paperwork.

BEN AS ZOLF

Sorry, Carter, are we just going to sit here in silence for the next four days while you nurse your hangover.

ALEX AS CARTER

That would be absolutely fine.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, you're out for a minute so, you know. Just stuff your ears.

BRYN AS HAMID

Look, I know that there's this idea of you know operational and you know security of intelligence. But we've got to do something while we're here. As soon as we're out of this quarantine you know we've got to go off and do other things so this is the best time, we've got to plan and research.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yes, okay. But the more days that we go through, the more likely it will be that it would have shown. So, we'll have higher confidence towards the end of this week. So, let's maybe just table this for now...

BRYN AS HAMID

Okay.

BEN AS ZOLF

And, you know, we can spend...

BRYN AS HAMID

If we're doing something.

BEN AS ZOLF

I know...

LYDIA AS CEL

So, I've actually come up with a really cool thing that we could be doing. Like, you know how really to understand people, you just mostly reduce them to numbers and statistics and then you randomise elements in order to provide a certain level of ...

ALEX

Eer eer eer eer (sounds like a buzzer). First warning!

(laughter)

ALEX

There has been one golden rule that has never been violated. Feel free to carry on, I know where you're going with this. First warning.

(laughter)

BEN

Did you just get a big data warning?

LYDIA

Doesn't it make sense to play D&D.

ALEX

Eeer. Eeer.

(everyone laughs)

ALEX

Second warning. No recursions. No recursions. No recursions, this is a hard ban.

LYDIA

Sounds like a patreon award.

ALEX

I am not diving down this rabbit hole.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yes, but if we do that, can I like... I have to mediate every day and I have to do that. Can I like... every time... I have to meditate every day and I have to decide what my spells are going to be and, to be honest, the pressure is just ridiculous. So, can I be something nice and easy like whatever Hamid is where is just...?

BRYN AS HAMID

I'd like to be some sort of hero who could swing a sword really well.

ALEX

And so, we are jumping time ahead a few hours.

BEN

Look, guys, if we just keep talking eventually he will leave the room and we can just keep going.

(laughter)

ALEX

There are very few hardened hard and fast rules.

(laughter)

ALEX

This is one of them. I will turn this recording around, okay?

HELEN

We're turning it around.

LYDIA

And inside itself.

ALEX

I am jumping ahead with a little bit of time.

HELEN

Alright.

BEN AS ZOLF

And we spend so much time underground and really the biggest... we can...

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check.

BEN

Can we play Meritocrats and Meadows?

LYDIA

Aaaaaw.

ALEX

Good name. Good name.

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, cool, we get to play it then. Thanks, Alex. What am I making, a perception check?

ALEX

A perception check.

BEN

An appropriately bad roll.

HELEN

24.

BRYN

17.

LYDIA

21.

BEN

13.

(screaming)

BEN

“It is I, Bertie”.

HELEN

I’m no longer the Bertie of the party.

ALEX

I am going to jump ahead to what can generously be called the middle of that night, okay? You forced this time jump, do not test me. I can jump ahead more than one year.

BRYN

We had... we had... we had a justification of why we shouldn't start immediately, we'd go back to reading and playing cards.

BEN

Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

So, during the day, there is a food drop off, there is a waste pick up etc. Like it's all...

HELEN

Oh, no, a slop bucket.

ALEX

Yes, there is.

HELEN

Noooo.

ALEX

For what it's worth...

BEN

You remember we are kind of living in a world that doesn't really have plumbing.

ALEX

For what it's worth, it is well thought out and has things like appropriate covers and rubber seals and things like that. So, it's not a complete just bucket in a corner situation.

LYDIA

And a vacuum pump.

ALEX

I will allow you from just the materials that you have upon you to start working on that if you want.

HELEN

You said vacuum pump, I just thought, "Ooooggh" on everyone.

BEN

We could just get a Dyson out and just Hoover it off the floor.

(laughter)

ALEX

As always, Wilde is utterly cold because you're all dead to him until you're proven otherwise.

HELEN

Oh, he's so damaged.

ALEX

You, Azu, hear in the middle of the night someone is moving around upstairs. You hear the sound of something has been knocked over. This is not like life changingly awful but it is unusual in that normally the inn has been quite quiet at night, people aren't staying there, like it's... it tends to be dead from about like 7pm-ish.

