

RQG – [156] – [In Memoriam]

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

And welcome to episode 156 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

(Laughter)

And... and I nearly said 'and Azu'!

(Group laughter)

It was bound to happen one day, but I was thinking about how fast you talked just then! This is Helen, yes!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith.

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al Tahan.

LYDIA

Ceeeeeeel Siiiiideboooooottommm...

ALEX

It's hurting me!

HELEN

Annnnnnd Aaaaazuuuuuuu... !

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Aarrggh, you've found a way to actually get on my grit!

(Group laughter)

Aaarrrrgggghhhh!

BRYN

You've just been getting faster and faster. I've decided that I'm not on board anymore! Just sloooow it dowwwwwn...

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

He's gonna speed us up!

BEN

The other thing it was that he did it, but then... we did it quickly and then didn't point at me. You know sometimes you will reverse the order so I'm, like,

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I'm not gonna say it until you point at me otherwise you'll be, like, haha, I got you!

ALEX

No, I'm not annoyed at you. The slow ones in the room...

LYDIA

Yeahhhh...

(Laughter)

BEN

Oh, no, I was doing the intro fast, but I'm doing to do the rest of the entire episode like that.

(Laughter)

ALEX

Cool.

BRYN

Let's find some chill, Alex!

HELEN

Yeah!

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ALEX

Speaking of chill...

HELEN

Mmm hmm!

ALEX

... we find ourselves outside of a moody cleric's door...

HELEN

Again?

ALEX

... and it's weird. It feels like it's 2016!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I have a lot of hard work ahead of me, spinning up all of this weird stuff that no one knows about!

BEN [deadpan]

I don't know what you mean!

(Laughter)

ALEX

So. We are all in the inn, quarantine has all but failed, but, ehh... in a comparatively controlled way.

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

And, thus, I'm going to pick up exactly where we left off with Azu knocking on a door and finding Zolf staring out at a not-stormy night scene!

(Laughter)

HELEN/AZU [quietly]

'Hello.'

BEN/ZOLF [quietly]

'Hi.'

HELEN/AZU

'Are you going to come downstairs?'

BEN/ZOLF

[sighs]

'I, I dunno...'

HELEN/AZU

'Do you want to talk about things?'

BEN/ZOLF

[sighs]

I, yeah... I dunno. I... I tried and it doesn't do any good, and, look, I've only known you for, what, two weeks... ?'

HELEN/AZU

'Yeah, something like that.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Three weeks? Two of which have been either your jailer or being in jail with you, the other week being life or death at all points, so...'

HELEN/AZU

'I take your point. We don't know each other well...'

BEN/ZOLF

'No, it's not... yeah, I... yeah... it's just **[sighs]**... I thought I was better than I have been and, erm, seeing Hamid again has kind of brought a lot of it back

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because I wasn't in a very good place when, I don't know, the first time, and I made some changes and I thought, maybe, hey, this time will be different and it's not, and Sasha isn't there and I, I dunno. I am now devoted to, like, hope and optimism and doing what comes next so hard that I'm literally magic, right?'

HELEN/AZU

'Yeah.'

BEN/ZOLF

'And that's weird. But it's happened so it is. And yet, he's right. I dunno, it's something about, I dunno, maybe I'm just not, you know, I'm not okay and I... I dunno if I can be okay.'

HELEN/AZU

'Well, I'm not sure that anyone is okay.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Yeah, I know, I know... and everyone's going through, like, all this is awful for everyone...'

HELEN/AZU

'That's not what I mean. I mean there is no normal way to be.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Yeah.'

HELEN/AZU

‘And I think we can’t always be in control of our feelings and our emotions, but we can control our actions and what we do with them. But I think this has obviously been really hard for you, so don’t blame yourself for everything. It feels like you’re piling everything that’s ever happened on top of yourself.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, well I’m the common denominator for my own life, aren’t I, so... you know!’

HELEN/AZU

‘There are lots of things that are common denominators for our lives. The world is a much bigger common denominator. I think it’s much more likely that things that happen in the world are at fault. You didn’t cause any of this.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I know! I don’t... I’m not blaming this on me, you know, it’s just **[sighs]** I dunno, I don’t know if I’m cut out for this. I’m not helpful to other people when I’m like this, so I remove myself from the situation, right, I don’t need... I don’t know how to be any different. This is me, this is it, right? I’m not... I can’t wave a magic wand and change who I am.’

HELEN/AZU

‘And yet you did become so full of hope that it gives you magic powers. So something has... that’s a concrete thing that has changed.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘And yet here we are again. It’s not Hamid this time, it’s you, and it’s not Paris, it’s Japan, but it’s the same thing.’

HELEN

[Sighs]

So Azu’s been standing in the doorway until now. She’s going to, like, come over a bit closer and, oh, she’s also very tall. Let me think...

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Extremely!

(Helen laughs)

BEN

Just as a reminder, I am four foot three!

HELEN

Is that, is that like a chair?

ALEX

Currently, just to aid imagination, Zolf is too small for the room he is in. Azu is too big for the room she is in!

HELEN/AZU

Azu comes crouchingly into the room...

(laughs)

... and does a little sit on the floor! 'What is it that you're scared of happening?'

BEN/ZOLF

'Failing. Not doing... I don't know if I can articulate it...'

HELEN/AZU

'I don't think you've failed at all. I think that losing your temper sometimes is something is very, very normal to do. And Hamid has been through a lot as well, as we all have. So...'

BEN/ZOLF

'Yeah, it's just... I dunno, his driving naivety about everything...'

HELEN/AZU

'Mmmm...'

BEN/ZOLF

‘... it just... And now we’ve got these Kobolds? Is he some sort of dragon lord?
I mean, what’s that?!’

HELEN/AZU

‘Can you not see the funny side of that?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No! No, not at all! He’s the son of wealthy people. He’s the son of a banker.
This is going to put him right back where he... this is going to be bad for him.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I don’t know. He has different influences around him now. Someone once
told me that the point is that you try. That you try your best. And I think as
long as you’re doing that, is... that can’t be a failure.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Hm. Yeah, well.’

HELEN/AZU

‘And you know what? You’ve done some pretty amazing things.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Look, we’ve only known each other for three weeks, so...’

HELEN/AZU

‘And I’ve already seen you get hit by lightning...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, sure...’

HELEN/AZU

‘... and absorb...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘... look, I can take a beating. Great, I can take a beating. Bertie could take a beating...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh, Bertie’s the one we that don’t like, ha ha.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, the one that I’m not sad is dead.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh, oh, oh...’

ALL

[Incredulous roars]

‘... yes.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Fine. I’ll come back down, but I am taking a back seat. I can’t deal with this pressure, right? And maybe I’m putting it... maybe I’m doing it to myself, so I’m just gonna... I will be there, but, yeah. Alright? So I’m coming down, so that’s an improvement, eh? That’s what you wanted to happen so...’

