

RQG – 165 – Hide the Fang

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 165 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

Rusty Quill Gaming – 165 – Hide the Fang

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom.

HELEN

And a really confused Azu.

[Laughter]

BRYN

Extremely popular Azu.

LYDIA

[Singing] Azu doesn't know how hot she is!

HELEN

She has no idea! She has no idea!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Azu, you know what needs to happen. Zolf needs to take you aside, take that ponytail out and just suddenly magically you're the most popular ork at school!

BEN

Zolf is leaving his ponytail in, thank you very much.

ALEX

So, how things stand at the moment. We are still aboard ship. Paying little to no attention to the changing landscape that moves beneath us as we all have far more pressing concerns.

BEN

I am assuming that some of us look down at some point.

(Laughter)

ALEX

The world is still there!

BRYN

You're giving us like four conversations per day, maximum. That's a lot of time outside what is recorded per day. That is when we're doing the boring bits of like, 'oh yeah, we're still going the right way'.

BEN

No, I just go stand in a cupboard!

ALEX

Zolf off!

[Group laughter]

ALEX

I am going to jump ahead a couple of days at this point.

HELEN

Mmhmm. Ok.

ALEX

As it stands, things have been getting colder and the cloud cover has been getting thicker and the weather has been getting worse. In the intervening time you've had your first storm of sorts. Nothing catastrophic. But basically, unpleasant weather where you know, it doesn't matter if people were off shift, they were on shift for this storm, that kind of thing. So, it's been a little less smooth sailing and a bit more ... viable. Like, there's occasionally bad days. There wasn't any damage to the ship or anything like that. However, Earhart has requested Zolf, that you get all crew on deck for another briefing and you know for a fact that it is to do with the fact that you are entering the Northern Wastes.

BEN

Cool. I do that.

ALEX

That's fine. So Earhart's there and she is looking ... alright actually. Physically she's looking more healthy than she was. Zolf, I will tell you know that if you're willing, she might have needed the occasional ... anti-withdrawal top up.

BEN

I'm ... yep ... so, as part of my general duties, it's making sure Earhart doesn't go off the deep end and gets the help that she obviously so desperately needs, or at least provides as much of that help as I am able to.

ALEX

She seems to be doing well by the virtue of having some kind of project.

BEN

Oh what? I don't know what you mean by that. That's ... that's ridiculous.

ALEX

And also, unfortunately, having very little in the way of negative stimulus to spiral upon. So, with everyone lined up on deck. Ok.

Well, we're all still alive, so you know. Big plus. [Sighs] good job on that storm recently. We got through it and we could've been worse, so good job on that. So, we are entering the Northern Wastes for the uninitiated this carries with it a few risks including, but not limited to, system failures, wild magic and weird creatures I guess is the best descriptor. We are going through lanes that have mostly been abandoned due to the number of deaths and we are going to be

then pressing beyond these lanes into a route that has never been forged. What this means for you and your safety. The ship might stop flying. If it does, hold on. Unless it's better to let go. Use your judgement. If you're about to hit the ground jumping does not help. Other things to be aware of, if you notice any peculiarities to do with the vessel you report them to Mr Smith immediately and these peculiarities can include, but not limited to things stopping working. Things becoming alive that didn't used to be alive. Things entering some kind of space that is neither here nor there in such a way that you could potentially fall through the vessel. The list goes on. Generally speaking, when in doubt ask Mr Smith and report to him any issues that you have. Additionally, I would like extra vigilance from the crew in terms of anything that we see approaching from now on. If it is approaching it is to be treated as hostile. There is no legitimate reason for any one to be here. Am I understood?

BRYN

Yes captain.

ALEX

If someone comes and they're waving a big white flag, we shoot at them. There is no reason that is legitimate for anyone to be out here. There is no one out here.

BRYN

Hamid winces but doesn't say anything.

LYDIA

Cel looks absolutely baffled. But...

ALEX

Hands up people who have been to the Northern Wastes?

Siggif puts his hand up as does Friedrich.

Hands up people who made it back with all of their crew.

They both sort of ... awkwardly put their hands back down.

I think I've made my point. Realistically there's no way of knowing of what's coming. Look out for each other and let's try to keep all of the problems on the outside trying to get in, not on the inside trying to go out. Does everyone follow me?

BRYN

Yes captain.

ALEX

Excellent. If anyone needs me, talk to Mr Smith.

She turns around, heads into her cabin.

HELEN

Hamid, what's wild magic?

BRYN

A lot of the places in the ... the ... the sort of northern reaches of Ager are ... they have spontaneous random magical outbursts. There's a few spells that mimic a couple of the properties where the sort of the outcome of the spell is semi ... well, partially I suppose, unknown when you cast it and ... but basically,

ALEX

Friedrich raises one massive arm as if with a question.

BRYN

Yes?

ALEX

Friedrich then raises the other massive arm and points at the first arm.

Oh.

And then puts both massive arms down again.

BRYN

It sort of means that sort of random spells or other magical effects happen without a caster. That's my understanding of wild magic. I mean I've only studied it from the very theoretical perspective a long time ago and you know, I've never experienced it.

HELEN

I didn't study it at all!

BRYN

Well, I mean, I guess it's not part of the curriculum at the Temple of Aphrodite.

ALEX

Siggif pipes up ...

Right, so, like the world goes completely wrong and sometimes it sticks.

