

RQG – 180 – Visitation

Content Warnings

- X
- X

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 180 of the Rusty Quill Gaming podcast. I'm your host and GM Alex Newall and with me today, I have

BEN

Ben Meredith

BRYN

Bryn Monroe

LYDIA

Lydia Nicholas

HELEN

And Helen Gould

ALEX

And who are you playing?

BEN

Zolf Smith

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom

HELEN

And Azu

ALEX

And everything's fine. Everyone's had like two square meals, and a night's sleep, apart from Zolf because, you know, Zolf...

[Laughter]

BEN

No, no, no, no... We've had a night's sleep now.

ALEX

Oh no... yes...

HELEN

Oh yeah...

ALEX

No, even you've had a night's sleep now.

LYDIA

Alex, you gave us a recovery night's sleep. A kind of recovery chill out day, and then another night's sleep.

LYDIA

Yeah... a bonus night's sleep.

BRYN

Yeah. We didn't even have to roll will saves for the second one!

LYDIA

That's crazy. I didn't even know you could...

ALEX

Did anyone notice by the way that the second that that rest day started, I was like I don't know what this looks like. Help me people!

[Laughter]

ALEX

What does one do with these? But thankfully I've managed to get everyone back into a room for conversation.

LYDIA

And the young person has been holding their breath for a whole week.

[Laughter]

ALEX

They've gone properly blue actually. Aw, it's awful. OK. So what I am going to do then is pick up, unsurprisingly, exactly where we left off. Young person speaks... "I Khantu, ... representative of Kaltés, pleased to welcome you all" and they look a little bit nervous for a moment. They look to the older ones, who are just sort of give a benign nod. "And I am here to first offer you formal greetings. I know that you have all been here a long time, and I am pleased that you have been able to be helped. We now are here to sit and discuss

everything”. They sit down, abruptly. The potentially oldest looking one, this is an extremely elderly looking man. Completely baldpate, quite shrunken in on themselves, they stand and take a moment, settle themselves, this is well-said “I Kondha, representative of Numi Torum, would like to discuss what it is that you intend? What are your goals? Why are you here? What is your purpose, I suppose?” They very slowly sit and then settle themselves down again.

BEN

Does Earhart go to speak?

ALEX

Earhart looks around, takes a moment to look at Wilde, who gives a sort of... I’m sure, go ahead shrug. Earhart actually looks to you Zolf, as well, and again gives a sort of...

BEN

Yeah... I’ll give her a... “go on get on with” sort of hand gesture.

[Laughter]

Earhart takes a moment, stands, hesitates, takes her hat off. “Hey, I’m Earhart... you know I’m not going to go through all the names, we’ll be here a while. We’re passing through, well we were passing through. We’re on our way to basically distant lands and the borealis kind of ate my ship. We crashed and we’re here. We appreciate the help, don’t get me wrong, but we don’t actually have any intentions towards you, beyond... I think I speak for everyone, making good on the assistance you’ve rendered, which we obviously hugely appreciate. We weren’t here for you... she says kind of bluntly, but it’s a good thing that we found you, well you found us. Thank you”. Earhart sits. The sort of Council on the far side take a moment and then they sort of lean in and give a... basically a muttered Council amongst themselves.

LYDIA

Can I, very briefly clarify, the langue this is taking place in? I assume that there has been some spells cast. The fact that the Council and Sohra have spoken so hesitantly, I have been assuming is because, when you use comprehend languages, and tongues and stuff, there is not perfect translation, and they are aware of that... not that they...

ALEX

That is exactly the situation...

LYDIA

... Not that they speak in a kind of.... Right OK.

ALEX

Yeah, so what has happened, again I've skipped over this, for the sake of brevity, but it's a fair point, is peaking behind mechanics curtain, there is a Druidic spell, which basically is share language. Bang, bang, we share a language. However, that doesn't necessarily give, again perfect translation, things like that. I am working under the assumption, because it's comparatively easy for them to do, and they have spell slot for days... In fact it is beyond trivial for people to make sure that everyone in the room is sharing a language.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

I am just going to continue just saying that like that is the case, because it lasts like... 24 hours each...

LYDIA

OK.

BEN

Sure...

ALEX

They can cast it on multiple people so it's very easy.

BEN

And everyone's just like working hard to avoid idioms and stuff...

LYDIA

Yeah... yeah...

BEN

So like... I'm trying to use the universal basic communication [unclear: 5:08].

ALEX

Yeah, there's a reason that people are being quite basic, is if it was like... it's raining cats and dogs... everyone would be like "what"...

LYDIA

Yeah... "do you ride the cats and the dogs from the sky... because that's what we do?"