HELEN/AZU

‘What I wanted to happen was to check that you were alright.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, obviously not, but I’m here if you want to talk about anything.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Sure. Well, I need to get better at doing that, so... thanks.’

HELEN/AZU

‘So do I, and also, you did mention Sasha, and if you ever want to talk about her...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I don’t know if I can.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I understand that.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Anyway. Fine. I’ll come downstairs.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Thank you, and the pressure is not about being the best, it’s just...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, I know. I’ve been... I’ve had a lot of time to think through all of the reasoning and everything in my own head, so, you know...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Alright.’

ALEX

As you both head downstairs...

BEN

Mmm hmm...

ALEX

... I'm going to say Zolf heads out first with Azu behind. The necklace that you wear around your neck...

(Helen gasps)

... grows pleasantly warm for a moment and then subsides.

(Helen laughs)

HELEN

You're just loving...

BEN

You've got the finger guns from Aphrodite!

(Group laughter)

[everyone cheers and screams with laughter]

LYDIA

Yeahhhh! That's some good lovin'!

(Group laughter)

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BEN

I genuinely thought I he was going to say, 'and the necklace, and the heart grew three sizes...'

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

It's really heavy and awkward now!

(Group laughter)

[clonk!]

HELEN

Did a good Care!

BEN

Pew pew!

ALEX

So, we are going to jump back downstairs, presumably the two of you enter?

BEN and HELEN

Yeah.

Mmm hmm.

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ALEX

Wilde pointedly doesn't make a big thing of it. So...

LYDIA/CEL [quietly to the others]

'Pointedly don't make a big deal of it!'

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Azu does a look that's, like, do not... !

BRYN

Hamid will give... will do his best to give Zolf a friendly smile and does not get a response.

BEN

Yep.

BRYN

That's fine!

(Laughter)

[Helen and Lydia shriek about the situation]

HELEN

... it's killing me!

(Laughter)

BEN

... softly with our song!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So! So, so, so... now that we're all at the table and so on, I am still thinking it's a good idea for building the thing to take a while...

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

... mostly from safeguards that you're building in and blah, blah, blah. I'm going to give you bonuses for him not turning into a giant creature that eats you all! There you go!

LYDIA

Okay!

ALEX

But, in the meantime, does anyone have anything to raise at this, sort of, this is what we're going to build a thing and then interrogate him? Or, am I okay to accelerate to the end of quarantine on the assumption that everyone stays within the inn's grounds, let's call them...

HELEN

Yeah!

ALEX

... there's enough food and supplies. It's deliberately always stocked for an emergency prepper, kind of, situation. People can just have a chill couple of days and...

LYDIA

Yeah, we're gonna take a lot of baths...

BEN

I don't believe you.

HELEN

Yeah, Zolf is not actually there...

LYDIA

I think the option is there!

BEN

No, I'm saying Alex. I just don't believe Alex!

(Laughter)

It's not true, it's never happened!

ALEX

Between now and the end of your "quarantine" is there anything that people want to address or should I just skip?

BEN

Hahaha, I'm not addressing anything actively! Hohohohoho...

Funny...

(Laughter)

HELEN

Hmmm... Azu's not going to press anything with Zolf, but she's just going to be visible in Zolf's eyeline a few times a day, to feel like a glowing pink reminder that there is somebody...

BEN

You'll get, like, half-hearted thumbs up, yeah yeah.

ALEX

You're not going to press anything apart from flowers in his eyeline so he knows you're there!

HELEN

(Laughs)

Azu might talk to Hamid, though.

LYDIA

Cel's going to try and build more bridges with the Kobolds. And they're going to learn more about, like, Cel, so that's an interesting dish!

ALEX

They all start teaching the heck out of Draconic to you!

LYDIA

That's really cool!

BRYN

Yeah!

LYDIA

I'm really enjoying that.

ALEX

Like, *reaaaaaallly* teaching the heck out of it and it becomes, kind of, a useful tool, should you want it?

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

For, can I not have you guarding me while I have a bath?!

BRYN

I mean, that's...

ALEX

... for a Draconic lesson...

BRYN

... but that's also going to be my thing, is, I wanna assist Cel, but almost more than that I want to encourage the Kobolds to assist Cel because it will quickly become apparent that I am the stupidest person in terms of engineering out of Cel, all seven Kobolds and Hamid, but he will happily play that role in order to help everyone else relax and get to know each other better.

ALEX

In which case, I'm actually going to answer some of the stuff with Hamid, turning first I'm going to turn to the Azu Hamid conversation...

HELEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

ALEX

In terms of the Draconic stuff, it becomes immediately apparent to you, every single one of these Kobolds is a prodigy when it comes to engineering.

LYDIA

Okay, we're going to rub out a bit of Draconic...

ALEX

... Yeah, you can now have passable, because you're a very quick studier. They're quite good at teaching it, but they are genuinely prodigies. They could have been born with spanners in their hands, like, oh my god, they're good!

LYDIA

[Gasps]

Yeah.

ALEX

... and it doesn't seem like there's one or two of them accept you – for the most part they just seem to have a natural understanding. I don't mean that they're necessarily going to be, like, invaluable assistants building the next eon of technology, but what they are is understanding in a way that most of the

people that you speak to, kind of, look at you blank and then say, '[0:12:41 Denny Mechasquid]?'

LYDIA

Mmm. Mmm, mmm.

ALEX

They're not that. They seem to have the knack. In terms of the Hamid stuff...

LYDIA/CEL

... Cel is going to, sorry, gently... now they very carefully have not directly asked about what the Kobolds are being made to do in their Science Kobold time, but gently begin to try and pry out what sorts of experiments were at... like, what the things they were doing when they were drugged and were doing '*science*', like, 'So what kind of experience with potions stuff have you had? What kind of, have you seen a mechanism like this before?'

ALEX

I'll answer this and then bounce to Hamid – it's not especially productive. They were deliberately shown how to do stuff not how it worked or why... so it was a lot of...

LYDIA

... but if they are that smart and...

ALEX

... so bear with me. Yeah, there was a lot of procedural stuff, however, generally speaking in the last six months it was basically business as usual, just churn out what are effectively steroids for the mooks combined with general maintenance on the place, but it's worth bearing in mind that they openly stated we were doing lots of maintenance towards the end and that was all they were doing, because the thing was breaking down faster than it was being maintained. In the early days, they were not just building the place, they were doing both actively helping source ridiculously rare ingredients, and also, yeah, the whole, like, 'ooh, some adventurers are happening – all normal business is suspended. Let's go full dungeon-master mode' kind of thing.

LYDIA

Did they build any Krakens? 'Cos someone needed to have been building the Krakens.

ALEX

Er, none of the ones here did...

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

... but they know that some of them did.

LYDIA

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Ah, so there you go! There's an answer to the did you build the Krakens and when they were built.