HELEN

Ah.

LYDIA

Right. The baffled look kind of ...

I just want to check, because I mean that sounds a lot like the internal area of the Northern American continent which I spent quite a bit of time passing through and back through and then down and then for a while up again, but mostly down and then through the southern continent there and there was ... there was wild magic and large creatures there, but there were very definitely people who lived there and had a legitimate reason to live there.

ALEX

Can you give me a knowledge nature Cel because I think you have knowledge nature don't you?

LYDIA

Yes.

[Dice roll]

That is ... 14. Which is as low as Cel can possibly roll because that's a two.

ALEX

You know that there are in the northern reaches of the Americas nomadic elven people. Not all elves are nomadic, but there are some nomadic elves and people in the very far north and American reaches and you know that the reason that they are nomadic is that they basically move based on where the Aurora Borealis is. Because if they see the Borealis it's normally an indicator of major wild magic so they stay away from the Borealis and that's why they're

nomadic. They're very good at basically picking up sticks and getting away very quickly.

LYDIA

Yeah. So, that is Cel's basic question is that people do live in regions like this that they're aware of. Do they actually...

ALEX

You know. You know that...

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But do they not live in Russia so they are confused now.

I mean are we actually sure, because I mean, where ... where I've been there were definitely people who lived there. You know they were aware of and they worked with and they knew the wild magic. Often worked with it by moving away when it got too much. But you know, like, I just ... I don't want us to necessarily to shoot someone in their house.

BEN

I think what Earhart means is somebody approaching from the air.

LYDIA

Oh, ok.

BEN

Not on the ground. It's not if we see anyone on the ground we're going to shoot at them. It's more if anyone is approaching us...

LYDIA

Ok.

BEN

...that's what she said. We're going to defend ourselves instead of assuming they are friendly. Because anyone...

ALEX

Oh yeah. We don't want to go low Sir. No. No. I've played that game before. We want to stay high. That's the good place to be.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

We don't want to be low.

LYDIA

Thank you very much for the clarification.

ALEX

If you go, things go really ... I mean ...

Points to a massive Armageddon. You know, it's just honestly, you just want to stay high sir. That's what we're doing.

BEN

So Earhart knows what she's doing so we will.

ALEX

Oh yeah, yeah, of course sir. Of Course sir. But yes sir, yes. Right. Yes.

LYDIA

Grand.

ALEX

Siggif just leaves and goes to his work. Does anyone have anything that they actively want to pursue?

ALL

No.

BRYN

I mean I guess I've just got a couple of quick questions about ongoing things. So basically Hamid, after the previous chat, would like to have developed the habit where I guess if there's not an active storm, he drops in on Wilde for 10 minutes every afternoon just to have a chat. Just to sort of make sure that Wilde isn't isolating himself too badly. And I think probably what they chat about during those chats is they gossip about everyone else on the ship.

LYDIA

[Laughter]

BRYN

Because I think the two of them would...

ALEX

Yeah, that works!

BRYN

...really enjoy doing that together.

ALEX

That works. That works.

Wilde has the following theories. The best thing that could happen to Friedrich and Siggif is if they paired up. Kiko is a wild card. And Wilde is of the strong opinion that Kiko is probably going to try it on with more than one person whilst she's on board. That's his considered opinion.

BRYN

I'll say I've noticed Siggif making eyes at Azu. Because I probably would have picked up on that. But I may not know about the actual incident from...

ALEX

And Wilde is of the very considered opinion that he doesn't know whose going to take the bullet for the team, but it might help everyone if Earhart got some action whilst she was up here.

[Group laughter]

BRYN

Hamid actively grimaces.

ALEX

He ... any time that comes he starts talking about like the nature of altruism and in times of great hardship sometimes the needs of the many out weigh the needs of the few. And then he looks to Hamid...or the one.

BRYN

Oh. I'm getting real Brooklyn 99 halt and want energy from these two.

ALEX

Yeah, that's fine. It's a thing to continue like that. He won't shut that down.

BRYN

The other thing Hamid is still keen to do, which I mentioned I can't remember in exactly what episode. But he wants to encourage the kobolds to explore their individual preferences and feel less like they have to do, you know, what they're kind of ordered to do all the time and find ways for the ... to embrace their own ... their own desires a bit more and I know that's going to be a very slow background ongoing thing because you know, how you've introduced them so far means they are quite rigidly enforced into the role that they've set for themselves for now. But, Hamid wants to encourage that. He's still hoping to encourage them to come out of their shells and to find their own individual places.

ALEX

So, can I first have a sense motive because there's a lot to unpack there.

BRYN

Yes.

[Dice roll]

21.

ALEX

You know that in order to continue these conversations Wilde is having to actively make an effort. It's not easy and he's clearly having to put effort in, in order to make the conversations work. But he doesn't seem to be trying to keep you away. Can everyone ... no, you know what. I'm just going to tell people rather than a perception check.

LYDIA

What?

ALEX

It's come to peoples' attention that the kobolds have a weird habit of when they're shifts are done, they have a tendency to just disappear. As in like, technically there is a space for them to use as their quarters, but it's weird where like if a kobold is not on duty, they tend to just somehow not be on the ship almost. Like they're just sort of gone. It's never caused a problem. None of them have every been late for a shift. Everyone has always done their work. But it's just a weird thing where it's like oh I need to talk to ... yeah, they're not going to be back until their next shift, where are they? I have no idea.