ALEX

Why did you put them up there like that, yeah... I'm trying to avoid that kind of thing. It's very obvious. I would say as well, whilst they're discussing, is Khantu, who is the youngest one, who first spoke, their face can be read like a book. Their heart is on their sleeve. They're very expressive. They swing wildly between great enthusiasm to "oh yes, yes, no that's a serious concern" "oh but there is this, yeah..." "oh but that's a serious concern as well". Like they haven't quite mastered the art of the... the Council poker face, let's say. The others are comparatively inscrutable. Even Sohra actually, she seems to sort of close down a little bit. Eventually, a different representative stands. This one, a very, very elderly woman. Seems to be similar in age to Kondha, who spoke last. "I am Shoshva, the representative of Kaltas'ekva. It is true that we have offered you a... assistance, and we recognise your offer of mutual assistance. There are a few ways that this could be rendered. That we would appreciate, but not expect. We assume that you would wish to repair your vessel. Is this the case?" "Yeah... yes please. Thank you. Yes".

LYDIA

Poor Alex. You're just being five people.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

My heart goes out to you.

ALEX

It's fine. I'll chuck Earhart off the bear and then it will be Ben's job to do all this...

LYDIA

No...

ALEX

"If we were able to accelerate your journey, would this be a positive to you?, or is your journey one where the time is not an issue?" Earhart just kind of turns to everyone.

BEN

Yes, yes, quick, yes.

BRYN

Very much so.

HELEN

Can you teleport us?

ALEX

"Yeah, how? If this means like climbing in a cannon and getting fired across a continent, like that's fast, but that's not necessarily a solution to the..."

BEN

[unclear: 7:10] Captain.

ALEX

"I don't know". "We have ways of doing this for some of you. To do so for all, would be a great difficulty"...

BEN

Oh... umm...

BRYN

Perhaps I sort of look to Zolf and Wilde, perhaps we should explain the whole situation, as best we're able to?

BEN

How long have they got? Umm...

ALEX

Earhart pipes up, "I am not explaining the entirety of the situation myself. I'm not saying we shouldn't... I'm just saying I'm not that person".

HELEN

We can just say we're looking for a cure for a disease. That would get the thing across.

BRYN

Well we still don't know exactly know the eventual purpose of the people with the blue veins and they might one day be a danger to the people here, and if that ends up being the case, these people deserve a warning, apart from anything else.

BEN

OK.

HELEN

Oh true...

ALEX

I hate being the one to do the talking... OK... Umm...

BEN

You're the Captain...

ALEX

I know... I know... I like captaining [unclear: 8:17].

BRYN

If you'd like to delegate then?

ALEX

Mr Smith, please.

BEN

Right, oh great. OK fine.

[Laughter]

BRYN

Zolf, you're also allowed to delegate but...

BEN

I'm going to get this done quickly. Right, OK... there are... down south, basically, most of... I don't know... Europe, does that mean much...

ALEX

"We understand what you're referring to".

BEN

Alright. A lot of north Africa, basically it's been taken over, seemingly by... some sort of... we don't know what... disease... whatever... people are being mind controlled, I guess, maybe... to some unknown purpose and basically the continent has devolved into war. A war which we're losing. We're working to try and find a solution to this problem. We don't know if it will become a problem for you lot, up here. Don't even know if the blue vein lot know that you exist, so I don't know... but fair warning, and yes, we would like to go quick. Time is a little bit of the essence. How many people can you send?

ALEX

Sohra stands up. "I Sohra, representative of the Clawed One, would ask what is the nature of this malady? You speak of blue veins etc. There have been

maladies before, why... how do you seek to end the sickness, at its source? What is your”?

BEN

There is some weird technology behind it, I guess, maybe. We genuinely don't know that much. It's not a disease, and it ain't a magical disease.

ALEX

“You speak of blue veins”?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

“Could you explain”?

BEN

People got blue veins if they've got the thing. And they don't know how to be embarrassed and stuff. They've got like...

ALEX

“What is the nature of the malady? Do they sicken? Do they wither? So they shake? Do they perish”?

BEN

They're mind controlled. They are working against their friends and family. Their loved ones. They know... they have all the memories, but none of the feelings, but they can fake that reasonably well, except for like surprise and embarrassment and stuff. And yeah, it's very difficult to identify which is why basically most of... if not all of Europe is kind of gone.

ALEX

Sohra looks slightly concerned. The older members of the Council are utterly inscrutable. Come to the youngest... like no rolls required, clearly suspect something and is mortified. It's just obvious. Like plain as day, written on their face.

LYDIA

Well, there embarrassed.

HELEN

Interesting.

ALEX

More like, not only is this awful, but that they think they know something extra. Like, they just clearly do. It's so obvious. They keep looking at the rest of the Council, and is like... am I the only... anyone noticing...

BRYN

The people who have the blue veins, they are coordinated. They seem to seek to infect further people, to work together to expand their control, as far as I'm aware. We don't know what the limits of that expansion will be. Where I was brought up, we were always taught that no one lived in this area, that we've obviously just met you and that was a lie or ignorance to us, and perhaps the people with the blue veins have the same belief, but my fear is that they will seek to expand forever and may end up expanding in this direction. I think that it... [unclear: 11:50] all people to try and work out a way to deal with that problem. We've been investigating for a while. Our last investigation happened far in the east, and we were heading back west and north to try and pursue the next step in the investigation, but the truth is that we have... we've always been short of information. We don't... we've never really understood what the malady is. All we know is that people are... we use the language of disease, as that's how it seems to spread, but it is not exactly a disease. It... people do not develop the blue veins straightaway, and one of the major weapons of this enemy force is to infect someone, and to have them infiltrate before the blue veins appear.