ALEX

In terms of the Hamid stuff, they are very, very wary of you...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

... and it becomes apparent that, with the exception of Skraak, most of them it seems to be coming from a place of, basically, presumed fear. The first while that you were with them, it's a lot of stuff, like, you know, you maybe see Zolf and you just give a sigh. Any kind of minor negative emotional response whatsoever, they are so hypersensitive and overfocussed...

HELEN

Ohhhh...

ALEX

... that it's just the tiniest thing they're immediately, like, on guard, 'he hasn't exploded or, like, killed someone or set fire to the building. Oh, this is okay...'

BRYN

Hamid is probably going to overcompensate a bit, then. If he notices that...

ALEX

... that, unfortunately...

BRYN

... becomes, sort of, relentlessly positive.

ALEX

... unfortunately, it puts them on edge even more...

ALL

Ooohhhhhh... !

ALEX

... because they recognise that you are faking it...

HELEN

Oh, yeah...

ALEX (also as Skraak)

... and eventually, I'm not going to RP this, Skraak intervenes and says, 'The best thing that you can be is absent in a way that they're not suspicious of.'

(Bryn and Helen chuckle)

That's genuinely his advice – it pretty much boils down to, 'be around the place' ...

BRYN/HAMID

I will thank him profusely for that advice and, rather than joining in with the assisting Cel sessions, I will be, like, 'I think you guys should help out Cel while I go and do something else' and, like, be still even in the same room at the other end or at the same building, but it gives them something to do and I've given them an order that they get to relax away from me.

ALEX

Skraak turns your gentle suggestions into hard orders.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX (also as Skraak)

Skraak's quite forceful in a way that at first seems quite harsh, but none of them seem to take any umbrage with it whatsoever, and the way that he gets around it is he just tells all the others, 'I'm his guard, you're here to help me. I'm looking after him so you don't look after him.' And that's enough to separate it out a bit. They are excellent at teaching you Draconic, just all over it.

LYDIA

And Cel is, just, so gentle them. It's like, you know, they have dealt with a lot of young and unsure apprentices in their time and...

ALEX

They're not that! When it comes to, like, they're quite confident, bordering on overconfident, whenever Hamid's not there.

LYDIA

Oh.

HELEN

Oof...

LYDIA

Yeah, but, like, Cel has dealt with a lot of traumatised creatures in lots of...

ALEX

Yeah, yeah... and then to bounce onto the Azu/Hamid conversation, that feels like one to RP as opposed to one for me to just kind of sail on.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Pick a time and a place – quarantine is not finished, but we'll assume it's imminent.

HELEN

Somewhere quiet and away from Zolf because I need to talk to you about Zolf!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Let's do it!

ALEX

(Laughs)

Sorry, for some reason I had, like, a snaptake in my brain of Azu going, 'He's gonna get ya, I dunno if it's today...'

(Group laughter)

'... I dunno if it's tomorrow, but I would watch my back, man, he is gunning for ya!'

BRYN

We need to talk about Zolf in a, 'we need to talk about...'

(Group laughter – laughing over the end of Bryn's sentence)

HELEN/AZU

Yeah, that's exactly what I was... 'Hamid, can I talk to you?'

BRYN/HAMID

'Oh, yeah, of course.'

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, hi. How are you doing, first of all?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I’m okay, actually. It’s, I mean, a lot to get used to isn’t it?’ I say, gesturing quite obviously, ‘But I think it’s going to be okay. They seem to be coming out of themselves a little bit more and they’re really enjoying working with Cel and I just, I want them to be less scared around me and...’

HELEN/AZU

‘I think you’re doing a really good job.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Thank you. I’m trying.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I know.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘How are you doing?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh! Yes, I haven’t thought about it!’

(Laughter)

BRYN/HAMID

‘You can’t be too busy looking after everyone else to look after yourself. We’ve been through a lot, too, and it never stops, but that doesn’t mean we have to just ignore what’s happened and carry on.’

HELEN/AZU

‘No. And we haven’t really talked about it yet, but there’s something a little more immediate at the minute.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Oh, okay.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I think Zolf is going to have a breakdown at some point.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Oh! What do you mean?’

HELEN/AZU

‘He is extraordinarily anxious about... He thinks that he’s going to fail us in some way and, I mean, I don’t know if you’ve spoken to him already, but...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well, not since we were all in the actual cage together as such. Erm, look, he... I knew him for a while before, obviously, and he was always struggling with

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stuff and I never knew how to help him, and he's always, he does a much better job than he gives himself credit for and he...'

HELEN/AZU

'Yes!'

BRYN/HAMID

'... second guesses everything and I've never known how to... I wasn't... I tried to help him acknowledge that and it never quite got through. In the end, it meant that he did leave, and I don't want that to happen again because I think...'

HELEN/AZU

'I don't think it will, but just be aware, I suppose. He is very concerned about his relationship with you.'

BRYN/HAMID

'How do you mean?'

HELEN/AZU

'From what I gather, he feels that he used to, I dunno, snap at you and...'

BRYN/HAMID

'Well, you've seen...'

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... how he is. I mean, that isn’t a lot different...’

HELEN/AZU

‘... but he thought that he’d grown past it, I suppose, and...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘It’s hard sometimes, isn’t it, when you had a certain relationship with someone and then you don’t see them for a while and you’re thrust back together, you tend to adopt old modes. I remember every time I visited home it was hard not to be the, you know, the kid I used to be, even though I felt like when I was away from home I’d grown out of that.’

HELEN/AZU

‘I think that’s something similar that’s happening here. I just want to let you know.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I don’t...’

HELEN/AZU

‘He seemed sorry about the way he is.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Of course! I don’t hold it against him, I mean...’

HELEN/AZU

‘But he doesn’t know that, I suppose. But maybe you should talk to him at some point?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t know what I’d say. I mean, there’s so much history there and it is difficult between the two of us because of what we’ve gone through, and I do feel like we clash a bit more often than I would like. It’s tough. Do you think it would help him?’

HELEN/AZU

‘If you find him in the mood that I found him in, possibly. He seemed willing to talk about it. I just... I don’t think it could hurt.’

(Bryn and Helen laugh)

BRYN

Where’s that naïve optimism now?!

(Group laughter)

Handing it around like a hot potato!

HELEN

Look, Azu thinks communication can solve everything.

BRYN/HAMID

Yeah! ‘Oh, okay. I guess I’ll try and...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Maybe not now, but if he, you know, if he talks to you, just be nice to him.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Of course, of course!’

HELEN/AZU

‘I’m just, I’m worried, that’s all, and you’ve known him longer than me.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Okay, yeah, I’ll try and find a good time to have a word with him, I guess.’

LYDIA [quietly]

Can we talk to the *borb* now?

HELEN

Yes! I forgot about the *borb*!

ALEX

You can’t, because there’s one last thing to deal with before the *borb*.

ALL

[Gasps]

Oooohhhh!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Before the *borb*!

