

RQG – 177 – Last Words (Part ii)

Content Warnings

- X
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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 177 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

Ben Meredith

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

HELEN

And Helen Gould

ALEX

And that's a close to a slow chill intro as I can give you. That's what meditative sounds like when you still have to intro an episode. How are we all doing?

BEN

Well who are we playing?

LYDIA

Yeah I don't know who I'm playing anymore. That's how chill I am.

BEN

So chill he's forgotten to do the intro.

ALEX

Well here's the thing are we all playing? Aren't we just always playing in some ways?

BEN

Zolf Smith

(laughing)

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom

HELEN

And Azu

BEN

See it just happens without you now Alex. You've trained us so well!

ALEX

This makes me so happy!

BRYN

I love that he can't mess up the order anymore. That was a trick he could only pull with in person recordings.

ALEX

Yeah we tried that in the first remote recording. I pointed at the screen and then went, wait!

(laughing)

BRYN

So now we get to always do the order and he can't mess with it!

HELEN

Yeah. Take that!

ALEX

So I'll have to find other ways to mess with you. Speaking of which let's go into an alternate mind space. Together but separate. So I'll let people bid for it. Who wants to go first?

LYDIA

I bid nothing.

HELEN

Why don't we go in the order we had before? So it's...

ALEX

Because I don't remember it so I am vamping around it. I have no memory of the original order.

LYDIA

Ben, Helen, me.

ALEX

Ok we'll do that then. So starting back with Zolf then. You have clearly moved through a significant portion of the city with your eyes closed. It is clearly

making it easier for you to do so. In fact, it's reached the point where as you're walking you will stop, as if just deciding to. Obviously step around something just based entirely on instinct and then continue.

BEN

Cool.

ALEX

So this is not just the way is clear for you. You are actively sort of weirdly enough, just your instincts are right. You feel yourself pass through the denser city with the closer alleyways and so on and then you feel the space start to open a lot more and as far as you can tell you appear to be heading back towards the dock where you first came in.

BEN

Sure

ALEX

Eventually you feel the tell-tale smack of shoes upon actually boardwalk as opposed to the thicker palisade that makes up the rest of the city.

BEN

Also slight clarification, I didn't come in on the same dock as everyone else so is it back to the ship or is it back to the lift?

ALEX

It's back to the ship.

BEN

Cool. I will carry on until I either hear him say "hello" or literally walk into him.

ALEX

You continue walking and then feel yourself brought to a stop.

BEN

Cool.

ALEX

Naturally I should say.

BEN

Then I will open my eyes.

ALEX

You are right at the edge of the dock. To your left is a completely fine and original "Vengeance". It is shipshape and ready to go with no issues, not concerns, no problems whatsoever. And Wilde is sat with his legs dangling over the edge of the dock looking out towards the apparently now clear, rolling hills. I say hills...rolling mountains and forests and so on. Even from behind you can see that he is slightly younger and your first impression is that this

appears to be the Wilde you were meeting all that time back in Paris. Well dressed, good hair, at ease but again this is from behind. He is staring straight out and you are immediately behind him.

BEN

Oh good, insufferable as well. Brilliant.

(laughing)

I'll walk up to the edge and sit down beside him with my legs dangling over the edge too.

ALEX

Another thing to notice there is nothing underneath this palisade. This place is apparently just hanging in space. There is landscape underneath. It's not like a yawning void or anything but it's very, very far away and it just appears like this city is a fixed point in the sky is the best way to describe it.

BEN

Yep. Oh I guess because the bear is a living thing as well and there's no other living things around.

ALEX

And so Wilde is just there. Legs dangling over the edge, just looking out. You can see he does not have the scar.

BEN

Sure. Hey.

ALEX

He turns and sees you – hey Zolf – turns back and looks out at the horizon.

BEN

Do you know what's happened? Do you know what's going on?

ALEX

Yeah it feels like for the first time I get to have a break.

BEN

Yeah. Yeah well I guess...I guess that's what I've come to talk to you about.

ALEX

You could just join me. That's ok too. He pats the deck next to him. Room for one more etc.

BEN

I'm not done yet. And I'm here to ask if you are or not because you can come with me if you want.

ALEX

[sighs] Wilde kind of looks out a bit – I mean you say if I want but that's never really, really what it's about is it? It's less if I want than if I can, if I get to.

BEN

No not in this case. If you want I will turn around and go back and, you know, leave you here and that...

ALEX

You don't need to. You're welcome to...you're welcome to stay.

BEN

I'm not done yet. I don't want to stay here.

ALEX

Why not? Just...

BEN

I've got things to do and I've got...

ALEX

Yeah well you always will. That's the...if there's one thing that I've learnt is that there's always something to do. That doesn't mean that you actually have to do it. It just means that there's something to do.

BEN

I've got things I want to do. And if you don't that's fine. Well, no that's fine and I will leave you here. It's up to you.