ALEX

The elderly woman, who has not yet spoken, raises her hand, to stop you.

BRYN

Yeah, Hamid stops instantly.

ALEX

This woman has a shock of white hair. Very similar to Wilde and Sasha and so on. Again, this is, like a very pure burnished white. They tentatively stand as well. “I Sumutnyerl, representative of Yerlik, would ask these people, with their malady, do they act as one?”

BEN

Yeah...

BRYN

Yes.

ALEX

She sort of gestures with her hand to like hold and sit and then they have a Council basically amongst themselves and muttering again. Again Khantu, bless them again can easily be read like a book. They seem mortified. Like it looks like they're simultaneously afraid, actively afraid. Very very concerned, very very worried, very confused. This is clearly a bombshell that the others are sort of giving you nothing on, and Khantu is like... “what are we going to do... oh no”... and they're all like... “it's fine, everything's fine”... “it's not though is it! Because of the big secret”...

[Laughter]

ALEX

They're really, really just broadcasting loud and clear...

HELEN

Intriguing.

ALEX

At which point, the first elderly man who spoke stands up again. “I Kondha, representative of Numi Torum, thank you for your conversation and for your honesty. We believe we have relevant information that we can share, that should [unclear: 14:13] both of us, but before we do so, we must also let you know we received a visitor, soon after yourselves, not in itself an impossibility, but certainly a... though I may represent Numi Torum, I do not always assume coincidence, versus destiny - these things are more often guided by people”.

BEN

What?

HELEN

What did they look like?

ALEX

“They are as you, to a degree, they are orc’ish”.

HELEN

Oh...

ALEX

They claim to know yourself, Azu...

BRYN

Err... what...

ALEX

“Though we are normally so welcoming, we are hesitant to believe this is coincidence”.

HELEN

Did they give a name?

ALEX

They described themselves as a Chinua.

HELEN

Azu does exactly what I just did, and just covers like half her face with her hands.

ALEX

“They asked that they might speak with you, of utmost importance. We took a liberty of confirming no ill intent before we might make you aware, for fear that you were perhaps pursued by one who had caused your crash, something similar, we knew very little. Everything you have said, broadly agrees. We think it might be best that you meet this person, before we continue our discussions”.

BRYN

How is this relevant to the malady?

ALEX

“They claim that this meeting with Azu would be of the utmost importance with regards to the malady”.

HELEN

Oh no.

BEN

Oh... what if they've found us? Oh...

ALEX

“They claim that they came with answers that they might assist you, and provide assistance”.

HELEN

We can't trust this.

BRYN

Who is this person, Azu?

BEN

How did they get here? Did they just appear? Was there a weird man with them?

[Group laughter]

ALEX

Kondha looks at you for a moment and goes... “Yes, they were not seen to appear as such, but when they were first seen, there was a stranger with them, a cowled figure, who then disappeared”.

BEN

A weird shouting man... what a cowled...

HELEN

A cowled figure...

LYDIA

Cowled...

BEN

Yeah, yeah... I know what cowled means...

HELEN

Oh...

BRYN

Do we need to suggest quarantine protocols at this point?

BEN

Yep.

HELEN

Azu gets up and starts pacing up and down the room. She’s wringing her hands.

BEN

Right, OK. One thing then. We don't know how this malady is spread. We have literally no idea. All we know is that the symptoms usually appear after about seven days, so we can only trust this person, if after seven days they don't show any symptoms, and by the by the blue veins can manifest anywhere on the body... so... you know.

ALEX

"This Chinua claims that the veins, as you put them, would appear first beneath the eyelids within a day".

BEN

That's new. I look at Wilde.

ALEX

Wilde's like... "I mean... I've been out of the loop for a while. That could be true... I don't know that that's demonstrably not true".

BEN

But that's also a really good lie, if it isn't true.

ALEX

"Yes it is".

BEN

So no, we need to wait seven days and then we can trust them after seven days and that might be new intel but...

ALEX

Wilde sort of stands... "Have you... has this person been wondering freely? Have they met everyone in the town? Like... what happened here"? "No once, they were found, as they did not announce themselves, nor were they invited, they were kept aside, less they wish ill".

HELEN

You'll need to quarantine everyone who came in contact, I suppose. Oh... this will be my fault.

BRYN

Azu... who is this person?

HELEN

No, it's... my ex-fiancé man, my potter.

BEN

Azu, quickly, it's not your fault. Because we are here.

BRYN

No, of course not.

BEN

It is collectively...

BRYN

Yes.

HELEN

But he's...

ALEX

Khantu sort of stands, even though they're the first person to stand whilst someone else is standing, and just kind of looks meaningfully at Kondha who then settles down. But Khantu rattles it out. "I Khantu, representative of Kaltes... so with the greatest respect, do we need to take action immediately? Are we saying that we should absolutely ensure that this person does not leave, and that they are kept where they are, and that anyone who has been with them, is themselves isolated"?