ALEX

Hamid...

LYDIA

The *borb*... !

ALEX

Hamid...

(Lydia laughs)

ALEX

... So the *borb*... Hamid, Azu and Zolf only, Wilde, this is of an evening after dinner – it is the last night of your quarantine before, basically, the first day of not being quarantined. It's like, to all intents and purposes, it's clear, like, the week is a fairly arbitrary one and Wilde seems to have just... the door... the

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thing has swapped in his eyes. He comes and he knocks on each of your doors in turn and invites you down to his office for a drink and a chat. He doesn't say it in an ominous way...

(Laughter)

... I need to...

HELEN

When your boss says, 'we need a chat!', like that's...

BRYN

I mean, you've definitely said it in an ominous way!

ALEX

That's why I had to explicitly state he's not being ominous!

HELEN

Terrified! *You're* being ominous!

ALEX (also as Wilde)

He's knocking is more along the lines of, 'I think it would be a good idea if the three of you...'

BRYN/HAMID

'Sure.'

HELEN

Wilde, are you gonna break up with us?!!

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

'No, we're just having a one to one!' But he will...

LYDIA

Quick, looking for something in the diary five minutes before...

BRYN

... a performance with you!

LYDIA

... peered at all the diaries afterwards, all of those kinds of appointments get cancelled! Strange!

(Group laughter)

Gonna be fine!

ALEX

In his office, he has laid out a whisky tumbler for each of you, and he's poured one for himself and he is waiting, if you all choose to go meet him?

BRYN

Yep.

HELEN

Yeah!

BEN

Does he imply that it's just him and the person he's talking to?

ALEX

No, he implies that it is all three of you.

BEN

Ahh!

(Laughter)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

He also, and for Zolf specifically I'll say this, 'I think it would be a good idea if you, Hamid and Azu join me in the office. It's not to clear the air, it's for something, actually...'

BEN/ZOLF

'Business.'

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘Basically.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Fine.’

ALEX

He only does that for you, by the way.

(Helen laughs)

Do you head down?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Okay. So the three of you are there. He gestures quite warmly for you to have a whisky. ‘Thank you all for joining me. I have a bit of news. It’s not bad news, but it is big news and it happened while you were in the Institute.’

BRYN/HAMID

Hamid reaches out, grabs the tumbler of whisky and clutches it like it might be a life-raft. ‘What is it, Wilde?’

(Helen laughs)

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘You’ll all want to sit down.’

HELEN [laughing]

Azu sits down.

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘So, it’s extremely unusual and there’s been a slight delay in terms of delivery due to the nature of things as they stand.’

HELEN

Can Azu hold Hamid’s hand?

BRYN

Yeah! Hamid swaps the tumbler of whisky back and forth a couple of times...

(Group laughter)

... before he realises which hand he needs!

(Laughter)

BEN/ZOLF

‘Guys, get on with it, Wilde.’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘So...’ This isn’t me being deliberately tense, it’s... ‘The Temple of Aphrodite provided a letter to the Harlequins which has taken a while to filter through to us. It has been opened. I have had to read it myself, you know the standard procedures, and it was sent...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Get on with it!’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘I’m trying... Hmm... It appears to have been written in ancient Rome and held the seal of their founder...’

[Helen gasps]

‘... Ava Huskangus.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘O-kay...?’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

‘Hamid, I think you should... Who wants to read it?’

ALL

‘What is it?’

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde starts to read, 'Alright, mates. Sorry about the erroribus. It's been so long that you all speak Latin in my dreams. But you know I wasn't all that good in English to start.'

BEN/ZOLF

'No, no, I can't do this.' And I leave.

[sound of door closing behind him]

ALEX

Wilde doesn't try to stop you.

BRYN

Hamid's jaw is just hanging open.

ALEX (as Wilde)

'Am I okay to continue?'

HELEN

Azu grabs Hamid. Not just holding hands, like, grabs!

ALEX (as Wilde)

'I can stop if you all want?'

HELEN

No.

ALEX (as Wilde)

[Editor's note: Wilde's voice fades out and is replaced by Sasha's, reading her letter]

'I got no proof you made it back, but I believe you did. I believe that you're okay, somewhere. I am. We landed back in Rome right when it was falling apart. There was fights. Grizzop took a spear that was meant for me, and then he took more. I light candles for him at the temple every year. They tell me that he's happy somewhere on a Celestial Hunt and I believe that, too. After everything was destroyed by the dragons, I found a home and a friend. So much was ruined and a lot of people was also lost, and so we took them in, too. Some of them was so small that they didn't have names or they couldn't remember them. But they've grown up now.

Azu is my best locksmith. Grizzop turned out all calm and quiet. He loves plants and growing living things. Cleric of Opis. I hope other Grizzop would be okay with that. Amidus used to help me out with the business side of our security work, but he's busy with his own twins now. They're exactly your height now Hamid and they call me Ava. No one here could pronounce 'Zolf'. We ended up calling him Sagax. He's **excellens** knife work when he's not busy arguing. I think they'd get on. Little Wilde has caused me so many headaches you would not believe. Bertus teaches the kids acrobatics now that I'm getting too stiff. I wish so much that you could meet them.

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

Sometimes you can't save the world, but you can save a person. I believe that I'll see you again and get to tell you that. Light a candle for Grizzop for me.

Thanks mates,

Whosaskinus "Sasha" Lolomg.'

[Editor's Note: Wilde concludes the letter]

(Group laughter)

BRYN [laughing and clapping]

Haha, ha, ha! Yesssss...

ALEX

And on that, we'll take a break.

LYDIA

Yeah!

ALEX

And welcome back! Are we all happy, cheerful? Everything good?

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Whoever wrote that deserves an award.

(Laughter)

ALEX

But I guess we'll just... never know!

LYDIA

Never know!

BEN

I wanna hear more about that Grizzop guy!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

So, I am going to pick up exactly where we left off, which is letter reading finished in the study with Wilde.

BRYN

Hamid dropped the tumbler of whisky without drinking it. He is weeping and sobbing and clutching at Azu.

HELEN

Mmm... Oh, Azu holds him.

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde folds the paper, leaves it on the desk. ‘She’ll be missed.’ And then stands and leaves the room in a calm manner, not a striding ‘I’m-making-a-point’ manner!

HELEN

Well, Azu will thank him before he goes.

ALEX

He gives a nod and leaves you two to it.

HELEN

Azu does a pat.

(Laughter)

I think that she is shellshocked.

BRYN/HAMID [weeping]

‘I can’t... she was... she was okay. She...’

HELEN/AZU

‘It sounds like she lived a really long life, that she liked.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yeah.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh, Hamid. I think Grizzop went how he would have liked to.’

BRYN/HAMID [weeping]

‘Saving... saving Sasha.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I wish we could have got them both back, but it’s so... it’s so good to know...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah. I’m really glad that they’re not just, you know... it could have been so much worse then.’