ALEX

How about we just have a sit for once. For a bit.

BEN

Fine. Do you want to talk now that we have...I don't know if time's even moving so maybe as much time as we want or I dunno, maybe not but...yeah. or we can just sit here. I don't know. This is, I guess sort of your whole space so...

ALEX

You say that – he looks over at the ship – if this was my space I would be somewhere a lot nicer, filled with soft beds and ideally there would be music but apparently...

BEN

Yeah well you could always learn an instrument and...

ALEX

I told you what happened when I tried to learn an instrument right?

BEN

You might have all the time you want now.

ALEX

I'm going to use this opportunity to jump to Helen. Yes Helen.

HELEN

Yes, I'm here.

ALEX

So we last left you in a museum being shushed.

(laughing)

HELEN

Yep I'm heading towards the centre...

ALEX

You were heading towards the shush right?

HELEN

Yes, yes.

ALEX

Are you attempting...this is going to sound odd given the scenario, are you attempting to move “stealthily”?

HELEN

No

ALEX

Ok you are echoing and clanging throughout the space. It is someone in full plate armour walking across stone floors in large echoey chambers.

HELEN

Ok once Azu realises how loud she is because she does have, you know, a sense of what is appropriate and proper.

ALEX

The susurrations are definitely turning actively hostile as you are clanging around.

HELEN

She’s going to try to be quiet but it is very difficult when you’re just wearing metal and you’re on the stone floor.

ALEX

The more you attempt to be quiet, the louder you are and the angrier the hushing sounds are.

HELEN

Sorry – she says.

ALEX

Shush!

HELEN

[whispers] sorry

ALEX

Shush! Clank, clank.

(laughing)

HELEN

Howard?

ALEX

All you're getting is hushing sounds and disapproval from the unseen people of the museum as you clank around the space making far too much noise and clearly unwelcome.

HELEN

Mr Carter? Professor Carter?

ALEX

Can you give me a perception check.

HELEN

Yeah. Oh good. 25.

ALEX

You hear an ever so quiet scritch, scritch of pencil in paper in an adjoining room.

HELEN

I find that room and open the door.

ALEX

There are no doors here. There are only doorways.

HELEN

Oh!

ALEX

As you clank over it's shush, shush, quiet, shush. Honestly.

HELEN

A nightmare!

ALEX

Just so disapproving. Everyone's so disapproving and you find yourself in another ancient history room. In terms of the organisation here it makes no sense to be clear. I realise you're not an expert but it doesn't appear to be arrayed by era, geography, it really does just appear to be a random assortment of this is ancient stuff. It's more like if you asked a kid to describe a museum what would be designed as opposed to an actual organised taxonomic category system or anything like that.

HELEN

Sure

ALEX

Inside this room is a similarly, apparently random assortment of ancient artefacts and there are a couple of stone benches in the middle of the room. You can hear the scritch sounds coming from one of them. There doesn't appear to be anyone in the room.

HELEN

Howard?

ALEX

A small boy pokes his head out from underneath the bench, tousle haired, looks at you very wide eyed and then ducks back and the scritch sounds stop.

LYDIA

Aw it's baby Carter!

(laughing)

You've broken Helen!

HELEN

Very...

ALEX

Give me a sense motive

HELEN

Yeah. Ooh. 25 again.

ALEX

Ah there you go. The child is clearly terrified of you.

HELEN

Oh. Azu...how close is she to the bench?

ALEX

How close do you want to be to the bench?

HELEN

Ok that's fine, what she will do then is she will sit down and then she's going to be like, I'm probably still going to be too big and she's going to lie down on her front and like...

ALEX

Clank, clank, clank, clank, clank. Shush!

HELEN

And she's going to try and see under the bench.

ALEX

The child [coughs] Carter [coughs], is scooped underneath the stone bench in such a way that you would not have been able to see him from the doorway. He appears to have a number of schoolbooks laid out on the floor, seemingly haphazardly and he appears to be sketching something in what appears to be a maths book.

HELEN

Hello Howard.

ALEX

Hello. I can be quieter, I'm sorry.

HELEN

That's alright. I'm very loud.

ALEX

Yeah.

(laughing)

You might not want to be. They don't like that here.

HELEN

Well...

ALEX

[Whispers] We shouldn't really be in here. They don't like kids in here.

HELEN

Well who cares what they think hmm.

ALEX

I mean I do. Don't you?

HELEN

No.

ALEX

Why not? They're really angry though.

HELEN

Well sometimes people are angry and it's not really your fault.

ALEX

It doesn't seem to make a difference.

HELEN

Are people angry at you a lot?

ALEX

School's just rubbish! And everyone in it's rubbish!

HELEN

Oh really?

ALEX

He catches himself being a bit loud and kind of hushes back down.

HELEN

What would you like to do?