LYDIA

I was quite hoping that Cel would continue chats with Skraak in the same way that during ... while we were in the inn, they were asking a lot of questions about kobold culture. As somebody who is trying to look after and foster the

growth of the other kobolds and their engineering goodness, I can imagine that becoming conversations about...

ALEX

That's fine. Can you ... I'm going to give you a free three ranks. You know have three ranks. You are now trained in kobold studies.

LYDIA

Yeah, but this is also about them becoming closer friends with Skraak.

ALEX

Yeah, I understand.

LYDIA

Ok. Profession kobold whisperer. Is that where it goes? Or does it ...

ALEX

Kobodologist.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

Specialism kobodology.

LYDIA

Kobold culture. Yeah, cool.

BRYN

So Hamid is going to be very keen not to intrude on their privacy because he's knows that ... in some ways, he's not well positioned to actually, you know, have these conversations with them because of, you know, the relationship they've all been forced into. So, he's having to proceed very softly and very cautiously. You know, he's worried that if he expresses any negative reactions it will sort of move things backwards. He wants to give them their space too, but he's keen to begin to break down the sort of weird barrier.

ALEX

So Cel...

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

You know ... you just know this because Skraak has been comparatively open about kobold culture. Kobolds have a real issue with people knowing where they sleep.

LYDIA

Oh yeah.

ALEX

They actively don't like it.

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

And for a kobold to sleep somewhere where they can be easily found it's almost like a social faux-pas.

LYDIA

Oh I wish that they could meet Sasha!

[Laughter]

ALEX

It's like a ... it's like ... it's like heading out without any clothes on you know. it's just like oh. So you strongly suspect that they are finding nooks and crannies in the ship.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

And setting up shot individually.

LYDIA

The level of intelligence and knowledge of ship mechanics that Cel has, they would probably be able to work out where the warm spots are.

ALEX

That's exactly what's happening.

LYDIA

Identify work out ... like where those would be and from seeing what direction kobolds go in, like probably actually plan out where they all are and then they would pointedly not go to those places.

ALEX

Sure, that's fine. The other thing that the kobolds are doing is ... kobolds have a game. Which only you are now going to be party to. It's called Hide the Fang.

LYDIA

[Laughter]. Yes! Ok. Cool. Is it continually hidden in different places around the ship?

ALEX

Hide the Fang is very, very simple. Whoever has the fang, must hide the fang. Everyone else must then find the fang.

LYDIA

Love it.

ALEX

You win that round if you find the fang.

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

But there is also a sort of like honorary points lest call it, for the more audacious a place you've ...

LYDIA

I was immediately thinking like if it's in the most obvious place possible. Ah, yeah. Cel absolutely loves it when it's their turn they ...

ALEX

Oh it's not your turn yet. We'll get to that.

LYDIA

Oh, ok, ok. Very cool. But yeah, two things. because over the course of time we have multiple things we're able to do. They ... I would love them to get to a point where they and Skraak are actually friends. Like I can imagine you work together for many hours, you're interested in how power relationships work and then they're like 'oh this is messy'. And also they are going to very much push Azu and Kiko like...

ALEX

Things to be aware of though. Allegiances are quickly forged and easily broken in Hide the Fang!

LYDIA

Ah, right. Yeah. I'm sure.

[Laughter]

ALEX

It's a game of dragons and kobolds. Of wits and weariness. Of care and curiosity. Hide the Fang.

LYDIA

Yeah. Yeah.

BEN

Alright Austin!

HELEN

I want to play Hide the Fang!

LYDIA

You're not invited to Hide the Fang!

HELEN

That's fine.

ALEX

The fang is only out of play once it is retrieved. It's not enough to notice it.

BRYN

At some point, somebody has to hide the fang on Azu.

ALEX

There are a couple of rules now for Hide the Fang aboard the ship. One of them is you are no longer allowed to hide the fang off the ship. Because someone lost a fang that way. And the one, eating the fang does not count as hiding the fang!

[Laughter]

ALEX

These are two rules that have now been established.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

What I am going to say then is ... Azu...

HELEN

Yes.

I mean yes.

ALEX

When you head up to the crow's nest for your shift...

HELEN

Mmhmm.

ALEX

There is a small paper package waiting for you there.

HELEN

Azu says to herself 'I hope this isn't tobacco'.

[Laughter]

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

HELEN

To open a bag?

LYDIA

No! To see if anyone's watching you!

HELEN

Oh.

[Dice roll]

Well, that's 18.

ALEX

It's ticking.

HELEN

Azu goes and gets Zolf.

BEN

What?

HELEN

Amelia said to tell you if there was anything strange and there is something in the crow's nest that is ticking. And I feel like that's probably a bad...

BEN

Right.

HELEN

...thing. Can you...

BEN

Ticking thing? No you probably want to get Cel. Like I would say throw it off the side. That's probably the safest thing to do. Because it can't blow up if it's ... well, it can't blow us up if it's not here. But we don't know what it is. So may be Cel. It sounds mechanically. They probably know better than I do.

HELEN

Ok.

BEN

I'll come with you. But yeah...

HELEN

Ok. Lets go and get Cel, yes.

BEN

Right.

HELEN

Azu's really scared of this wild magic thing. She doesn't like it!