BRYN/HAMID [whispers]

‘Yeah.’

HELEN/AZU

‘What do you want to do?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t know, aughh... Where did that whisky go?’

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

(Group laughter)

HELEN

I feed Hamid whisky!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I think it's a sensible point to close the curtain on that scene.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Well...

[Everyone gasps]

... no, no – I'm not going to cause more problems.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

There's a fire at the inn and Zolf says 'enough!'

(Group laughter)

BEN

No, no. So, once they leave, I have just been hanging about outside...

ALEX

Ahhh...

BEN

... and as soon as they're gone, I go in.

ALEX

Sure. Unless any of the others had a reason to wander off with it, I'm going to assume it's still on Wilde's desk.

BEN

So, I read the letter...

BRYN

Oh, I'm gonna give Wilde a hug and thank him as well.

ALEX

He doesn't fight it.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

It's the best you can hope for!

BRYN

Yeah! And also I just give Azu, like, a hundred hugs!

HELEN

I think you've just been, like, attached to me.

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde says one thing to both of you, 'You know the really odd thing, the bit I can't really get past? Technically, I think that makes Sasha my boss!'

[Helen laughs]

BRYN

What?

ALEX

I think everyone at the table might have missed an impertinent piece of information in the furore.

BEN

Nope!

HELEN

No.

BRYN

It was something to do with the names...

BEN

Nooo...

ALEX

I'm not going to give Hamid anything...

BRYN

Something to do with the position?

ALEX

I'm not going to give Hamid any of the information because I'm going to assume that Hamid was way too tense to spot it...

BRYN

Oh yeah, that makes sense.

ALEX

So, yeah, Wilde just says that to you. A cryptic comment, and then wanders off.

BRYN/HAMID

'Wait, wait... what?'

ALEX

He leaves!

HELEN [laughing]

We can worry about that later!

ALEX

In which case then, if Zolf's able to read the letter, fine.

BEN

Yep. Grand.

ALEX

Sure.

HELEN

Azu has gone and lit three candles.

ALEX

Aw, that's nice, and there would be a shrine as well! That makes sense.

HELEN

And a bit of incense. Does some meditating and praying.

ALEX

Aw, look at you all being competent people! I mean...

[Everyone shouts over each other...]

BEN

Speak for yourself, mate!

HELEN

We're grieving!

ALEX

I mean, three out of four!

(Group laughter)

Grieving's healthy!

HELEN

We're good at grieving.

(Laughter)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

Zolf's bad a grieving.

BEN

So I grief feel, but your grief skilled!

(Group laughter)

[Everyone roars with laughter]

ALEX

So, I'm gonna jump time ahead so if you're doing anything in the evening I need to know otherwise it's going to be the next day and it's going to be exposition time!

BRYN

I go and grab another bottle of nice, strong whisky from one of Carter's stashes, and I'm going to go and knock on Zolf's door.

[sound of knocking]

HELEN

Ohhh, man!!

BRYN

With two glasses.

LYDIA

I'm never gonna get to talk to the *borb*!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Lydia, I feel your pain!

(Laughter)

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, what?’

(Laughter)

BRYN

I walk into your room. I put the two glasses down on whatever surface there is. I pour two large glasses, one slightly larger than the other. I hand you the larger one because you are larger than me...

BEN/ZOLF

‘Hey, Hamid.’ The letter is on the bedside table.

BRYN/HAMID

Cool. I will not acknowledge that. ‘You’re a big idiot!’

(Helen laughs)

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

BEN/ZOLF

‘Okay. Not how I expected this to start off, but fine!’

BRYN/HAMID

I hold out my glass and just go, ‘To Sasha.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah. To Sasha.’ And clink it.

[sound of clinking glasses]

BRYN

And I drain it.

BEN

As do I!

(Laughter)

BRYN

I will then pour another one.

(Laughter)

I’m actually going to get drunk this time!

ALEX

There's a reason all of this has been based in an inn!

(Group laughter)

I chose it very carefully! Very carefully!

BEN/ZOLF

'So, what, mate?'

BRYN/HAMID

'Zolf, you have to remember that you're my friend, and you're my role model for all of this, and you don't need to worry so much. You're doing fine, and just because I say when stuff's getting on my nerves, and things, it doesn't mean that you're bad and wrong, it's just stuff to work on, like I've got stuff to work on.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Okay. Erm, it's... I'm... yeah. This isn't about me getting you upset, er, so you ain't got to worry about that, and, look, if I hadn't read that letter just now then I probably wouldn't be talking to you, to be honest, but, look... [sighs]'

BRYN/HAMID

'We've got to find a way to work together...'

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yep, nah, nah, nah, nah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Alright?
This is not a ‘we talk it out and it’s all fixed’ okay?’

BRYN/HAMID

I know!

BEN/ZOLF

‘No... but thank you for sharing the drink. Thank you for coming to see me. I
will work on it. For now, let’s just call it there, alright?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Zolf, I was so... I was so angry at you.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘What for?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘For leaving! For leaving and then, then... my sister died in Prague, and Sasha
was nearly dead and I was so angry, but I do get it, I do get it, Zolf. And you’ve
changed, and I can see how much you’ve changed. And you’re doing so good
and you’re... Zolf? I dunno what I’m saying, I just... I hate that we can’t get on.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Alright. Then we’ll work on it. Why don’t you just, look, just...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t want you to leave again!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I’m not gonna leave again, so just... oh, you’re a lightweight!’

(Group laughter)

BRYN/HAMID

Yessss!!

(Group laughter)

‘Look at me, I’m tiny!!’

(Group laughter)

HELEN

You were tiny at, like, 20 years old!

BEN

‘Yeah, but you’re pouring yourself appropriate portions. Look, just go get some sleep, right? I know...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Just... tell me it’s gonna be okay, Zolf.’

BEN/ZOLF

'I hope it's going to be okay.'

BRYN/HAMID

'I'll drink to that!'

BEN/ZOLF

'Maybe you shouldn't!'

(Group laughter)

ALEX

I'm gonna roll for that. I'm gonna roar for that! And unconsciousness claims you!

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Fair!

BEN

And I will heft him back to his room and put him to bed.

HELEN

Aww...

(Laughter)

ALEX

It's very easy!

BEN

I know!!

ALEX

Oh no. You're forgetting one extra element – deep down, when unconscious Hamid is very good at being carried – it's not just that he's small...

ALL

Ahhhh... !

(Group laughter)

ALEX

... cuddles in, right? He knows how to be looked after!

BEN

That's how we know when he's dead!

(Group laughter)

If he's actually dead-weighting he's not unconscious!

BRYN

God!

LYDIA

Bleak!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Very horrible!

(Laughter)

ALEX

It wasn't even me!

HELEN

Terrible, terrible man!

BEN

Yes!

ALEX

Right. Lydia, shall we...