LYDIA AS CEL

Party scene in this town is rubbish.

HELEN

Is Barnes still on the stairs?

ALEX

No, Barnes has forced Carter onto the stairs and has taken the corner for this evening.

HELEN

I'm going to clamber over Carter and have a listen at the door.

ALEX

Do you want to actively wake him up or try not to?

HELEN

I'll try not to but I'm not going to but I'm not going to be... actually, no, I really want to not wake him up because he'll make a racket and...

ALEX

Give me a stealth check then.

HELEN

Oh, no.

BRYN

Let's assume you aren't wearing your armour.

ALEX

I am going to strongly suggest you not be wearing your armour in this space.

BEN

You'll be taking so many penalties.

ALEX

It would be so bad, bad.

HELEN

Yeah, I think... I think that she's not wearing her armour if she's going to be wearing...

BRYN

If you're penalty is only minus one, so minus seven.

HELEN

Woo hoo. She'll be wearing under-armour. Go mad for that. Oh, dear. That's five.

ALEX

Oh. So, as you're climbing up you manage to just stand on Carter's hand.

HELEN

He shouldn't have his hand there.

ALEX

So, give me a reflex save.

HELEN

That's 18.

ALEX

He starts to cry out however if you choose to cover his mouth so that it's a, "Mmmm", instead of a, "Aaaaah", you can do so, that option is open...

HELEN

Put my foot in his mouth.

ALEX

You have the option of covering his mouth if you wish to.

BEN

This is not 38:04 ??.

(laughter)

BEN

You say away from our RP, alright?

HELEN

But you said I stepped on him so that means the closest thing to his mouth is my foot.

ALEX

Are you trying to stop him yelling out, yes or no?

HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

Okay, cool. So, you tread on his and just, “Aaargh, oooh, mmm.”

HELEN

Okay. I lean down and I’m like...

HELEN AS AZU

There’s something going on upstairs. Shush.

ALEX AS CARTER

Mmm mmm.

HELEN

Okay, I take my foot out of his mouth.

ALEX AS CARTER

What’s going on upstairs.

HELEN AS AZU

I don’t know, I heard a noise. Be quiet.

ALEX AS CARTER

Shall we go have a look?

HELEN AS AZU

No, we can't leave but I just want to listen.

ALEX AS CARTER

I mean, we can, it's dead easy.

HELEN AS AZU

No, ssshhh.

HELEN

Azu listens.

ALEX

Give me another perception check.

HELEN

21.

ALEX

21. You hear two things. I will start from top down. So, upstairs there are multiple people in the inn being very quiet.

HELEN

Mmm mmm.

ALEX

And you hear the distinct sound of someone almost masterfully opening a set of lockpicks right next to your head.

HELEN

Aaaah.

ALEX

On this side of the trapdoor. It's Carter.

LYDIA

(laughs)

HELEN

Azu smacks Carter upside the head.

ALEX AS CARTER

I'll lock it again afterwards.

HELEN AS AZU

No, we're not leaving.

ALEX AS CARTER

Why not?

HELEN AS AZU

You absolute pile of dung.

ALEX AS CARTER

You're a pile of dung.

HELEN AS AZU

No, you are.

ALEX AS CARTER

You're a pile of dung.

HELEN AS AZU

Be quiet.

ALEX AS CARTER

You trod on my hand.

HELEN AS AZU

I'll tread on it again.

ALEX

Carry on.

HELEN

Okay, this time Azu goes to hold Carter like with his arms pinned to his torso.

ALEX AS CARTER

This isn't helping.

HELEN

Okay. Press him against the wall with one hand, cover mouth with the other hand...

ALEX AS CARTER

"Mmm mmmm uh mmm."

HELEN

Take hand away.

HELEN AS AZU

Shut up!

ALEX AS CARTER

You shut up.

(laughter)

HELEN

Tries to listen.

BRYN

I'm so glad you're on a team with this man.

HELEN AS AZU

(screams)

ALEX

If you'd just let him open the door he'd solve all your problems, you'd be able to see what's happening.

HELEN AS AZU

He never **39:59 ??** the door.