ALEX

I dunno. No one's asked me that. I don't wanna do maths. I hate maths. It's rubbish.

HELEN

Oh I'm bad at maths as well.

ALEX

It was fine when it was just numbers but it's not just numbers, it's letters too. Why are there letters in maths, it doesn't make any sense!

HELEN

I know.

ALEX

That's not maths, that's English! But I hate English as well. It's all just become one big pile of merrrr.

HELEN

What do you like doing?

ALEX

I like drawing. That's quite fun.

HELEN

Can I see?

ALEX

Oh well er – kind of holds the book close a little bit – well I'm not really meant to be drawing though so I don't think that's...yeah alright – just thrusts it and like unceremoniously at your face.

HELEN

Ok, what's he drawn?

ALEX

He appears to be doing a bunch of, at first...so there's two parts to the book. The first half where he's just, by the way he's just writing over the maths in there which by the way, even to your eye is just like that's wrong. That's just all wrong.

(laughing)

This...oh no. Oh mate. Come on. He's just sketching straight over the top of the working that's in there. It starts with a series of still lives of the stuff within the museum it seems like however they're growing increasingly elaborate as he starts adding extraneous details where it's like it's not just a broken pillar, it's a broken pillar that's part of a building, it's a broken pillar of part of a building that has a large crowd of people looking up, it's a broken pillar of part of a building with a large crowd of people looking up as a ceremony goes past.

And it's just him slowly, seemingly elaborating on the things that are held within the museum. It's very good.

HELEN

Yes, that's exactly what she says. She says – you're a very good artist.

ALEX

Yeah but it doesn't matter though does it.

HELEN

Of course it matters.

ALEX

It doesn't. I've still got to do maths.

HELEN

Well only for a little while.

ALEX

That's not what they say.

HELEN

Who's they?

ALEX

What do you mean they? Kind of pokes his head out from under the thing and just looks at one of the other rooms and then pokes back underneath the bench.

HELEN

Hmm well...

ALEX

It doesn't matter what you want to do you just end up doing what everyone tells you to do anyway.

(laughing)

HELEN

Azu says – that's not always the case. Listen I think that they might not come in here while I'm here. Oh. I'm Azu by the way

ALEX

Hey Azu.

HELEN

Hello Howard.

ALEX

Do you want some space under the bench?

HELEN

I'm not sure I'll fit I'm afraid.

ALEX

Alright. I am going to jump to Cel.

LYDIA

Cool.

ALEX

Cel, we last left you in a tunnel with a long, let's say mat. I forgot what the word was. What was the word I used?

LYDIA

I think you said mat on the floor.

ALEX

I forget the word.

LYDIA

Fabric woven thing.

ALEX

Yeah I kept wanting to say tapestry but you don't put tapestries on the floor.
That stops being a tapestry.

LYDIA

You mean like a carpet?

ALEX

That's the word, yeah. No! It's a woven, it's a woven mat, let's leave it at that.
And you were in a corridor that lead towards a warm looking fire around a
bend.

LYDIA

Cool. Cel walks along.

ALEX

Heading along you hear the distinct sounds of movements seemingly echoing
through the corridor, sort of a gentle scritch here, a gentle scuttle there. It
is not drawing nearer or anything. It's just this constant sound of gentle
movements all over the space.

LYDIA

Cel, as they walk along will be quietly talking assuming that there may be
smaller creatures around, that maybe one of those may be Sassraa so it's a
reassuring kind of tone, like the kind of thing you do with a small child or an
animal where you're not sure what the language is they might be speaking so

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in draconic, but very gently – hey Sassraa, it's me, Cel. If you remember. This is a really lovely tunnel.

ALEX

There is a loud cry from further down the tunnel – hey! Hey Cel.

LYDIA

Oh! Hey! Sassraa. Buddy. How are you doing?

ALEX

Oh yeah...

LYDIA

Cel jogs down to meet Sassraa.

ALEX

So you turn a corner in the tunnel and then find yourself opening into a larger but not large space. It's at this point that things get a little bit weird for your perspective because first of all you find yourself face to face with a Sassraa who is your height.

LYDIA

Right, yep. I almost sort of expected that.

ALEX

The space around you it feels like someone took a quick sketch of a chemistry lab and smashed it into Mr Tumnus' study.

LYDIA

Right gotcha. Yeah.

ALEX

That's the quickest, easiest way I can describe this.

LYDIA

So it's heaven basically.

ALEX

Think a combination of like creature comforts so there is a fire, it's not a fireplace. It is an open fire leading to a hole in the ceiling which seems to be taking the smoke and it appears that everything around the space is...again it has comfort in mind even if it's not elaborate, think more cushions and rugs and things like that. There appears to be something cooking on the fire and around the place it feels more like things have been kept by virtue of just being interesting so it's not that there is a full chemistry set up bubbling away so much as like there are the makings of a big elaborate set up that is currently being assembled by Sassraa apparently.