ALEX

And it apparently comes in small paper boxes that tick.

HELEN

Cel?

LYDIA

I assume like, literally, kind of waist deep in the engine at this point. Emerges. Goggles on head.

ALEX

I'm going to say it's on and you are occasionally ducking your head for the piston that you're just stood between...

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

...with perfect rhythm.

LYDIA

Yep. The tips of their hair are singed. It's just how it is.

Yep, how can I help?

HELEN

Can you spare five minutes? You're like ... you're very involved in something.

LYDIA

Oh no. It's just ... it's like ... just radioactive decay and ...

BEN

Is the engine going to explode like right now?

LYDIA

Oh not right now.

BEN

We've got a package that might, so this is more important.

LYDIA

Oh. Exciting.

HELEN

It's ticking.

LYDIA

Are you sure it's not a clock?

HELEN

No, but it could be something worse than a clock.

LYDIA

I don't know. There are very few things scarier than the passage of time. But absolutely ...

HELEN

May be you can tell by the sound of the ticking?

LYDIA

Sure. Hand it over.

BEN

Open it in a way that's not going to make it explode. I mean you've left it in the crow's nest right?

LYDIA

Yes.

BEN

Yeah, good. It's up in the crow's nest. You can do it there. Because you know if it goes wrong. It's safer up there.

LYDIA

Oh, sure.

HELEN

We were thinking we were going to drop it off the side but also you like ... you could may be help.

LYDIA

Absolutely. I will head up there now.

So we'll build or modify an ... you know those like extendable pincer hands?

[Laughter]

ALEX

Yep.

LYDIA

So that's the sort of thing I imagine they already ... either already have, or have made so many times in the past it's literally ... in fact, their kit of tools has pre-drilled holes to the point that they can be rebuilt into these sorts of systems within minutes. So, if you'll allow that, they will be opening the package with long...

ALEX

I'm going to say that the thing is with an engineering room, is that you normally have a board which has all of the tools on them.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

For reasons beyond anyone else's care, most of the tools have been replaced by extendable pincer hands!

LYDIA

I mean they have...

ALEX

Makes sense to you!

LYDIA

They have other tools.

ALEX

Extendable hammers. The extendable screwdrivers!

LYDIA

Exactly!

ALEX

Everything is extendable!

LYDIA

I mean Cel works a lot with essentially continual explosions. It's you know ... that's ...

ALEX

Extendable is a good quality to have in your...

LYDIA

Exactly. It's just the way it is.

ALEX

You find yourself atop the crow's nest with an extendable tool.

LYDIA

And so with the package on the other end of the crow's nest. Which I am aware will be very small, but still kind of leaning ... just open the package.

HELEN

Azu yells up what is it?

BEN

Oh actually, I'm hovering just below Cel with a hand extended because if something explodes, I'm bloody ... channelling upon positive energy.

LYDIA

Cel is pretty convinced that this is going to be a present from one of the many admirers of Azu. So they are not taking it quite as seriously...

ALEX

Can you give me a disable device check please?

LYDIA

Yep.

[Dice roll]

That is 32.

ALEX

32. Ok.

LYDIA

Wait. No! 34. Sorry.

ALEX

You find a primitive trap is built into the box where the paper is ok but if you are to open the box...

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

You recognise that there is a trigger of sorts. It's easily dealt with and leads to a small explosive charge.

LYDIA

Yep. With glitter.

ALEX

You believe that it's most likely filled with some kind of confetti. And within the box proper there appears to be a large clock, of the alarm clock variety. They're quite expensive. They're very, very difficult to procure. Watches aren't really that much of a thing so it's quite hefty. And it's in quite bad condition. It is not keeping time well. But it has a very happy picture of a daffodil on the clock face.

LYDIA

Right, so.

ALEX

There is a note underneath the clock, sorry.

LYDIA

Yep. Cel will not read the note. Remember of course, it is about half a meter ... well it's about a meter away at the end of ... like extendable tools, but Cel will take the note very carefully and sort of dangle it over the edge.

Azu, Azu ... I think it's for you.

BEN

Wait? So it's not going to explode?

LYDIA

I mean...

HELEN

Did someone give me a bomb?

LYDIA

No! Like, no Azu. It's filled with confetti and presents and joy.

BEN

Right ok.

HELEN

Oh, that's nice.

BEN

I'm going to go then.

LYDIA

You're not a fan of joy Mr Smith?

BEN

No, it's just I've got to get on with my job and this isn't going to endanger the ship. So, great job done. Brilliant. This problem is solved. Enjoy your thing.

LYDIA

Ok. Sure. I haven't read it Azu.

Like dangles it over the edge.

HELEN

Azu is going to come up then.

ALEX

It's a big clock. Like...

LYDIA

Oh no, no. They're only dangling the note. The clock is on the floor of the crow's nest but they're just wagging the note and as Azu climbs up, it will be like dangled just shortly above their head. And like it's just out of reach.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Woo...

HELEN

Hey! That's mine!

[Laughter]

HELEN

Do you know, I think that Zolf could have done with some of that confetti!

ALEX

You read the note.

HELEN

Ok. I take the note. I read it. What does it say?

ALEX

I cast explosive ruins this morning!

[Laughter]

ALEX

No it doesn't! It doesn't but I would love to!

BRYN

What is it? 15 year old joke now?