BEN

Oh, you know what, I wanna do something else...

ALEX

Just you and I...

(Group laughter)

... just you and I... we can do a bunch of exposition! The rest can just do all this!

LYDIA/CEL

I... I, in the morning, Cel is basically thrumming with energy. 'I hope that you all had very good nights' sleep that were very uneventful and that you're emotionally ready for what is gonna be...

(Group laughter)

... and intense morning!

ALL

Yeah.

Yeah!

Yeah, I think so!

Yeah, definitely!

Go ahead!

LYDIA

Grand! Er...

[Bmmmf...]

BRYN

I get a super-high Bluff Check!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA/CEL

Cel isn't even checking, they are soooooo excited! 'Okay, so all that remains to do is to plug this wire into this wire. Now, if we are worried at all about intelligence spreading or, in fact, not from us but from Shoin, who we have to remember has part of the blue veins in the brain. So, what we ask him, maybe, stuff that is then aware...'

BRYN/HAMID

'Yeah, we don't know what the division of knowledge between the two halves of the brain is.'

LYDIA/CEL

'Wait! That half of the brain may be able to telepathically connect with the rest!'

BRYN/HAMID

'Oh dear!'

LYDIA/CEL

‘And remember he used to say, like, oh, oh no, shut up, all of you, like he was talking to plural, like, maybe all these minds were trying to get in contact with him. So, I’m thinking...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Would this apparatus still work if it was in the anti-magic field?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Ohhhh... I mean, it would be...’

ALEX

You believe so!

LYDIA/CEL

‘... but the crackles, I mean, not really because the electric crackling would not...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘But we’d still be able to do the talking, because that might stop any...?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘I think you’d be able to do the functional bit, but I... yeah, yeah, okay... !’

BRYN/HAMID

‘But would that stop the telepathic connection?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘If it’s... if it’s... yes. If it’s a magical thing, yes. So we should put it in the anti-magic field and, also, I was thinking that maybe we should... only the people that have spoken to Shoin should speak to it... I haven’t put any video feed so it can’t see us, and so then the brain and the telepathic connections, if they’re working, will not know about the rest...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... the four of us who Shoin’s already seen...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... the four of us talk and we also don’t give them any information about what’s going on...’

ALEX (also as Barnes)

Yeah, Barnes pipes up, ‘You wanna convince him that he’s still in the, um, wherever you got him!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘That’s a good idea! Yes, that’s a very good idea!’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah. That’s a really good idea.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘We can tell him that no time’s passed...’

Alex (as Barnes)

‘That’s a good plan. I like that. That’s a good plan. Yeah.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah. Your plan that you...’

ALEX (as Barnes)

‘No, no, no... I mean keeping everyone else out of the loop. That’s a good idea.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah. So, everyone else be, like, write questions down, okay, and then send them, and then we can, right...’ Cel picks up the *borb*. They are not strong, but they are keen...

HELEN

Azu will help you if you need help.

ALEX

You will need a bit of help to navigate down narrow stairs and stuff.

HELEN

Then Azu helps you.

ALEX

To me, to you!

(Laughter)

LYDIA

To me, to you!

ALEX

I need to ask one question of Cel, it doesn't affect the timings or anything else. You have become aware through the working on it that the *borb* basically houses an extremely nutrient-rich substance...

LYDIA

Mmmm, num num!

ALEX

... which will be depleted eventually if it's not renewed. For free, I will have allowed you to renew it again should you want or have chosen not to...

LYDIA

Chosen not to...

ALEX

... but, just... I'm putting that on the table as a thing you know.

LYDIA/CEL

Yep. ‘I should point out that we have several levers over Shoin. Firstly, I have installed this vibration device, which I know is not painful, but will scare him because he will think that I can explode his brain, see?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Very scary.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, yes! See? So torture, bad, but occasionally...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Psychological torture, good!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah!’

HELEN/AZU

‘Well, it’s threatening. It’s not...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Look, fine. It’s Shoin and I don’t care.’

HELEN/AZU

‘... and also, he’s horrible! Yes.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Er, also, he needs, or it, or they, or the group – it’s complicated, and English doesn’t have enough pronouns for the complicated things we’re dealing with here – they need more nutrients. I know how to make more nutrients to feed the brain, but...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Oh, you mean, like, the stuff inside the orb?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah, yeah, yeah – that broth. You can see it’s a bit thinner now.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well if you want the brain to think that no time has passed, shouldn't we put it back to how it was when we found it?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘That’s a very good idea. Excellent work, Hamid, I will go to the kitchen and make horrible soup!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Oh, right. I’m coming with you.’

ALEX

I’m going to skip past – it’s really easy...

LYDIA

... unless Zolf wants to...

BEN

Nope. I'm not, I'm not... no, no, no, not for that. I'm just very possessive of that kitchen!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

It's fine, although your... basically your broth supplies are depleted. Anything that's iron-rich.

BEN

Yeah, no I'm just, I'm just... I'm not getting in your way, I'm just hovering, slightly annoyingly.

LYDIA

Mmm, yep. I can see Jeff.

ALEX

But I'm happy to [0:40:35] on that. Yes.

(Helen laughs)

In which case, then, shall we jump cut to you're all down in your anti-magic cell, *again!*

HELEN

But this time we don't have to stay there!

ALEX

It's true! The door is open, and it's just the four of you...

LYDIA/CEL

'Right, is everyone ready?'

ALEX

... with no one else there.

LYDIA/CEL

Everyone else is, I would assume, sort of, at the trapdoor or below and can hear what's going on, but they're not going to say anything.

HELEN

Yeah, the deal is that only we talk, but everyone can hear.

ALEX (also as Barnes)

Er, in that case, then, jumping back a bit, Barnes would have piped up, 'I mean, if you're afraid that the words are gonna make people, you know, get infected and that, is it a good idea to make sure that none of us can hear it either?'

BEN/ZOLF

‘No, we spoke to him and we didn’t.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Also, there’s the anti-magic field, I mean, if the vector of infection is words then it has to be magical words of some kind, so...

ALEX (as Barnes)

‘Alright, fair enough.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I mean, Wilde, if, for example, you wanted to stand at the back of the room because you have extra questions and write them down and hand it to one of us to ask, that could also work.’

ALEX

Wilde steps in and, for the first time, has a faint glint and smirk of, I would not miss it for the world!

HELEN

Azu grins at him.

LYDIA/CEL

‘Wonderful! ‘Cos from what I’ve heard the world is literally at stake, so let’s go for this!’

ALEX (as Wilde)

‘It normally is.’

LYDIA

Cel takes the two big wires – they are not crackling randomly, which is really disappointing...

(Bryn laughs)

... and plugs one into the other.

ALEX

Two things. One, Cel knows that it’s working. Two, nothing seems to happen. There’s no boom, there’s not crackle of lightning, there’s no style or razzamatazz whatsoever.