LYDIA

Cool

ALEX

Hey Cel.

LYDIA

Hey. This place is wonderful. What are you making?

ALEX

Sassraa's there going – ok so I have some 6mls condensers but I'm considering swapping to 10mls because they just seem to have a better precipitation rate but I'd really...I'd...do I go smaller and just double the length. Do I double the precipitation length and recurve it back in?

LYDIA

What are you trying to achieve?

ALEX

I mean what do you think? She just gestures to the rest of the room and then starts assembling two apparently utterly incompatible pieces.

LYDIA

Sassraa do you know where we are?

ALEX

I mean yeah. It's my place.

LYDIA

It's a lovely place.

ALEX

I know. That's why it's mine

BRYN

Aw!

LYDIA

You are lovely and you deserve lovely things.

ALEX

I do. You're right. You can stay. Right so – Sassraa's there holding a tripod and a Bunsen burner and then just holding them both and then puts the Bunsen burner in the tripod and leaves it and it isn't quite right. Nothing's...it feels like someone's trying to build a chemistry set but everything is just at cross purposes, the dots aren't connecting for some reason.

LYDIA

Sassraa I...I'm going to stay here with you a while but there's...there's...if you understand what's happened. There was a ship and things went wrong and we lost you.

ALEX

Oh yeah. I know, I know, I know. I've just got to sort this, if I can just sort this then we can get on with things. I just need to find...

LYDIA

Then we can go?

ALEX

Yeah I just need to sort this.

LYDIA

What I'm thinking is...do you need help? What I'm saying Sassraa is you can...do you want...we lost you but there's a way back and do you wanna come?

ALEX

Yeah that's fine, that's fine, that's fine. We just need to finish this and then we can do whatever. That's fine. I just need to finish here.

LYDIA

Ok well let me help.

ALEX

Ok cool. Ok so where does this go? At which point you're looking at an enormous, like the size of Sassraa conical flask, just unnecessarily massive and a set up so far could probably fit on a small table.

LYDIA

This may be a rolling point because Cel is trying to work out if this is an unsolvable puzzle.

ALEX

Give me a...I will allow you to pick either between knowledge engineering or craft alchemy...probably...no you know what, craft alchemy for this one

LYDIA

Ok

HELEN

Lydia you're so clever, it would never have crossed my mind that it's unsolvable. I'd just be like ok, great, let's go!

(laughing)

LYDIA

That is a 31.

ALEX

Yeah. You reckon this is an unsolvable puzzle and the second that you solve a problem...ah no you see because that just makes a bigger problem further down the line. That's just going to be this. Just...it clearly will.

BEN

It's like playing Santorio

(laughing)

ALEX

Yes! Very much so, yes.

LYDIA

Cel has...they did one or two adjustments before realising this and they kind of breathe in and turn to Sassraa and say – I think what this is, Sassraa...this is the ultimate puzzle here and it's wonderful. I can see so many different ways to solve it but I think there'll always be something to solve and this will be here when you come back later, right but for now, I think, if you want to go back and solve the puzzles that we had on the ship we need to go and do that. This will be there for you. This is just going to keep puzzling.

ALEX

And I'm going to use that as our break.

And welcome back. So I think at this point I'm going to bounce across to Hamid.

BRYN

Oh ok.

ALEX

So Hamid ever since sitting down there it has been calm and it has been peaceful. Give me a perception check.

BRYN

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ALEX

After a while you come to notice that it's growing colder. At first you think it might just be a chill wind that'll pass or something but it's growing consistently colder and colder and eventually it reaches the point where it's gone from it's just a little bit colder to if your endure elements was not still active, people would be leaving.

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Because it is consistently growing colder where you are. Are you eyes closed or are you eyes open?

BRYN

Probably eyes open.

ALEX

There is frost starting to emanate from the central space. It is creeping across the ground slowly but obviously there is a...you know there's a small amount of snowfall and so on although the area seems to be kept broadly clear but there is an active ice patch working its way out across the floor of the space. It's not near anyone of the party as of yet but if it continues going eventually everyone will have to up and move.

BRYN

I will glance at the other kobolds just to see how many of them have their eyes open.

ALEX

None of them. Their breath is frosting in front of them but again endure elements is a wonderful spell.

BRYN

Yeah, yep. How long has it been roughly? A couple of hours, bit longer?

ALEX

Yeah about that.

BRYN

Ok I will keep my eyes open and watch for the progress and yeah, if the frost is like, you know, gets a bit closer I will quietly and politely prod the rest of the kobolds into moving but I'm not going to disturb them unless I feel like I sort of need to.

ALEX

I'd say before it reaches that point you notice a second element which is hard to tell at first but it just catches your eye. You notice that a ring of people seems to be very gradually and organically forming at the very, very edge of the circle. So where it turns back into alleys and so on. One person takes place there and then another person takes place at the far end, another person over here and it takes a little while for you to realise but it only appears to be awakened creatures.