(laughter)

ALEX

Give me another fresh perception check. You're taking so many penalties.

HELEN

Aaargh. That is only 18.

ALEX

18. You think someone is searching the place, maybe. Not trashing the place but you get the impression that people are maybe like moving around the space and searching.

HELEN

Okay, now go round and quietly... mm, yeah, I'll wake everyone up quietly.

ALEX

Okay.

HELEN

And I will say...

HELEN AS AZU

There's something going on upstairs. I think there are people upstairs.

BEN AS ZOLF

Okay, the best thing we can do then is make a load of noise and wake Wilde up because we can't leave. Agreed?

ALEX AS CARTER

Does anyone have any magical way of waking him up without making loud noises?

BEN AS ZOLF

No, no. Get ready.

ALEX AS CARTER

Oh, no.

BEN AS ZOLF

We'd have to have message but I think you've got to have line of sight.

ALEX AS CARTER

Oh yeah... no, we use that.

HELEN AS AZU

So, we have to make noise?

BRYN AS HAMID

I really want to learn sending but...

BEN AS ZOLF

Like do you know it now?

BRYN AS HAMID

No.

BEN AS ZOLF

Right, not relevant. Yes, but we just have to...

LYDIA AS CEL

On the count of 3...

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check.

HELEN

That's 23.

BRYN

16... uh, 17.

BEN

Also 17.

LYDIA

28.

ALEX

Ooh, Azu's smashing it though on the rolls. Cel, you hear the... this is a very you thing to recognise. You hear the sound of something mechanical happening nearby. Something small and subtle.

BEN

No, really.

LYDIA

Is knowledge engineering to work out exactly what it is.

ALEX

You reckon it's probably a lock.

LYDIA

The door lock or something else?

ALEX

Door lock.

LYDIA

Okay.

LYDIA AS CELL

I think we should open the door, someone's trying to get in.

ALEX AS CARTER

I'm on it, it's fine. I've got it.

BEN AS ZOLF

Don't you dare. If we open this door and if they come in contact with us well they're in here with us.

HELEN AS AZU

We don't want anyone... I don't want anyone else in here.

ALEX AS CARTER

No, no, no, we won't be trapped in here with them, they'll be trapped in here with us.

(laughter)

BEN AS ZOLF

The point is, they'll be more people in here.

LYDIA AS CEL

Yeah, but the room's going to get bigger.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, I know, I can make it loads bigger.

LYDIA AS CEL

That's fine.

ALEX AS CARTER

Why didn't you do that 42:06 ?? ?.

BEN AS ZOLF

Well, they also might be insufferable.

LYDIA AS CEL

More insufferable.

ALEX

You all hear the sounds of voices upstairs like in the main part of the inn.

LYDIA

Speaking what language?

ALEX

Japanese. You cannot make out the words, I'm not even going to get a perception check. This place is designed to not let much of this kind of thing going on but you're definitely hearing a [muffled voice]. It sounds like the innkeeper probably.

LYDIA AS CEL

I think we should just shout through. I mean, like, "Hey, what's going on?"

BEN AS ZOLF

That was the original plan, let's do that.

LYDIA AS CEL

Hey, what's going on?

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, what they said.

LYDIA AS CEL

Oy.

HELEN

Azu picks up her armour and bashes it on the floor to make a big clanky noise.

LYDIA AS CEL

You know it's hard enough to sleep in here anyway without exciting things.

ALEX

And everyone take a moment. So, quite a lot is going to happen so this is another one of let me finish describing instance before we go into specifics.

BEN

Okay, cool.

HELEN

How exciting.

ALEX

The following happens instantly before we get into anything like initiative. There is a [mumbles] and then a loud thump of someone hitting a floor. There is also the distinct sound of Wilde's voice in the building, [mumbles] and you hear the sound of large amounts of movement up top of like lots of running feet running through the roof.

HELEN AS AZU

What if it's the kobolds?

ALEX

Everyone please roll initiative for me.

BRYN

15.

HELEN

10.

LYDIA

13.

BEN

Also 16 because I can't read.

43: 37 ??

28.

LYDIA

You get like two surprise rounds before we even get to go.

ALEX

In which case then, Hamid, unsurprisingly, you're first.