LYDIA/CEL [whispers]

‘Hm, if we weren’t in the anti...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Erm...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘M... m... Mr Shoin!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Oh, ah, aha! Ha ha!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘You know me.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ha ha! So, you fell to my ploy, and now... ah, hahaa!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, yeah...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Maybe should explain the situation to you, Mr Shoin.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I don’t need your explanations. I, I am in full p... *shut up... will you... shut up, argh, gah!*’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Mr Shoin, it’s a lovely place that you’ve got here that we’re inside, but...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I think you will find it might be... your grave!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No, no, no. We’ve defeated it. We’ve defeated you. You are now our prisoner and we are questioning you.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘*Shut up!* NO, no you haven’t...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Who are you telling to shut up?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What? What, what?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Who are you talking to?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘No, no, not you... what, what?’

HELEN/AZU

‘You. Who are you talking to?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Yes, hello.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Who are you talking to?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What do you mean, I’m talking to you!’

HELEN/AZU

‘No, you’re not!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘The other people. Who are the other people who you’re talking to? Who are you telling to shut up?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I don’t know who any of you are, so you tell me... *shut up, shut up...*’

LYDIA/CEL

‘No, you tell me! You know me, Shoin. We met while you were in a body.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Need a bit more.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘So...’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

‘You kept sending people to try and...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... destroy my village...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... destroy their village.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Need a bit more.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘But, long before that, I was the alchemist that already had a shop and then you...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘You’re one of the inter... *shut up*... one of the interns, were you?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘No, no... nooo. I have never been your intern.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Anyway, Mr Shoin, we read your diary...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ahhh, ahahaha! What, what?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘We read your diary.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah, you found... haha... and, did you decode it?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yes.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘It was just written in Japanese.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yeah, François Henri...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah, so you haven’t found the secret code!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘François Henri, the power sources...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah, urrrgghh... *shut up, shut up!*’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

‘We know all the Kraken you built.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You turned yourself into a brain in a ball.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I have, hmmm... ahh.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘But your robot...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... and then about six months ago, a cleric came along...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘... *shut up*... who, what?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... and the cleric had blue veins.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘... er, oh yeah.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘And you were infected.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘The blue veins. It’s an infection.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Oh, I think you’ll find escape impossible. Hahahahaha... *shut up!*’

BRYN/HAMID

‘And you’ve done something to yourself to stop it spreading. And you understand the infection.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Oh, I understand many things. I understand you’ll never make it out alive.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh no.’

BEN/ZOLF

(Sighs)

‘Tell us about the infection, Shoin.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What infection?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘The infection that you’ve got in your brain... apart from being a meanie!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘That you severed half a hemisphere of your brain off because that one’s infected. I mean, you’re half a brain now.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Oh right, yes. Oh yes, yes. No... *shut up*... yes. Mmm hmm. It’s a very easy procedure if you know what you’re doing.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘That’s not...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Why did you do it?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What do you mean, why did I do it?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You did it.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Why did you do it?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Er...’

HELEN/AZU

‘What was the series of events leading up to it?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Er... *shut up*... erm. Oh, yes! No! Hahaha... and why would I tell you?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Cos we’ve won.’

LYDIA

Cel wobbles the ball...

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Agh, [*grrnnnnn*]...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Oooh, oh no! I seem to be tripping up here... oh no!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Stop! Don’t touch me. Don’t touch me, or...’

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

LYDIA/CEL

‘Oh dear, oh wobble wobble!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Don’t touch me, *shut up, shut up, shut up*, stop it!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Ohhh, it’s quite unpleasant, I think you’ll find!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘You need to understand...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘How long have I been out?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Oh, not very long! We’ve been busy!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What did you do to the network?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Errrr, well...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Disabled it.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Which network specifically? We’ve broken...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What do you mean? The network!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... we’ve broken quite a lot of your stuff!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Why? Why? [Grrrrnnnnnn]... *Shut up.*’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, you did try to kill us quite a lot!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I did not try to kill you!’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, you did.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I, I enabled the means for you to die.’

HELEN/AZU

‘No, you definitely tried to kill me and us...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... and then you came out in a metal body from the organ and you hit us several times...’

HELEN/AZU

‘You really hurt.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘It really hurt, you did, you did...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... and then we beat you...’

HELEN/AZU

‘I’m very angry at you!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... we beat you, and now you are our prisoner...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Oh, and we’ve released all the Kobolds and...’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

‘We’ve completely destroyed everything aspect of your operation.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... you need to understand the power relationship here.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘... shut up, shut up... get rid of it!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘We’ve killed all your henchmen. You are literally a brain in a ball, and you are completely at our mercy.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah, hm. Ahahaaa.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I could just smash the orb if you wanted?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Don’t smash the orb!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, I know, ‘cos you’d die, wouldn't you? And you have no way to prevent us from doing that!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah... please, if you smash this orb I would still be fine, forever.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No you wouldn't. Nope.’

HELEN/AZU

‘How?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Yes...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Alright – smashing the orb, then!’

ALEX (as Shoin) [shrieking]

‘Don’t touch the orb!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Wha, why? I thought you’d be fine! So I’ll smash the orb...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘There, there... *shut up*... there’ll always be a Shoin, that’s the important bit.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Really?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Did you back yourself up?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘That’s a good way – I’m taking that! Yes. I backed myself up. I invented that, that’s a phrase that I just made.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Where did you... where did you back up? Where is that?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah, uh... hmmm... and why should I tell you... oh, er... *shut up*...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘All the power stuff that Mr Smith just told you.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I, I, I, I spread myself out.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Uh huh. Distributed back up.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Important thing right, though, if I smash this orb, you’ll still be dead though, won’t you?!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘There’s be another Shoin somewhere.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘But that’s not you, is it?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘With part of your personality and most of your memories.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Still not you, is it?! This line of perception, you’re thinking...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Shut up!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘We’ve destroyed the network, so all those other places you are, they can’t communicate with each other anymore, so they’re not really doing so much!’

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

BEN/ZOLF

‘It’s basically a bunch of just other people.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘*Shut up, shut up.*’

HELEN/AZU

‘We turned the power off to everything, if that matters?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Wait, wait, wait, wait, *shut up, shut up*, no no, *everyone shut up...*’

LYDIA/CEL

‘No.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘...what did you do?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Turned it off. Took you out. You know, you’re not...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘No, no, no, no, it’s quiet... *shut up...* what did you do?’

HELEN/AZU

‘What’s quiet?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘It’s quiet.’

HELEN/AZU

‘It?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘We’ve got some anti-magic...’

HELEN/AZU

‘The cleric or the network?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ahh, this is nice! Huh! Yeah, right, okay. Hmm. Er, what was your question?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘What are the other people that you’ve been telling to shut up?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Hmm... Aha! Okay. There is the, yes, there was a cleric wasn’t there?’