BRYN

Oh interesting.

ALEX

Trees. Animals. Stuff like that. And they appear to be doing the same sort of thing that happened when it came to the, you know the route through the city where it wasn't people actively bowing heads reverentially, it's just sort taking positions almost. Similar situation. They seem to be taking positions around the central space. They don't...they're not trying to interact in any way but it has reached the point where there's an active crowd forming very, very slowly.

BRYN

Ok

ALEX

At which point I'm going to dive back to the rest of the group. I'm going to start with Zolf. Ok never have I ever...

(laughing)

...crashed a boat...sorry ship and blamed it on someone else.

BEN

You know this game would be a lot more fun if we had something to drink

(laughing)

ALEX

Well...yeah alright. Wilde stands. I think there's something left in my cabin.

BEN

Alright.

ALEX

He just leads you through to the cabin, opens the door and then steps into a broad and airy Parisian apartment.

BEN

Follow him in.

ALEX

And then heads in and grabs a drink from a cabinet and starts pouring you both. It seems to be a measure of some kind of spirit.

BEN

Oh this is nicer than I remember it.

ALEX

Oh this place...it's not all that. It's ok to start with but big plans. He takes a drink. But it's nice to have somewhere to fall back on, you know, have a bit of a break.

BEN

Yeah. Plans?

ALEX

Oh yeah, you know. I know I've been doing a lot recently but I think once I'm out of uni I really need to look...

BEN

Alright Wilde...

ALEX

...I really need to look towards a career.

BEN

Wilde. I didn't know you when you were at uni.

ALEX

What?

BEN

Hang on. Who am I?

ALEX

What do you mean Zolf.

BEN

Ok

ALEX

It's you.

BEN

How did you meet me?

ALEX

You're going way back then. Wilde opens the doors to the balcony and then steps out looking out across the Parisian skyline. I mean, I'm trying to think. I can't remember when we met actually. I know you...didn't I crash your place one time. I'm pretty certain I did.

BEN

You broke into Hamid's apartment.

ALEX

Yeah! Yeah! God. Oh because I was doing that...oh...oh no. I was doing that piece on Bertie wasn't I.

BEN

You were.

ALEX

God. That's a blast from the past.

BEN

Yeah how long ago was that?

ALEX

Well it all just sort of bleeds into itself doesn't it a little bit.

BEN

Yeah but you were working for the...for a paper at that time weren't you?

ALEX

No I can't have done because I've only just finished uni.

BEN

So why were you writing a piece on Bertie?

ALEX

It must've been a paper or something, right?

BEN

Yeah so why are you at uni?

ALEX

Look what's with all the questions? Alright, ok, it's fine. We have all the time in the world because all of this stuff that we can do. Big plans but we don't have to do it now. We can have a moment.

BEN

Wilde. You're dead.

ALEX

Dark.

BEN

No. You are dead. You died. I saw you die.

ALEX

You've always been very dramatic Zolf. You do know that right. You just like...you kind of need to learn to just pull back a little bit. You're very intense all the time.

BEN

Wilde.

ALEX

What?

BEN

We were in the Vengeance. We went through the borealis and the engines went down and we crash landed and you died.

ALEX

Why are you having to steer this in such a heavy...it's fine. Just have a sit and have a drink, for once Zolf.

BEN

I am here to ask you if you want to come back to the world. To live again.

ALEX

And I'm saying it's fine. Like we have all the time in the world. We can have a bit of just chill time. Look if there's one thing that I've learnt, ok, it's that it's fine to be ambitious but sometimes you just need a bit of you time. You know.

BEN

I agree with you but...

ALEX

Fantastic so join me.

BEN

...I don't wanna spend some you time with a version of yourself which isn't real.

ALEX

Getting very deep here.

BEN

How can you...

ALEX

I've just invited you for a drink.

BEN

I don't know what sort of state you're in and obviously I don't think I can know what sort of state you're in given the state you're in but I'm here for a reason. Not just to hang out with you although that would be nice if we ever got a moment to just hang out.

ALEX

We do right now. Just five minutes Zolf. For once. Just for once!

BEN

We took five minutes Wilde and now we're in your apartment in Paris.

ALEX

Fine where do you wanna go? He goes to the front door and opens it onto a park at night. You don't recognise the park.

BEN

If you wanna go there, let's go there but we're in a situation just to...look either you wanna stay here, wherever here is. Or maybe move on, wherever that might be. Or you wanna come back with me.

ALEX

Give me a sense motive.

BEN

Oh nat 20. So that is a 29

ALEX

Wilde's getting real angry and he's hiding it.

BEN

Wilde just talk to me honestly. Why are you...why...