BRYN

I mean, I don't think Hamid's... sort what... we heard a thump...

ALEX

You heard the thud of something hitting the ground and a cry out from presumably the innkeeping just before said thud. Then the sounds of Wilde clearly speaking, like calling out, and then large amounts of scattered feet up top.

BRYN

I'd probably just shout, "Wilde, what's happening?"

ALEX

That's fine. Zolf, I have to be in initiative for now even if it's just people like doing nothing, I just need to know.

BEN

Get up to the front of the door and says...

BEN AS ZOLF

We can't go out while we're wanted this way.

ALEX

And Cel?

LYDIA

Going to cast shield on myself.

ALEX

That's fine, he'll require you to step into the sort of corridory bit but that's fine.
Azu?

HELEN AS AZU

Shall we put on our armour?

HELEN

Azu's already halfway to her armour.

BEN AS ZOLF

Probably a good idea.

ALEX AS CARTER

Do it.

HELEN

Okay, I'm going to start putting on my armour.

ALEX

Okay, at which point then...

BEN AS ZOLF

I'll help you, we're functionally out of the fight.

ALEX

There was... there was a...

BEN AS ZOLF

Because it will, take like 30 rounds cause they're six seconds.

ALEX

Also, Wilde basically gives another cry and there is the sound of all of the scattered boots all move away from the room that you're currently in towards

Wilde. At which point, Barnes is at the base of the stairs, sword drawn ready to go. You give him this, he's quick off the mark. Carter is actively trying to fight through and unlock the door. Barnes is currently stopping that situation.

BRYN

If I'm right by the door, am I in the anti-magic field?

ALEX

You mean by the door out?

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

No. So, this is... I'm going to have to explain this visually, I apologise for listeners who can't see this. You have trapdoor, a stairway down, which leads to a base corridor and then the cellar, the prison room borders onto that corridor. So, there's a full length of corridor which is the length of the prison room and that corridor leads out and up to a staircase.

BRYN

I get up really close to the door.

ALEX

Mm mm.

BRYN

And cast fear.

ALEX

Okay.

BRYN

Any creature in... I'm just pointing it through the door, I can't see what's going, I don't know the best way to help Wilde so...

ALEX

That's fine.

BRYN

So, I'm hoping this helps. Any creature in a 30 foot cone on the other side of the door has to make a will save or be panicked for nine rounds

ALEX

Okay. So, what's the DC for the will save?

BRYN

18.

ALEX

8.

(laughter)

BRYN

It is a level four spell, like it's a new shiny one that I haven't cast before.

HELEN

Oh.

BRYN

Oh, and by the way, the way I cast fear because I haven't cast it before, it's specifically a bloodline spell from my draconic bloodline so I literally form a dragon face in front of my face and give a dragony roar. That is me casting fear.

BEN

So, you mean there's like a hologram sort of dragon or your face becomes dragony?

HELEN

No, like a...

BRYN

Somewhere between the two.

BEN

Aaaah.

ALEX

Okay. Because we're in initiative order I can't describe what happens just that you do that. So, just to give us a bit more description. So, a dragon face replaces your face and then you roar down a keyhole?

BRYN

It sort of more like grows out of my face and it's not entirely clear if it's an illusion or an actual physical change. It's quite fleeting but I literally... my face forms into a scary draconic visage and then roars.

BEN

Do you do what in the Lord of the Rings Bilbo does when Frodo tries to leave Rivendell?

BRYN

It's a bit less icky than that.

BEN

No, but in that like...

BRYN

It's kind of similar.

BEN

No, but I mean in that like flash of like sudden change and then back to normal?

BRYN

Yes, yeah, very much so.

HELEN

Maybe more like when Gandalf does the, “Bilbo”.

(laughter)

BRYN

Yes, yeah, a bit more like that. Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

We have to watch those films together.

HELEN

I know I want to watch them again!

ALEX

You’re the only person I think would enjoy them as much as me.

HELEN

Okay.

LYDIA

47:18 ??.

(laughter)

BRYN

I love them.

LYDIA

I've watched them through like six times.

ALEX

Yeah, but she still bounces and gets giddy in a way... I just don't see you two doing.

LYDIA

Helen does that about so many things.