ALEX

Yeah, but could you imagine the double fake out on that!

BRYN

It's alright in the sodding playground!

ALEX

No, it says the following: "Sorry. Here's a clock".

[Laughter]

HELEN

Oh.

[Laughter]

HELEN

Oh, I think it's from Siggif. Well, it says sorry. Here's a clock. And there is no one else who would be sorry for anything with me. Unless, you know, it was...

LYDIA

Unless they've done something that you're not aware of yet and they've messed up the timing of this real bad.

[Laughter]

BRYN

May be Carters tried to repair the bridges from so long ago.

BEN

Oh yeah. Carter and Barnes are here. I completely forgot about them!

[Laughter]

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BRYN

You guys are terrible!

LYDIA

There's a lot of people here.

BEN

There are so many Alex's to keep track of!

BRYN

I hadn't forgotten about them!

ALEX

You can't keep track of them all Ben! One of them is going to go wrong eventually!

BEN

Also Bryn, you took the leadership fee. You signed up to remembering MPC's names.

[Laughter]

ALEX

And on our clock base news, I'm going to take a break and then we can come back in a couple of minutes.

[Laughter]

ALEX

And welcome back. So clock. Have fun. I give you nice things. Look at the nice things I give you. It's clock.

LYDIA

I mean ... Azu how many entanglements have you got going on right now?

HELEN

None. I think.

LYDIA

Oh hun. Get going!

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Kiko is definitely up for it. Did I mention that?

HELEN

Well ... I ... it's a bit ... it's a bit complicated.

LYDIA

Right.

HELEN

You know, I was going to be married once.

LYDIA

Oh! Oh honey. Do you want to talk about what happened?

HELEN

Oh it was ... it was fine. Just he couldn't come with me to follow Aphrodite. So I had to leave.

LYDIA

Ah.

HELEN

So...

ALEX

[Whispering] Oh my God!

HELEN

It's ok. We're friends. He makes pots.

LYDIA

Oh wow. What kind of pots?

HELEN

Any kind of pots. Pots for decoration. Pots for flowers. Pots for putting cool rocks in.

LYDIA

Oh he sounds great!

HELEN

Yes, he was good. He was nice.

ALEX

Cannon, Orks have a thing. Rock arranging very popular.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Rock-a-pots!

HELEN

Half rockery, half pottery!

ALEX

Nothing sets off a room better than a good pot of rocks!

BRYN

Is that orcish potpourri basis?

ALEX

Absolutely!

[Laughter]

HELEN

Scented rocks!

LYDIA

There's like sulphur and other rocks that smell!

[Laughter]

BRYN

You could have like a rock garden and then sort of have like a layer of water which then ... because you then get that really nice kind of earthy kind of riverbed smell and then you could replacing it. That would be nice.

[Laughter]

ALEX

See. Ork based ... rock arranging. Definitely a thing!

LYDIA

So was it a difficult to decision to leave him behind?

HELEN

Yes and no. I don't know if you believe in ... if you have faith in anything you know that's up there. But you know, once you feel a calling to it you can't really ... I could say no.

LYDIA

Yeah.

HELEN

I know some people can. But I couldn't. And I did ... I did try to move on.

LYDIA

Yeah?

HELEN

Yes. But that didn't go well. It was a short lived ... she ... she wasn't very serious and I was serious. Am serious.

LYDIA

Oh hun, I'm sorry.

HELEN

So, I've avoided it. But now I think maybe I don't know how long. You know I might get poofed by wild magic at any moment. So maybe I should just...

LYDIA

Maybe you should just go for it!

HELEN

Maybe. But not with the old man!

LYDIA

Well, yeah. No, I mean, look, I've been married a few times...

HELEN

Oh!

LYDIA

And there has also been people that I've lost.

HELEN

Oh, Cel.

LYDIA

The first one, I don't know ... well I ... you know, some of those losses you live with and you grieve and some of them are just happy lessons. And like it's up to you to decide what kind of relationships you are open to, right?

HELEN

Mmhmm.

LYDIA

Only ones that end in marriage ... or maybe ones that take different forms that are you know complicated. That are ... you know that go on a different rates. That involve other people. All sorts of things. Or ones that are based on a fear of explosion. An imminent explosion you know. That is actually the core of quite a few of my relationships. But, you know, I'll stop pushing if it's something that's uncomfortable for you. But I just, you know. She is cute!

HELEN

She is.

LYDIA

Yeah?

HELEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah.

HELEN

I'm not ... it's not ... it's not uncomfortable. I wasn't expecting it. May be I should give her the clock.

ALEX

Give me a perception check Cel.

LYDIA

Oh, that's relatively low for Cel. 20.

ALEX

You hit the DC, you're fine! There is a fang behind Azu's left ear and it's been there the whole time. You notice it at this point in the conversation.

LYDIA

Cel's eyes just keep flicking to it, but they're really trying to focus, because this is an important conversation with someone that they care about! And that they want the best for!

[Laughter]

ALEX

Good.

LYDIA

Yeah! I mean that's ... you know ... it's and maybe ... like, yeah. Relationships are complicated!

HELEN

Azu turns around.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Cel quickly reaches out. I assume this is like a slight of hand check. They're trying to get...

ALEX

Exactly what it is! This is a slight of hand game!