ALEX

I tell you what, I'll talk to you honestly when you talk to me honestly. Just say the words "Wilde we need you to fix it again". "Wilde it's gone wrong. Help" "Wilde solve this problem" "Wilde, won't take long". Just give me one of them. Just actually talk to me honestly for the first time. What is it? What needs fixing? What's gone wrong? What's on fire? Who died? What do I actually need to fix here because right now, this is the first chance I've had in I don't know how long. I've got finals coming up. I've got all of the interviews that are lined up on top and everything's piling up and all I've got is people asking me to fix things and I keep doing it and I keep fixing everything. Brilliant. So tell me Zolf, I thought we were friends but no. What do I need to fix? Do you want to cheat off me? Is that it? Do you need to cheat off me? That's fine. Cheat off me like everyone else does. It's fine.

BEN

You don't have uni. You don't have exams. You don't have interviews. You are dead. You have no responsibility anymore and you don't need to have any

responsibility anymore. That's ok. But I'm giving you a simple choice, you come back with me or you don't. That's it. There is no other motive. Yes things are broken and things need to be fixed and things need to be sorted out but that doesn't have to be on you and it shouldn't be just on you. We're all responsible for everything and you died in pursuit of a fix and it would not be fair for me to tell you that you have to come back.

ALEX

So why are you here? What's the actual point? Why would you just not let it lie then?

BEN

To ask you if you want to come back. You didn't choose to die but you can, right now, choose to stay dead.

ALEX

Wilde takes a moment, finishes his drink and just stands there absorbing.

BEN

I know better than a lot of people that death ain't the end. I'm a cleric for goodness sake so there is a natural order to things and people die and they move on and that's just how it works.

ALEX

I'm just tired Zolf, that's all. I'm sorry. I'm just...I'm just...

BEN

I know Wilde. I am tired too.

ALEX

Everyone thinks that they're carrying this but they're not because you know what happens if they drop the ball? I pick it up and I pass it someone else and if no one else is there to pick it up I carry the ball myself. That's just how this works and I'm just tired. I'm just so tired Zolf. I'm just so tired.

BEN

Do you really think you're the only person who feels like that? Everyone feels like that. All the time. Everyone's tired. And everyone has work to do.

ALEX

So what we just go back and carry on until eventually we can't. That's not...

BEN

Not necessarily. Not if you don't want to. I told you when I first came here I will turn around and I will go back on my own and that is fine. That is your choice but I want you to understand the options.

ALEX

Just give me a reason other than because there's something that needs doing. That's all I need. Just one reason other than there is another job for you Wilde. That's all I need.

BEN

Do you want there to be another reason?

ALEX

What did I just...obviously I do. Yes.

BEN

Fine. Because I need you Wilde.

ALEX

And there we go. An honest answer from Zolf Smith. I never thought I'd hear it.

BEN

You were just angling for that?

(laughing)

You bastard!

(laughing)

ALEX

No I wasn't just angling for that but it's nice to know, right.

BEN

Well I didn't want to say because it wouldn't be fair.

ALEX

Oh nothing's fair. Look at it.

BEN

Fine...do you want to come back or don't you? I've said it. I know but it's still your choice.

ALEX

Here's the plan. We're going to finish up these drinks. We go out there and then we just...we'll figure it out, we always do. It's fine. It's just useful to know I'm not just beating my head against a wall for no reason Zolf, you know.

BEN

Look – and I will grab him by the lapels and pull him down to my height – when this is all done we'll go on holiday or something.

ALEX

Where?

BEN

Oh I don't know! I don't know where's gonna be left after all this is done but somewhere nice.

ALEX

Give me a sense motive before I continue.

BEN

Ooh 11.

ALEX

You're fairly certain you've already won him over and that he's messing with you by this point.

Zolf, I won't come back with you unless you tell me where we're going on holiday together.

(laughing)

BEN

You're such a dick. Come on.

(laughing)

ALEX

I'm gonna use that opportunity to bounce to Azu.

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

So Carter's been scritch, scritch, scritch away and you feel like you've hit a bit of a static point. The best way to describe it that you just have the instinct that nothing here is going to change unless you make the change happen. You're at a fixed point.

HELEN

I mean I had that idea anyway. Alright so he's drawing. So Azu's gonna say – Howard?

ALEX

Hmm

HELEN

What do you remember?

ALEX

Apparently nothing.

HELEN

No...I mean how did you...how did you get here?

ALEX

Oh well I always come here. It's the only place people leave me alone.

HELEN

Oh. I'm sorry I'm not leaving you alone.

ALEX

Yeah it's alright, you're alright. I mean it helps that you're proper scary so if anyone tries to pick a fight with me I'll just point at you.

HELEN

I will happily fight anyone who tries to hurt you.

ALEX

Really?

HELEN

Yes

ALEX

Would you fight a bear?

HELEN

Oh yes

ALEX

Really? Would you fight two bears?

HELEN

I'd try.

ALEX

What if both the bears had swords?