BEN/HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

“I would formally request that this Council be stopped, so that we can take such action, and then reconvene”. The rest of the Council take a moment, slowly raise their hands, Sohra obviously a little bit quicker. Khantu looks to all of you, gives us a slight head bow... “I thank you and beg your forgiveness”, and then just sprints out of the [unclear: 18:59] and just legs it.

[Group laughter]

HELEN

Oh no...

ALEX

Shoshva pipes up - this is the elder woman... “You will forgive of course, Khantu’s vigour... it has its place in important matters”.

BRYN

Probably right to do so, to be honest...

HELEN

Yes...

ALEX

“Though it is not normal, we would be happy to continue to discuss with you whilst Khantu makes arrangements”?

HELEN

I don’t know if we can, because... we don’t know who... people who met Chinua, if they then spoke to other people, and then, they spoke to other people... we could all... oh... Azu sits down hard on the floor.

BEN

Yeah, you’re right, but it’s unlikely. Look, maybe if we act now, we act soon enough, and if we didn’t then, whatever. There’s nothing we can do about it. So, let’s just do what we can, and see how it works.

ALEX

“Is it possible that you yourselves could be carrying the malady”?

BEN

It’s as possible as you lot now... not from external sources... no we’ve been basically quarantined for like... I don’t know, weeks - months...

BRYN

Over three weeks now, since we took off. Yes, on some level, if people are travelling in groups, you have to... Hamid will spend a little time explaining the protocols that they’ve been living under...

ALEX

Sure.

BRYN

... as best he can, given that he hasn’t lived under them that long. But just... to make sure that you know...

ALEX

Yeah... yeah...

BRYN

... the information, without going into real detail.

ALEX

Shoshva takes a moment, and looks to Sumutnyerl and sort of gives a small gesture, then sits. Sumutnyerl sits and seems very, very deep in thought. This is the one with the shock of white hair. She seems very very deep in thought, considering for a long time. Eventually she stands and looks at all of you... “As we are not in formal Council, you will forgive my informality - ha”...

BRYN

Of course...

ALEX

“What you describe as a malady, is known to us, in some way so... not as a malady”...

BEN

What?

HELEN

Err... Azu shoots up again... What do you mean?

ALEX

“It is hard to explain... it does not behave in the manner to which you describe. But your description of the blue veins, of the... the behaving of one, it... it seems to my eye at least”... she looks to the rest of the Council who sort of give her a mild nod... “it seems to be a... some kind of corruption of the Garden of Yerlik”.

HELEN

What’s the Garden of Yerlik?

ALEX

I’ve not heard of it behaving in this way, but certain similarities cannot be denied.

BEN

I describe the seed that we’re going to Svalbard to investigate. Does that mean anything to you?

ALEX

“Oh yes”.

BRYN

I get the seed out...

[Laughter]

BEN

Oh yeah, we’ve got it. Forget about that...

ALEX

They look at it. “How did you come by this?”

BEN

Yeah, well...

BRYN

That’s a long story. Umm...

ALEX

“May I hold it?”

BRYN

I suppose so...

BEN

You’d probably make more use of it than we can.

ALEX

She holds out her hand, which has a slight tremor to it, but she holds it out to take the seed from you, if you offer it.

BEN

Yeah...

ALEX

She holds it in one hand and closes her eye for a moment. Seems to mutter something and then strokes her finger down it, from one end to the other. Any small blue bloom takes shape at the tip end of it.

BRYN

Umm... err... should we be worried about that?!

ALEX

She strokes her finger in the opposite direction and the bloom recedes back into the seed. “This is a Yerlik seed, yes”.

BEN

Great. Alright. So basically, probably what’s happened is, they took this thing, whatever it is, and changed it, manipulated it, to turn it into something that will...

ALEX

“How long ago?”. This is the first time they have interrupted, “how long ago did they make this change?”.

BEN

How long ago is... how long is the campaign Alex, I haven’t got a clue now...

[Laughter]

BRYN

A little under two years, technically, in game time.

ALEX

Yeah, about that.

BRYN

It’s time to take a break. Why don’t we spend that break explaining the entire plot of the campaign to these people?...

[Group laughter]

ALEX

And welcome back. Sumutnyerl takes a moment, sits heavily, and then has another conversation with the rest of the council. Unfortunately you have very little insight into this conversation, because we do not have come to visually semaphoring every emotion passing through their face.

[Laughter]

ALEX

But the discussion takes a while. And by a while, I mean like... eventually Wilde... you know, starts up a side conversation effectively going... “This is new”.

BEN

Yep.

BRYN

Yeah...

ALEX

“I’ll tell you now, at the risk of overshare, this is not something anyone’s talking about”.

HELEN

But it explains why, it reminded me of a mushroom, when I saw... in [unclear: 23:40] thing... room... like a plant...

BEN

Yeah. And it explains how it can get round... well... your supposed immunity.

ALEX

Wilde, seems to have an almost inappropriate smile. I’d say everyone gives me sense motives...

EVERYONE

Yey...

BRYN

[unclear: 24:00] motive.

ALEX

Look at me, remembering the system we’re playing!

BEN

Right, I'm actually good at this I think.

HELEN

19.

BRYN

13.

LYDIA

11.

ALEX

Zolf...