LYDIA

Yeah, they do not have high slight of hand. You know what's tragic?, I don't think that I ever used Sasha's slight of hand.

ALEX

You didn't. And it was through the roof!!

HELEN

You did when you were playing cards with Grizzop.

ALEX

Yep. Oh yeah, you kept cheating at Grizzop. That's it!

LYDIA

I think once!

BEN

Is this going to turn out like that famous post. Like oh, critical fail. Instead of punching the ork, you reach out and...

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Yes! It could have. Except that I just rolled 17 plus decks ... so 21.

ALEX

You fail to accidentally caress Azu and instead you manage to remove the fang and have the option for a legitimate caress, should you wish.

LYDIA

Ah no. What's tragic is that that is actually the pivot on which the story could have turned.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

There are moments ... there are moments where there was near death. There were moments where there were conversations that didn't go where they could of, but there were moments of just missing the DC when you find a leg in a pool of water and you wonder if maybe the solution was there the whole time. Like all of that stuff. But this...

ALEX

So an entire timeline of fan base content that has just been born is what you're saying!

BRYN

I think...I think we all knew a game that was called Hide the Fang might lead to romantic misunderstandings.

ALEX

Thank you Bryn.

LYDIA

Yeah. Well I'm sure there'll be more opportunities in future but like, that is ... that's not what Cel's going for. Cel wants the fang and Cel wants Azu to be happy.

ALEX

You have got the fang. Your conversation may continue. Azu...

LYDIA

Are you happy yet?

ALEX

You know what? Give me a perception check.

HELEN

That's 23.

ALEX

There is actually something on the horizon.

LYDIA/HELEN

Whooh!!

LYDIA

Is it just romance?

[Laughter]

HELEN

Is it the prospect of a happy ending?

[Laughter]

BRYN

It's a ship. No, not that sort of ship.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

It's Superman!

ALEX

You hear on the wind the pitter patter of tiny ork feet ... No! there is a very unusual rock formation right at the edge of the horizon.

HELEN

Oh.

BRYN

Do you see that?

LYDIA

Does Cel see that? Do they need to...

ALEX

Yeah. I'd say it will be pointed out. That's a weird mountain.

LYDIA

How is it weird Alex? Is it shaped like the words "Do not go here".

ALEX

If you squint, yes.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Is this the sort of thing we should consult Mr Smith about?

HELEN

Yes. I will talk to Kiko later ... I think.

LYDIA

Good.

HELEN

But more important things now. If we survive ... let's go.

LYDIA

I mean, I don't know. If you put romance off until your certain of survival Azu, you're never going to get it.

But yes, Cel goes down the rigging.

[Laughter]

ALEX

Ok. Go find Zolf.

BEN

I am currently in the kitchen cooking dinner!

LYDIA/HELEN

Yay!

HELEN

Azu, I think, is going to pick up Hamid on the way.

ALEX

If you've been in the kitchen, there's detail for you.

BEN

Oh, sure.

ALEX

Draal...

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

Has been continuously underfoot and unhelpful. Not in a "I'm trying to help". But mostly in a smelling and tasting things.

BEN

Right. So out of character, they're looking for the fang. In character, what on earth are they doing. I don't know if it exists.

ALEX

Just to get an idea.

BEN

Yeah, just to get an idea of like their actual behaviour. Sort of...

ALEX

I mean, give me a sense motive actually.

BEN

Sure.

[Dice roll]

That is a 22.

ALEX

They may be there fore something else other than the food. But they certainly seem to be tasting everything.

BEN

I will...

ALEX

Very 'handsie'.

BEN

...as I'm cooking, keep shouting "What do you want?".

ALEX

And they keep giving you a double thumbs up going "nice". And then carrying to handle all the food.

BEN

Right, next time they bump into me ... “What do you want?”

ALEX

At which point, Azu and Cel enter.

BEN

And apparently Hamid.

HELEN

Wait. I’ve just caught Hamid and I’m just like ‘Hamid, maybe there’s danger’.

BEN

Oh, with all three over there. Oh what do you want?

HELEN

There’s a weird mountain.

BEN

Right. Ok.

HELEN

We should go look at it.

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BEN

Yes, sure.

HELEN

Or not?

BEN

No, well...

HELEN

But you should know.

BEN

Yes, thank you. Right.

LYDIA

It's in fact looking at something that could do harm. Should we not look at it?

BEN

Well I don't know. This is Northern Waste. Anything goes. I'll go get Earhart. Thanks.

And I'll go get Earhart.

BRYN

Given I've been working on navigation. We said that was my ship board speciality...

BEN

Oh yeah!

BRYN

...does that match up with any of the maps I've been using? Any of the charts? Am I aware of a mountain nearby?

ALEX

The problem with charts, is that the further north you go, the more black they become. There should be mountains here. This is the subtotal of your navigational knowledge!

HELEN

Oh, I forgot that we would have tell Ear... I just, sorry. We keep doing things ... doing danger together and I just ...

BEN

No, that's fine. You can run it up the pole. That's great. I'll go tell Earhart. That's my job. So thank you.

And I'll kind of run off to tell Earhart.

ALEX

Barnes, calls from where he's steering the ship, as if often does, forgotten as he is.

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ALEX

Everything alright?

HELEN

There's a strange rock ... mountain.

ALEX

Great. Alright.

BRYN

Hamid might scamper up into the crow's nest.