HELEN

Well I've got several axes.

ALEX

And four arms. Each.

HELEN

Look the point is Howard, do you want to come out from under that bench for a moment?

ALEX

Not really because if I do everyone's just gonna yell at me again so I'm fine. I'll just stay here.

HELEN

I just told you I'd fight bears for you. Do you think I can't fight them off?

ALEX

Well yeah but...you're not going to be here forever and then it's just gonna be yelling again and Carter you don't know what a declen...whatever it is, is. Don't do that, it's annoying. Don't eat that you'll be sick. Maybe I want to be sick, ok. Sometimes, you know, how do I know...how am I going to know unless I'm allowed to.

HELEN

Hmm. Well it sounds like you quite like breaking the rules.

ALEX

It's not that I like breaking rules, it's just most of the rules are stupid and thought up by stupid people!

HELEN

Look – she's going to reach her hand out across the floor and she's gonna be like – why don't you come out and if anyone yells at you I'll hit them with my axe. How does that sound?

ALEX

And what do I do when you're not there? You can't hit everyone with an axe. I know, I've tried.

(laughing)

HELEN

Well you are quite small. How about you just try it.

ALEX

So what you're saying is because I'm small and you're big I should climb out of this bench.

HELEN

No, no, no. I'm saying that right now you can depend on me to protect you and I would quite like to see you stand up.

ALEX

You don't need my help though look at you. Like you said you've got your big axe and your big armour and all of that. I don't bring...I'll stay here, it's fine. I get it. I'm useless. I don't have anything to help or do so I can just stay here at least out of the way. It's fine. I get it. It's not nice but I get it, it's fine.

HELEN

You're very young Howard. Nothing stays the same forever.

ALEX

Meaning what?

HELEN

Maybe if you come out something will change.

ALEX

So if I just...wait, wait, hang on. So what you're saying is that if I come out from under here I change but what if I change worse. I'm just hearing a lot of Howard I want you to come out from under the bench.

HELEN

Good that's...

ALEX

But there's no point. I don't just wanna do what I'm told. I wanna do what I wanna do. I'm sick of doing what I'm told. No one ever told me to do anything good. People always just told me to do stuff that I'm rubbish at and every time I do stuff that I'm rubbish at they just tell me to do it more and then they get annoyed at me for being rubbish at it but I'm only rubbish at it because they told me to do it. If they hadn't told me to do I wouldn't have known I was rubbish. If I wasn't rubbish they wouldn't be annoyed so people just tell me to do things that'll make them annoyed.

HELEN

Howard.

ALEX

If I climb out from the bench you're just gonna be annoyed. Same as everyone else.

HELEN

I won't be this time. I promise. Please?

ALEX

No need to say please. You're massive and I'm really small. It's fine.

HELEN

I am not going to drag you.

ALEX

Fine. What, what. What. Howard just pokes out from under the bench and stands in front of you. Child Howard is a little streak of nothing. Child Howard is tiny. Big mop of hair, tiny everything else. And he's just there holding all of his messy books really angrily and just looking at you – what? I'm here. What? What?

HELEN

Azu sits up because she was previously lying on her front wasn't she. So Azu sits up and she goes – do you want to be in this room. You said you...

ALEX

No it's rubbish! It's the only place I can be.

HELEN

I can show you other places if you like?

ALEX

You promise no one's going to be annoyed at me for just being there?

HELEN

So Howard's a kid at the moment.

ALEX

Yes, yes

HELEN

If there was an adult there someone would see Azu look really hecking sad and then she's gonna say – everyone will be really pleased to see you actually I think.

ALEX

That seems to upset him. Not in a, that's awful way but in a, no they won't. No one's ever happy to see me.

HELEN

I am

ALEX

Yeah but you're different because you're like, you know, cool.

HELEN

I only hang out with cool people.

(laughing)

ALEX

So Howard kind of preens himself a little bit and stands up a little bit straighter and in the act of standing up straighter just seems to age up. Not in a, oh how horrifying but more like somehow you find yourself staring in front of now a young teen instead of a very young child. Really?

HELEN

Oh yes. Everyone I know is very cool.

ALEX

Oh yeah?

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

So like what kind of things do you all get up to? He's continuing to progress, let's say.

HELEN

I know two people who can make things explode.

(laughing)

ALEX

Really?

HELEN

Oh yes

ALEX

At this point you're at a young man Carter, not necessarily the slightly older man Carter that you know but you're getting there.

HELEN

I know someone who got hit by lightning like three times.

ALEX

Wow!

LYDIA

And still had loads of hit points!

(laughing)

ALEX

At this point, if I may, I'm going to suggest that if you were to be leading Howard away from the room whilst talking, he would be following you too engrossed in what you were saying to realise.

HELEN

Before Azu goes on though she's going to say – but you're sure you want to come with me yes?

ALEX

Well yeah obviously.