BEN

17

ALEX

... is going to get a bonus to this.

BEN

Oh... OK. 17 + whatever...

LYDIA

Because your hearts are in tune...

[laughter]

ALEX

In which case then, I'd say Azu and Zolf actually.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

It would be easy to misread this, and I would say that to Cel and Hamid, this is certainly a first takeaway, it would be easy to receive this as quite poorly... this is someone smiling at... although a revelation, pretty big news, or whatever, for both Azu, from just a place of perceptiveness, and Zolf, from a place of familiarity, Zolf, especially, you just know this. This will be the first real breakthrough Wilde has had in a long time. Shoin was clean up, Shoin was chasing a dead lead. This is the first real lead that you've had that's like new information, completely hot off the press, in like two... well in like a year and a half. This is Wilde effectively just being like... I was right.

BEN

This is potentially a lifeline now...

HELEN

I'm back on...

ALEX

Exactly... this is like "mad... they said I was mad to chase across the World! Who's mad now!!"

[Laughter]

ALEX

But yeah, Wilde's like... "this... we can't pass this. If we were travelling to Svalbard to find out what the seed is, and we found the source of the seed, that's got to be a break, right"?

BRYN

It seems that way.

HELEN

We'll need to find out what it does and...

BEN

Yeah... Depends what the information we get about it is.

BRYN

Yeah...

BEN

But at least it's information.

BRYN

And why Chinua's here too.

HELEN

Oh... I don't want to think about him.

BEN

I'm hoping Einstein, but it might be the cult.

ALEX

We don't have enough information either way.

BRYN

I give Azu a big hug.

HELEN

Ah... Azu's going to return the hug, obviously.

LYDIA

Azu, is your... like... is... I mean I don't want to be tactless... but is your ex possibly chasing you, because you are their ex? Or is it?

ALEX

"Are they out to get you"?

LYDIA

Yeah...

HELEN

No.

ALEX

“Are they gunning for you”?

HELEN

No. Our last... our last letters were quite friendly. Oh no, maybe... no... but he knows... he knows it's over... We just took... we took different directions... like I...

LYDIA

Clearly not

HELEN

Oh no...

BRYN

It's going to be OK, Azu.

HELEN

You can't know that.

BEN

Yep, but we're saying it aren't we. Come on. Like... yes... no...

LYDIA

Azu, whatever happens, you've got us. Right?

ALEX

“You don't know... it's bad. You fear it's bad, but you don't know it's bad”.

LYDIA

What he said...

ALEX

“All we know is that someone has turned up, that we didn't expect, and that thank... you know... the powers that be, that these people spotted um...

seemingly quickly... and decided to keep him aside. From what I'm hearing is, if their turning up was an inevitability, you know... it could have gone a lot worse".

HELEN

But he shouldn't be involved in this. He should be... in his little house, making little vases.

ALEX

I don't think you get to decide, what he should... or they... Is it a he...

HELEN

He...

ALEX

"He? I don't think you get to decide what he should be doing if... you know..."

BEN

Bearing in mind, that like... most of your European refugees went south...

HELEN

Oh.

ALEX

"Realistically, there's no way that your... I'm sorry to say there's no way that your village don't know what's happening by this point".

HELEN

Oh...

ALEX

"They may not be... you know... heavily effected... but they'll know..."

BRYN

It's a conflict that affects the whole World. A sort of... a war of the whole World...

LYDIA

Cel sticks up their hand and is like... we keep to forgetting that there are several continents that... that, as far as I know, have not yet been encompassed... so yes, yes...

BEN

Not yet...

LYDIA

... eventually... encompassed the whole world, but like... but the World is extremely large.

ALEX

“No, that’s a fair point. Cel, you’ve been in the Americas and that. Have you heard of any of this Yerlik stuff?”

LYDIA

No, and it’s probably.... I may be a lot less helpful than maybe appears. I mostly was involved with my father’s people, who was actually English... and with a lot of things that happened, wasn’t... err... a lot of the final few years that I was there, I was travelling somewhat. So if there had been... if this is deep magical knowledge, I wouldn’t necessarily have gained that while I was growing up, because that was not what our town was really focused on. But also when I left there, when it wasn’t... I mean... Cel is babbling slightly... and then after that I was travelling on the ship, umm... and then I...

ALEX

Barnes puts his hand on Cel’s shoulder. “It’s fine. It’s OK not to know”.

LYDIA

Yeah... I’m... I’m sorry... I could have researched more, but it’s not really my area of... expertise... umm...

HELEN

That’s alright. It’s OK.

ALEX

“That’s why we were going to Svalbard, can’t be an expert in everything”.

LYDIA

Well, I'm working on it.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

“You can't be an expert on everything, yet”. At which point, Sumutnyerl stands again. “We offer you an invitation, we would never normally offer, that we might share our knowledge, to deal with this malady you... you... describe, and at the same time, better understand the sickness within the Garden of Yerlik”.

BEN

Thank you.

ALEX

“If you are willing, we would bring you on a journey to the garden, that you might see and also understand...”

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

“That we can talk in this way”.

BEN

Yes, please, yes.