HELEN

That is true. Rusty Quill, Lord of the Rings thing then sometimes.

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

And we'll do it as a company social or something.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Ooh, ooh.

BEN

A nine hour... no, we're watching the extended, a twelve hour company social.

HELEN

You made the correct choice. I'm not watching the extended versions.

ALEX

Zolf, you are helping Azu?

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

Okay, cool.

BEN

But also keeping an eye on... okay, I'm helping Azu unless Carter or any... well, unless anyone tries to do something stupid at which point I will be getting in the way.

ALEX

Does Hamid's action count as stupid?

BEN

No.

ALEX

Okay.

BEN

Sorry, if anyone tries to get out of the cell.

ALEX

Okay. If Alex tries to worsen the situation, that's what you're actually getting at.

BEN

No, if her character tries to worsen the situation, it will be Carter. So, yes, but specially, anyone.

ALEX

And Azu is still putting armour on, I'm guessing?

HELEN

Azu is also helping Zolf with is armour.

BEN

Well, you'll probably have to 48:12 ?? or something.

ALEX

You can't.

HELEN

Oh, really?

BEN

Also, like...

HELEN AS AZU

I thought it might be a nice thing where I could be like, "I'll buckle you", "No, you buckle me", and then we could do like a...

BEN AS ZOLF

Could do that but that means both of us will be done at the last possible point that either of us could be done 48:25??.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh.

ALEX

It's the difference between one of you being done in five minutes and the other being done in two minutes or you both being done in seven minutes.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh, okay.

BEN AS ZOLF

Yep.

HELEN AS AZU

So, you're helping me?

BEN AS ZOLF

Yeah, cause...

HELEN

I allow you to help me and also help myself.

ALEX

Wilde gives a definite cry. It doesn't seem to be a cry of panic worth bearing in mind.

HELEN AS AZU

I hope it's a cry of attack.

ALEX

What then happens is you hear the sound of all of these boots on the floor seemingly scatter into the winds.

HELEN

Ooh.

ALEX

All just [sounds like oooommm] and scarper. I'm going to drop us out of initiative unless someone actively wants to stay in initiative for some reason?

BEN

No.

LYDIA

No.

HELEN

No.

BRYN AS HAMID

Wilde, what's going on? Wilde, are you okay?

ALEX

There's no response.

HELEN AS AZU

Mr Wilde?

BRYN AS HAMID

Anyone?

BEN

I'm going to make a constitution saving through to belt out, "Oy, Wilde" as loud as I possibly can.

ALEX

There is no response.

LYDIA AS CEL

That man is so impolite.

BEN AS ZOLF

No, that man is maybe has been killed.

BRYN AS HAMID

We need to know what's happened.

BEN AS ZOLF

No. No.

HELEN AS AZU

Oh, Zolf.

BEN AS ZOLF

Because... no, because the alternative is we get this wrong and we cause an outbreak in Japan. So, is it Wilde or the entire country? That is the choice we're making.

BRYN AS HAMID

Is there a keyhole?

LYDIA AS CEL

Isn't he a friend of yours?

BRYN

Can I attempt to look through the keyhole?

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Oh, you're the right height as well.

ALEX

Give me a perception check. It has to be through the keyhole because your fear affect went through it.

BRYN

22.

ALEX

So, from here, because of where the trapdoor is...

BRYN

Yeah, I have quite a restrictive field of vision.

ALEX

You can sort of see the entrance to you know the trapped room that drops people down into that cell.

HELEN

Yes, I remember that.

ALEX

On the far side, there is a corridor that runs the length of the inn. You can see a set of claws are currently just poking out past the edge of the wall and you can see them sort of tapping velociraptor style. In terms of size, they are small.

LYDIA AS CEL

Kobold.

HELEN AS AZU

It is the kobold.

BEN AS AZU

So, look, yes, he is a good friend... but, okay, I'll rephrase the question. A friend or the entire country of Japan?

HELEN AS AZU

Mm.

BRYN AS HAMID

What colour are the claws.

LYDIA AS CEL

I don't think things are really so binary as dramatic choices like that try and present.

ALEX

They might be red, yes.

BRYN AS HAMID

Skraak?

ALEX

At which point I'm going to end the episode there.

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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