HELEN

And you don't want to be here?

ALEX

This is rubbish! No one's been struck by lightning here and I've been here ages!

HELEN

Alright then Howard. Why don't you come along? I'll tell you all about a group of people I know who are excellent at building things. You wouldn't believe the things that they can do and so fast and – she starts telling him about various other members of the crew.

ALEX

At which point I am going to jump across to Cel. So last thing we heard is this is an unfixable problem. Sassraa just puts a pair of flasks down angrily. In fact one of them shatters a little bit. Cracks, let's say and Sassraa turns to you and looks, as if from nowhere, properly upset. You know that you can't just leave it unfixed. You have to solve the problem. If you don't solve the problem then it's just going to get worse so we've got to solve it because if we don't solve it then it's just going to get worse so if just do this now then we can go back. It'll be fine.

LYDIA

Sassraa, I...I know exactly how you feel. I do. I know that sometimes you feel you need to solve the thing and you can't think of anything else until that thing is done.

ALEX

Great!

LYDIA

But there's...but what I've learned...and I'm so old Sassraa. I am so old, I have learned so many things so slowly, right. Sometimes things don't get finished, right and that has to be ok.

ALEX

Yeah but I can finish it if you just help. If we get this done then we go back.

LYDIA

You've already done it Sassraa. We've done it. We've fixed the first problem and then another problem came and then another and this is...

ALEX

Yeah but if we finish this it'll fix all the problems.

LYDIA

It won't. Sassraa what I'm saying is that this is endless and that's fine, right. If you wanna solve these problems forever but there are other kinds of problems back on the bear...back where we were and those problems...I just...I think that we work really well together. And you have to remember, of course, while we don't obviously show tonnes of time of them hanging out, it has been explicitly said that Cel hangs out with Sassraa doing detailed work that while Sassraa was in Earhart's body they sat there with the logic puzzles. They've spent a lot of time together so it's that kind of...we don't share that but it's...

ALEX

It's right here. It's right here. We're so close. I'm sure...maybe – Sassraa reaches out and grabs two completely different components. I know that if we just like...it's just so close. It's so close Cel.

LYDIA

The thing about these puzzles right is that they always lead to other things and that's what...that's what being is. I thought that was being alive was like but it seems it's even bigger than that. Whatever you do it becomes something else

and that's great. You don't get to get a completion score though always on problems and I think this...look, I just...I feel like there were other things that we left unfinished and you can choose to stay here. These are some really cool problems. You've got really incredibly equipment here. I mean I have never seen a flask as big as that. And the spiralling on that...wait, no! No. No. I'm not gonna focus on all of the...that's really cool as well. No! Ok. Sassraa this place is cool. It's wonderful and I'm so happy that it's here for you but there are other really cool problems and your friends and I hope I'm your friend and we can do more stuff back on the ship so it's a choice Sassraa but there's...I can't...we won't be able to finish this. It's not a, you fix it and then you move on to the other thing. You don't get to complete everything. You're gonna have to choose and either choice is fine. They're both valid puzzles.

ALEX

Sassraa kind of takes a moment and puts the two components down and just gives a bit of a [sigh]. This will still be here won't it? It'll still be here?

LYDIA

I'm pretty sure this or something like it, even better.

ALEX

Sassraa gives you a side long glance. Give me a sense motive

LYDIA

Ok now that is...this is not Cel's strong point. 7.

HELEN

Oof

ALEX

Gives you a sidelong glance that could mean anything.

(laughing)

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

I'll make you a deal.

LYDIA

Ok

ALEX

If we don't solve this now

LYDIA

Right

ALEX

But you and me solve this later, you know, when we get time. When we've dealt with everything else. It's all done, it's all solved, we can come back here and finish this together.

LYDIA

Sassraa I would like nothing else better in the entire world.

ALEX

You promise?

LYDIA

I promise.

ALEX

Wait, hang on a minute. Come here – Sassraa kind of gestures with her talon – no closer.

LYDIA

Yep, yep.

ALEX

Closer.

LYDIA

Yep

ALEX

Right close.

LYDIA

Ok

ALEX

Sassraa reaches out and plucks the fang from behind your ear.

(laughing)

We should go back. We should go back.

LYDIA

Cool.

ALEX

And I think I should end the episode there rather than return to Hamid. We'll leave that for another week. But well done all of you. There was a version of events where you wouldn't all manage it and I thought I'd give you a challenge you can't solve with a dice or quote "all the hit points"

(laughing)

BEN

Where we're going we need hit points.

LYDIA

I think all of us are just like Zolf, tell Wilde that you like him. Tell him that he's your friend!

ALEX

Oh you did come close.

LYDIA

Say something nice!

ALEX

You did come close but...

BEN

I know, I know.

ALEX

It's all good. Well I'm happy to say that slight spoilers we shall be returning to the "real world" next week but until then bye everyone.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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