BRYN

It will help us in our quest. We would be honoured and grateful.

ALEX

“With Sohra's permission” ... Sohra gives a nod... “I would ask that you... we could not take all of you”.

BEN

How many?

ALEX

“The journey is less than a day by flight. We could take four perhaps five of you”.

LYDIA

I can fly myself, if it’s only for... you know for an hour, and then I need an hour break, and then... and then another hour, and then...

ALEX

“A generous gift, but the journey is... is... though less than a day, longer than this. We would ask you to pick four, perhaps five people, to make the journey with us, that we might show you”.

BEN

Easy enough. Us four... I point at... at the PCs and [unclear: 30:28]...

[Laughter]

ALEX

“Thank you”... If you’d have sat there and gone... right... right... Barnes, thingy... blah... blah...

LYDIA

Well it should have actually have been Wilde, and Earhart, Carter and Barnes and Zolf. Those have been the ones that have been fighting together for... yeah...

ALEX

Please don’t do that to me... please don’t...

BEN

[unclear: 30:42] Earhart actually...

ALEX

Please don’t do that to me.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

At some point, this campaign is just going to deteriorate to me sat in a soundproof room, talking to myself, and recording it...

LYDIA

Like Magnus does... yeah...

ALEX

I don't want to do that... I already do that.

BRYN

We're back to the PCs and our handler.

ALEX

Oh thank God. Thank you, thank you for saving me from myself. "Very well, given the... the pressing nature of this, we would ask if you can ready yourselves... I will be setting off immediately".

BEN

Sorry - yes. Azu, are you OK with this? I don't know with...

HELEN

Err... yes.

BEN

OK. Right.

HELEN

Just a moment... and I'm just going to go and say goodbye to Kiko and try to... I mean I assume Kiko has heard all of this so...

ALEX

Of course... of course. Kiko is deliberately doing what Kiko does, which is staying quiet to get a better lay of the land, because this is a group of people, who like to talk a lot, so listening is a very valuable skill to have.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

Kiko is there and just says... “It’s fine. You’ve got this. Where am I going to go”.

HELEN

But I’m going.

ALEX

“You’re fine. Look at you. You’re the biggest badass I ever met”.

[Laughter]

ALEX

“And I grew up on stories of her” pointing to Earhart.

BRYN

Helen’s face is constantly so adorable...

[Laughter]

BRYN

I wish our listeners could see what we get to see...

[Laughter]

ALEX

“Just while I have you though, do I need to worry about this Chinua person?”

HELEN

No, no, we’re just friends now. We were going to be married, once, but not anymore. Obviously... but I’ll try not to... fall out of the... oh... well take care of everyone...

ALEX

“yeah of course”...

HELEN

‘Cause, you also have a badass.

[Laughter]

LYDIA

There’s a bomb and that bomb is deadass!

[Laughter]

ALEX

Kiko raises an eyebrow and gives you a quick kiss, and then basically shoves you... to like... “go on, get on with you”.

HELEN

OK. Bye, bye...

BEN

Which I assume mainly consists of her, shoving herself back on Azu...

[Laughter]

BRYN

Hamid would like to have a very quick chat with Skraak.

ALEX

Yep.

BRYN

Skraak, I mean between the two of us, we probably weigh about the same as a... other person. If you want to come with us, I might be able to ask but... I don’t know how much this quest means to you? And I know you said you’re here to gather information from your people. It seems to me that you could have a pretty good opportunity to learn from our hosts. What do you think?

ALEX

“I’d normally send one of the others, but err... you know” [sound effect]... out come the wings...

BRYN

Yeah...

ALEX

“It might make a bit more sense to go myself... yeah... if you’d ask. No you know what, I’ll ask. I want to go as well.” Sumutnyerl takes a moment.

BRYN

I’ll repeat my point from just now to our host... which is... I mean the two of us together would not... you know... if it’s... five people, we’re depending on the calculation as it were...

ALEX

“I’m not as young as I once was, but... you are not sizable. This should be fine.”

[Laughter]

ALEX

“In which case, if we are agreed, if you can ready yourself for a day’s journey, you will not be... you will be cold... very cold”.

BRYN

Yep. Well, I mean I can take care of that.

HELEN

Oh yes.

BEN

Oh, I completely forgot.

[Laughter]

BEN

Oh...

HELEN

OK, who wants to cast endure elements on us all?

[Laughter]

BRYN

I mean I don't have to prepare spells, so I can just do it, without having to worry about...

ALEX

"You will forgive me, if I ask for some privacy, whilst I make my own preparations..."

BRYN

Of course.

ALEX

I'm assuming that everyone heads out of the... the conical build and off the bears gently vibrating back and back up onto the foundations of the town.

BEN/HELEN

Yeah.

BEN

Also, I'm going to be saying that Zolf canonically forgot to re-prepare spells. Because I can't be arsed, and I'll do it later.

[Laughter].

BEN

I've got like 20 spells I need to reselect every day.

ALEX

I can't hear you over an entire city full of people...

[Group Laughter]

BRYN

I will cast endure elements, six times.

LYDIA

You don't need to do it on Cel, because they can do it on themselves.