HELEN/AZU and LYDIA/CEL

Yeah...

Mmm hmm...

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What do I get if I tell you things?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Not smashed.’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘What else do I get if I tell you more?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Some nutrient broth.’

HELEN/AZU

‘The continued gift of life. And I do say gift.’

ALEX [laughing]

Cold, in a brilliant way!

LYDIA/CEL

‘Tasty broth?!’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

‘We can help you. We can help you against the infection that’s taken over half of your brain.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Ooh, and I’ve got one – we won’t unplug your speaker so you won’t be able to talk to us but you’ll still be able to hear us berating you, and you’ll be unable to respond! Forever!!’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ask questions.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘What is the thing, or the people, or that you’ve been telling to shut up, and what do they tell you?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘The... it’s not... it’s not words. Ah, so it’s the cleric won’t shut up...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Mmm hmm...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘... but this has gone quiet. I don’t know how... or, at least, for a while.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘That may be something that we’ve managed. We’ve got some effects going on here, so, you know, if you’re enjoying this...’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘How did you do it?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Nah, we’re not gonna tell you, but I’d like to know who the people are you’ve been speaking to who’s not the cleric, and what have they been telling you to do?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Er, well... I...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘What are their aims?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I don’t... it’s not words, just the cleric won’t shut up.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Okay, well, translate.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘If it’s not words, what are they sending?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘I don’t...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Are they screaming?’

ALEX (as Shoin)

‘Ah... I...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Are they trying to take control of you?’

ALEX (also as Shoin)

‘Uh...’ He just continues in that mode for a little while. ‘Can I, can I paint it?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Er, yeah... Wait one second, I’m gonna make a tiny robot arm. Don’t worry, I’ve done this many times before...’

(Helen laughs)

‘... not a big one, because I don’t want him to hit anyone, but...’ Can Cel do a Knowledge Engineering Check and take 20 to make a tiny robot arm, like, an almost comedically tiny, wee robot arm?!

ALEX

Er, technically speaking, you can't take 20, but you can take ten and it's enough.

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

For anyone who's listening at home... but yeah, it's fine, and it won't take you long because you have all of the components kicking around anyway.

LYDIA

Yeah, it's like a comedically tiny...

ALEX

... yeah, it's a little...

LYDIA

... it's a tiny arm, like, about as big as a hand.

ALEX

I'm imagining, this is such a specific reference, when Bender gets broken and he gets a pair of tiny little hands.

LYDIA

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

Yep. And then puts a soft calligraphy brush...

ALEX

It immediately starts drawing. Immediately starts drawing. Shoin doesn't seem to have noticed.

HELEN

Oooh...

BEN

Okay, an automatic painter!

ALEX (also as Shoin)

So he's there, like, 'Itch. No, don't stop. Ask a further question. It's a stupid question for stupid people. Ask me smart questions for a smart person.'

LYDIA/CEL

'What did you do with the Krakens? Did they cause the weather stuff?'

ALEX (as Shoin)

'Ha, ha! Oh, you liked those, did you?'

LYDIA/CEL

'I did, actually!'

ALEX (also as Shoin)

‘Yes, I said you would!’ As he is continuing by the way the picture that is taking shape on the other side is highly abstract...

LYDIA

[Groans]

HELEN

All that stuff in the tunnel...

ALEX

... and it seems vaguely reminiscent, actually, of the circulatory diagrams that you were seeing earlier. It is clearly a network that’s being drawn out on the piece of paper, and then when it runs out of paper he flips it and then he starts sketching what is best described as a scene. However, the way he drawing is extremely weird in that he’s doing it the way printers work, top to bottom, left right...

ALL

Ahhh...

Ooooooh...

Yeah...

ALEX

... not sketching from top, like, depth of field.

BEN

So, while this conversation is going on, until something's different, I will be quietly feeding paper.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, that's fine. And in terms of the scene that it is depicting, it starts with what best can be described as, like, loads and loads of faces yelling.

HELEN and LYDIA

Ahhh...

ALEX (as Shoin)

'And, so yeah, the Krakens, oh, you see the trick with them is how do you get a signal underwater? It's tricky!'

LYDIA/CEL

'Oh, that is actually very tricky!'

ALEX (also as Shoin)

'... shut up... that's what the heights for... so if, if you use the combination of the height and then we use the modified power source, obviously, I have no idea what he's doing there, but it's clever enough that you can mess around with it and you can modify it. But the thing is, is the that, that... the door goes both ways...' As he's continuing the picture finishes and then he draws more, and you start recognising that it is an image of London and it is the creepiest charcoal sketch you can imagine, where I want you to imagine a charcoal

Rusty Quill Gaming – [156] – [In Memoriam]

sketch of Parliament on a busy, crowded street, where everyone is staring at the person who is drawing and their mouths are open.

HELEN

This is so Magnus!

BEN

Invasion of the body snatchers!

[Helen groans and laughs slightly hysterically]

LYDIA/CEL [muttering to themselves]

'It's underneath Parliament... Ah! It's Guy Fawkes who's behind it all along!'

ALEX

And although I don't like doing this, we're going to have to end the episode there...

ALL

Aaaaauuugggghhh...

ALEX

... a bleak and terrifying image with an interrogation that barely got going.

BRYN

Dun, dun, daaaaahhhh...

HELEN

That's alright, we've got lots of time!

BRYN

Yep!

ALEX

I'm sure that none of the images mean anything...

ALL

Nooo...

ALEX

... and that he just got bored and wanted to draw something!

HELEN

It never crossed my mind that the infection might be really painful, like, this is horrifying.

(She laughs)

LYDIA

Why didn't you start with that?!

ALEX

And on that note...

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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BEN

... I am, you know, the common denominator for my own life, aren't I, so, you know...

ALEX

Almost Cockney, suddenly!

BEN

Yeah, sorry!

(Group laughter)

... I don't know... yeah, there we go!

ALEX

Wilde starts to read the letter to all of you...

[someone shrieks, 'LYDIAAAAAA'...]

(Group laughter)

['LYDIAAAAA.... [BEEP] GIVE A CALL...']

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Played that one cool, didn't you?!

ALEX

Hi everyone. Alex here. I'd just like to take a moment to thank some of our Patrons; Elena Royce, Shane Kelly, Greckles, Anonymous Sky, Lainey J, Jays ND, Oatmeal Addiction, Deirdre Pitts, Andreas Evans, Disaster, Lovro, Sadia, Megan Linger, Billy, Rowan De Lacy, Gill, Zatalis, Woodspurge, Red, Erin Sellas, James Currie, TJ Hoffer, KP Wilson, Zoe Schroeder, Charlie Wall, Shannon McHugh, Taylor Ashmore, Lou, Mitch Parveo, Sageybug, Josephine Huar, Azaria Serpens, Bonnie Phillips, Darven Breadspores, Bex, Qualish, Jacks Wells, Twisted Site,

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