ALEX

Ok.

BRYN

And have a look.

ALEX

Give me a new perception check.

[Dice roll]

BRYN

30.

ALEX

You see that there are some very subtle shifting colours along the horizon. You can see the rocky outcropping or some kind of shape that they were referring to. It doesn't look to be solid. In so far as ... I don't mean it's transparent, but it's more like ... don't expect it to be just one big lump. It's very kind of spikey. But the distance is far too far for you to really see. It doesn't look like there's a big blob there, lets put it that way. And it doesn't look like a mountain proper. But mountain is the right word because it's not really enough detail. But it's big enough to be one. Earhart pokes her head out of the cabin...

What?

BEN

What's the sort of ... as I was going to Earhart's cabin, looking to the horizon. Was it dead ahead? What was it like? Was it offset to the side or?

ALEX

Slightly offset. You might be able to skirt it.

BEN

Ok.

Captain, we've got sight on what appears to be a mountain range just off starboard. It's still quite a way away but you should probably have a look to see if it affects our heading.

ALEX

I mean sure, ok.

BEN

Do we need to avoid it? Like how close can we get to it?

ALEX

We knew there was going to be a mountain range of some kind. I mean as long as we increase elevation we should be fine.

BEN

Right, so. Ok. So we just go up.

ALEX

Ok. I feel like I'm missing something here. You wouldn't come to me if you'd saw a...

BEN

It's the Northern Wastes. I don't know. We've not been here. I'm deferring to somebody with more experience.

ALEX

You know what, sure. Give me a second.

She starts climbing up the crow's nest and finds Hamid there.

BRYN

Hello!

Definitely something a bit odd about it I think captain.

ALEX

She pulls out a looking glass. Extends it and has a look ahead.

BEN

Useful.

ALEX

She squints. Pulls out a second looking glass, extends it and then combines them into extendable binoculars.

LYDIA

Did she think Cel was in that crow's nest because...

BRYN

Yeah, that would've really heated up.

LYDIA

Yep.

BEN

That doesn't work Bryn!

LYDIA

You don't know about magic looking glasses.

ALEX

Ok. That's interesting. Barnes I want you to increase elevation. Couple of hundred feet. Everyone, it's going to be getting a lot colder. Please just bear with that. I want everyone on shift please.

BRYN

Should we skirt a couple of degrees to port do you think captain?

ALEX

Yes, that's probably a good idea.

Earhart starts climbing down and starts actually captaining. You start skirting slightly to port. There is cloud cover but you're increasing elevation to sort of just below cloud cover. Going above cloud cover you all know ... you've been told, has issues because it's easy to get lost and it is easy to lose track of your elevation.

BRYN

And it's a lot colder.

ALEX

Yeah, exactly. It increases a lot of problems. So she's gone as high as she can whilst being below what is overcast cloud cover.

BEN

Also, with the order of like everyone on shift, I'll start running around the ship rousing everybody who might be sleeping with the kobolds because I have no idea where they are. I will be in as middle of the ship as I can and yell at them to be about.

ALEX

The way to summon a kobold is to yell loudly and clearly “Oi!”.

BEN

Ok. Then that is how I do it.

ALEX

Kobolds begin to manifest.

BRYN

I mean there’s probably like, you know, an alert bell on the ship right that you ring which lets everyone know they should rush to stations.

BEN

Oh, that’s a very good point.

BRYN

Like...

BEN

Yes.

BRYN

I mean I haven’t sailed on a, you know, 18th century sailing ship. But I have read novels...

LYDIA

You what!

BEN

Ah, see, I've done neither of those things. So yes, I will ring the 'oh no bell' [bell ringing] and get everyone here.

ALEX

The 'oh no bell' is rung. And everyone takes their positions. And you continue. It becomes like you can all soon start to see there are shapes and colours on the horizon. The extreme horizon. Still served beyond this shape that you're approaching. Cel, you recognise a Borealis when you see one!

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

And you all start drawing nearer. And then finally, your eyes start to make sense of what you're seeing and it takes shape. It is an enormous, like huge, impossibly huge skeleton.

BEN

Yay!

ALEX

What used to be what you thought was a mountain is actually an exposed ribcage. Some of the ribs have collapsed in on themselves. And it is ... it's

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basically at this point very difficult to tell what it is. By far the largest kind of creature that you will have seen in terms of it. Give me a non...either knowledge medicine or knowledge nature.

LYDIA

Oh, I've got tonnes of knowledge nature.

BRYN

There's no such thing as knowledge medicine.

LYDIA

Yeah.

BRYN

Do you mean heal?

ALEX

Oh heal. Sorry. Sorry. I'm in the wrong system.

HELEN

I have heal and so does Zolf.

LYDIA

I got 31 knowledge nature.

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BEN

18 on heal for me.

HELEN

32 on heal for me!

ALEX

Cel, the skeleton is ursine in nature. It's a big old bear...

LYDIA

You're a big bear!

ALEX

...and in terms of the checks for heal, I'm afraid that Zolf...

HELEN

The bear is dead!

ALEX

Yeah...

[Laughter]

BEN

It's very, very dead!

[Laughter]

ALEX

But is the...

LYDIA

It's a grisly sight!

[Laughter]

ALEX

As it stands, you think that it has died a while ago. Not ancient, but a while ago.

BEN

Roughly, probably a year ago. From a guess.