BRYN

I will cast endure elements five times.

LYDIA

Yeah, because basically their spells only work for them, so they might as well use up...

BRYN

Yep, yep.

HELEN

Yeah... Azu can cast endure elements on herself as well, but she'll let Hamid do it.

ALEX

You have the time to make whatever preparations that you desire for the journey. I'm assuming endure elements straight out the gates. Is there any further long term spell casting you would like to do prior to your journey?

HELEN

No.

ALEX

OK. In which case then, after a little period of time, out step both Sohra and some Sumutnyerl. Sohra seems very much... no, there's no like determined regalia where there's like, you know... there's no strips or colouring or differences really. Sohra very much seems to be a step behind Sumutnyerl at all times. And that Sumutnyerl starts to speak... "Myself and Sohra will be transporting you. To make this distance, it is going to be easier to do so as an... well as eagles! We would ask one last thing of you, before we depart, which is that what we are to share with you, is not to be shared with others. You may

share it with your crew, given the situation, but we would ask a level of secrecy as this... the place where the resurrections was not hallowed, this is..."

BEN

Makes sense. The whole situation [unclear: 36:26] health is entirely because somebody couldn't keep a secret, so we understand the importance.

ALEX

"We thank you. Very well. Please step back and do not be alarmed". Basically, unsurprisingly, [sound effects] both Sohra and Sumutnyerl transform into full blown eagles of the very, very large variety. And Sumutnyerl is pure white. Think sort of like the whitest bits of snow eagle type deal, like, end to end. Sohra is as described before. They then, very very carefully settle themselves, and basically lay themselves out in such a way that they're kind of gesturing with a claw, which is... I'm just going to have to say it... you're going to get picked up with claws... like this is how this is going to happen.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

They're being very careful about it, but it's not like a sack is brought... they're just like... you know... claws come on...

[Group laughter]

ALEX

I'm assuming that everyone just is OK with this?

ALEX/LYDIA

Yeah...

BEN

We'll make it work.

ALEX

Sure. In which case then, [sound effect] you're immediately lifted straight off from the open area the conical structure is within. And for the first time really,

even including the crane, you didn't get that elevation. As you leap up into the sky, you get your first proper view of where you've been. Which is, as your vertical distance increases, and you pull away from... well the bear, firstly you see the town stretching out, as a very, very, you know dense, overlapping layered structure. But it becomes very clear to you that you can see that there is a slight curvature to the town. And with that curvature, there are large... the best way to describe it, is again, sort of crane... think like freight transport type things, in the corners and the edges, and enormous/massive pulley systems of huge threaded rope, and it looks like, effectively this large curved foundation is genuinely sat upon the back of the largest, absolutely largest bear you can imagine, in terms of scale, it already starts to break your sense of scale. Like, you stop being able to see people in the town, as you start being able to see the whole creature. It is walking... very slowly and very carefully picking itself along the ground. It turns its head really slowly, and then turns itself back. The best description is, it doesn't appear to just be a large creature, it seems to genuinely be moving very slowly for a larger creature. It seems quite older as well. There's the sense of age there, you know there's a certain grizzling to the snout and so on... but the town itself, once you've taken into the full scale, this really isn't a huge wait on the back of it. Like the bear is massive, and there is a comparatively smaller space upon its back, which is the town proper. There appears to be towards the front of the town, closer towards the neck... the sort of nape of the bear, where there's a big shaggy fur, there appears to be almost like a gatehouse, with a long bridge leading over the neck, to a smaller gatehouse towards the skull of the bear, and... everyone give me a perception check?

BRYN

Oh... 22.

HELEN

17.

BEN

29.

LYDIA

31.

ALEX

Cel and Zolf only. As you're looking, at first it appears to be an optical illusion, you get the distinct sense that there has always been a small amount of... you know... borealis towards the edges, maybe. I don't mean a thick wall, but you know there's always been elements of it. It is clear to your eye, though it takes a little moment for you to first notice it, that it is being drawn towards the bear, ever so slightly. And I don't mean, think if you were to take a big like cotton... not cottonwool... a large candyfloss, and you were to take out a single strand, and it sort of makes that long thin, it seems to be being drawn in towards the... towards the bear... and that weather pattern that you were seeing, Hamid, earlier... sorry Azu... earlier... is a lot more apparent.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

There is a weird dead zone around this enormous creature, that effectively seems to be some kind of localised weather. Some kind of localised effect. However, as you start flying, you start leaving this area of localised... yeah... localised weather, and the first thing that you start to notice, is the eagle's flight where at first it was straight, starts to take these dips and these sweeps and these dives, and you all start to realise that what they're doing is they're getting ahead of curls of borealis and things like that, where they're deliberately picking and plotting a route, to navigate around it. To be clear, it doesn't seem like they are just beelining in one direction, it really does seem to be that they are picking a route. And it is very obvious that there is a reason that this is a day's journey. It's not because it's a day away, it's because you're having to do a certain amount of like doubling back and so on. The fact that they can fly with wing beats instead of a vehicle, you would not be able to replicate this journey in an airship... Like that... Cel, to your eye, no one could. There's a material limitation here. You can't get that kind of manoeuvrability and you would have just been ploughing through banks of borealis, which is what got you in this mess, to a degree in the first place.