ALEX

Azu, yeah, Ben's kind of beat me to my own punch a little bit here. Yeah, it looks like it is the corpse of something massive that probably died a year, year and half ago. Something like that. And the elements have stripped it very quickly. But it's a big exposed lump in what is a comparatively flat plane near some mounts. That makes a lot of sense. It's like it's been picked clean almost and there's only the bones left which are beginning to crumble under their own weight.

HELEN

Urgh. Azu keeps that to herself for now because everyone is everywhere and she doesn't know who to tell so she just watches.

BRYN

Hamid is just muttering swear words to himself under his breath, constantly. Because he just can't cope with this.

ALEX

The kobolds are less scared than crowding the rail to get a good look. And then eventually, holding the tail of one of them so that they can lean out further to get an even better look and then holding the tail of the one holding the tail to get an every better look.

HELEN

If Azu sees this happening she's going go and like be like no!

ALEX

They've all got harnesses. It's fine.

HELEN

But still, dangerous.

ALEX

I mean they're not wearing any of them. They're getting away. But they have them.

BEN

Zolf continues to be all business. Because he's spent a year and half hunting giant squid. So...do you have a giant animal, ok.

LYDIA

Cel is absolutely not impressed. I mean like they're enthusiastic because they're enthusiastic about everything. But like, Cel would have literally seen a creature like that alive, like wandering around North America.

ALEX

I'd say this would be bigger than anything you've seen in North America.

LYDIA

Oh right. Ah, ok. Ok.

ALEX

I'd say the biggest one you would have seen wandering around North America would have been ... maybe like three storeys.

LYDIA

Mmhmm.

ALEX

Where is this thing is closer to like 20.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

25 storeys. Maybe more.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

It's hard to judge because it's scattered.

BRYN

You could even build like some kind of settlement on this back if it were that big.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

I mean I guess, but like the physics wouldn't really work.

BRYN

Yeah, why would you do that. Especially if it died, then everything would fall off.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

It's a very short sighted way of living. But yeah, I'd say it is big enough to be a curiosity to you. You are aware of megafauna. I don't think you would have encountered uberfauna before.

LYDIA

Ok, cool. Cool. So they're more like scientifically impressed rather than an essential crisis.

ALEX

Yeah, that's fair. It's more like 'What an interesting growth problem this specific species must have had'.

LYDIA

Yeah, like 'ah the physics of how they kept their weight together. That must have been difficult'. Rather than 'I did not know such a thing could be! What does that mean of life. Who am I in context'. Yeah.

ALEX

Earhart takes it in stride and she's like 'Yeah, I was expecting some kind of nonsense...

[Laughter]

ALEX

...at least it's dead nonsense!

Wilde actually pokes his head up on deck. He stays at very much at the bow. Looks to Hamid and gives a gesture that I'm going to have to describe, but I'll do on video for everyone else which is [showing gesture]. Basically gesturing with a thumb going

BRYN

Get a load of that!

ALEX

That's big isn't it!

[Laughter]

BRYN

The biggest you've ever seen Oscar?

[Laughter]

LYDIA

No!

ALEX

I don't know about that. I mean a lot of it's about the ratio you know.

BRYN

I can only imagine I'm afraid Oscar.

ALEX

Any way.

[Laughter]

ALEX

As you all start to skirt around it, you are all noticing that the lights on the horizon are moving nearer. They are not moving to be clear. You are moving towards them. That's a better way of putting it.

BRYN

Oh, ok. Good.

[Laughter]

ALEX

They are ... they are the thing the mountain range that you are approaching. Your elevation is fine. However, it's probably likely that you're going to end up having to go above cloud for a while. But as you start approaching the mountains, you notice there is a similar shape even further on. A little bit closer to the mountains on the horizon.

BRYN

Oh.

ALEX

As the ship continues, you see it is another enormous skeletal corpse of something similar.

BRYN

Oh dear!

ALEX

It is significantly older. And then you start to take shape of the mountain range ahead.

BEN

Right, we're in sort of an elephants' grave yard of...

ALEX

Corpses as far as the eye can see.

BEN

Yep.

LYDIA

But nothing alive?

HELEN

I'm so glad that none of them are alive.

ALEX

As you draw near to, yeah what is effectively an enormous not elephant grave yard...

BEN

A Bayer moth's grave yard.

ALEX

Earhart rather grimly starts to increase the elevation and you head up into the cloud cover and everything falls from view.

BRYN

Hamid grabs one of the maps that he has to hand and based on their position, he writes "Ursa Major"...

[Laughter]

ALEX

Yeah, that's a good out! I'm going to end on that. I love a good pun based out.

HELEN

Terrible.

BRYN

You've been talking to Wilde too much!

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BEN

And it was either that or just be here be bears!

[Laughter]

LYDIA

It's bear corpses.

ALEX

Well I gave you some time without horror.

HELEN

You did.

ALEX

I want that on the record. Now that people will start dropping one by one like flies.

[Laughter]

HELEN

Yep.

BEN

That's cool!

LYDIA

You've got to get those emotional connections so that every loss feels poignant in its own way.

HELEN

Mmhmm.

ALEX

It has been tricky getting you to the most deadly part of the world, and filling it with NPCs that you care about. But, I like to think I've managed it.

BRYN

So we'll see you all next week!

LYDIA

Yay!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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