LYDIA

I think Cel would also realise that they would not be able to fly this well... like...

ALEX

Oh yeah...

LYDIA

Like... proper beast mode... like... lovely big bat wings and [unclear: 42:03]... yep... they are... not as skilled as these life-long eagle fliers....

ALEX

They do seem to be heading broadly south again, rather than north. However, they seem to be heading towards the southwest. There are moments where like there's a gentle like movement in the claws, where they may be shuffling you all around a bit, make things a bit more comfy, or make things a bit easier and so on. But it's almost hypnotic. It's just that constant... [sound effect] of the slow wing beat. And again... and yeah... the land just unrolls underneath you. It's very clear that you're heading towards a more mountainous region, from where you were. From this vantage point, it's clear that you must have landed comparatively near to some... basically foothills. And that you are heading straight into the most mountainous region that it can get to. The days wears on and the day wears on. We pass midday with them still flying along and just... slowly beating on. Eventually you manage to pass through the sort of borealis that was kicking around. Whether that's broadly true or not, you're passed whatever need they had for swerving around. And it does settle down into something a lot more rhythmic. Finally, I would say, as the afternoon wears on, you're not facing sunset yet, but it's certainly apparent that you are going to be arriving and there when it's getting dark. The mountains have been growing steeper, they've been going more precipitous, they've been growing increasingly weather beaten and weather worn, craggy. If any of you know what I mean by like... ice age geography, sharp... sharp... rocks... thick chunky bits that have fallen off. Shear cliffs...

HELEN

Massive allies...

ALEX

Yeah... this is a landscape that has been chewed by the movement of continents and the movements of time...

HELEN

Yeah...

ALEX

And the weather itself around you is getting significantly more like blustery. A lot more flurries of snow and so on. And then as you can progress, you notice a spec of pure blue, just beyond an upcoming peak... and as you draw nearer that blue, this isn't the blue of ice, we're talking like a... like an aqua marine blue. Vivid, [unclear: 44:11]... it is clearly not clearly not of the mountain. It is something upon it. And as the eagles' swing round this nearest mountain, you're exposed to... I've forgotten the word for it. Not a caldera, it is the one where you have a natural valley, but between multiple peaks, so its not a trough valley, it's more like a bowl. I don't know how to describe it, I've forgotten the word...

LYDIA

No idea mate. Bowl valley... [unclear: 44:35].

ALEX

I always know from hiking as cauldrons, it's like you hike around this cauldron, cauldron or whatever. Basically a large bowl valley, let's call it, is absolutely full of large, bright blue flowering trees and by large at first you're like... oh we're nearer than we thought... Oh no, these are massive. These are enormous trees... and that lurid blue, seems to be the blue of some petals, which are... coming lose from the trees themselves, and are sweeping out, across the mountainside and being basically sprayed up almost one mountainside, where the wind is blowing them into the... the snow, where they are being held. The eagles come lower, and start coming in slower, and finally they... you know... a rapid increase of wing beats and they settle upon a sharp cliff, overlooking this large... not orchard... I've forgotten... wood basically!... this large flowering wood. The plants do not look like they belong here. These are flowering plants that look like they belong in some temperate climate, a thousand miles south of here. But they are all over the cauldron and they are in full bloom, but as look, as you notice, you see that there is a portion of dead plants, towards the centre of this area, and it is not a perfect circle, or anything like that. it is not that something has landed, there appears to be a spreading sickness with the plants, that is originating in the centre. Behind you Sumutnyerl and Sohra transform back and then Sumutnyerl steps forward and goes... this malady that you see is what began at the times that you say you

first became aware of your malady and this is the Garden of Yerlik. This is the garden where one can follow the path from life to death and back. And I'm going to end the episode there.

LYDIA

Wow.... [laughter]

HELEN

Oh my god...

BRYN

We're all sitting here, open mouthed... we're like... WHAT!

LYDIA

Yeah... yeah... like... how do you react

ALEX

People keep saying they want law... they don't...

BRYN

No... this is awesome... this is awesome...

ALEX

This is... to my eye, this is all perfectly transparent... all the mysteries are solved. I could basically end the campaign here because it's just a clear straight run...

BRYN

Alex, Alex, Alex, Alex, Alex... The name of the campaign is erasing the line...

LYDIA

Yep.

BRYN

Is that the line, between life and death?

ALEX

Bryn, if you for a moment think... I would link myself to...

BRYN

There's only a single reason...

ALEX

To merely want...

BRYN

Yeah...

ALEX

Interpretation of a title...

[Laughter]

ALEX

Goodness...

BRYN

Fair...

ALEX

Come on man...

BEN

It's a proper high fantasy here...

ALEX

Yeah, it's been ages. I've been building to it for ages. I had to get you to the edge of the world, but there you go... ha! I knew we could do it...

BRYN

How long do we have to wait for our next recording? I want to know what happens... I want to know more, Alex...

LYDIA

Good lord...

BRYN

... I need more law...

ALEX

Err... tough... you can wait a couple of months, like everyone else...

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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