

RQG – 185 – Silent Silver

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 184 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 somehow still managing to play despite everything I do to you?

BEN

Zolf “Still Got Loads Hit Points” Smith

BRYN

Hamid “Actually Quite Hurt A Little Bit Badly In A Sense” Saleh Haroun al - Tahan

LYDIA

Cel “Actually Better Than Usual Because I Beast Morphed Into A Massive Bat Thing With A Big Wolfy Snout And Teeth And Claws So I Got Tons Of Hit Points Now” Sidebottom

(laughing)

ALEX

And?

LYDIA

Rar! In fact that’s a valid, valid playing of Cel’s -2...

ALEX

And...and...

LYDIA

...even more charisma. So...

ALEX

This is why we keep Cel out of our discussions. And...

HELEN

And Azu “F*** You Alex”

(laughing)

ALEX

Fine. Fine. You’re on my list Helen. Lydia’s still my favourite for failing a check at some point. Only one but you’re on my list now. Fine, alright.

HELEN

Fine!

BRYN

Do we do a clean take or are we just going to go with the bleep thing.

ALEX

No, no. We're committing to this. This is our in. Fine. Right. We all good to pick up then after Helen's horrendous, just visceral in.

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Ok. So, fine, yes. Lines in the sand are drawn.

(laughing)

Me and all my monsters are on one side and you are all on the other. Bryn's a little bit closer to my side by virtue of allowing himself to get hit, like, 12 times.

BEN

Hey I got hit. Just not very well.

BRYN

I tried. I was super invisible but apparently that didn't matter.

ALEX

Bryn, no but that's why because you went invisible and thus I got to use their see invisibility thing. I'm really happy. You at least engaged. That's fine. The rest of you are...you know first warning, alright.

LYDIA

Hey, Cel is shaken but not affected by it.

ALEX

But these CRs are so high! At some point I'll reveal...like I'll go back and look over the audio and be like what was the CR for that, ah, 47.

BRYN

All I hear is this is so much tasty XP!

HELEN

Ooh!

ALEX

Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Bryn was like I wanna hit a certain level. Alright.

(laughing)

There are quick ways of doing that. I mean I'm just saying if the airship had crashed and you'd lost everyone I might've given you some XP for that but it's fine this way too. That's fine too.

HELEN

Oh god.

ALEX

Ok, so we are going to be picking up where we left off which is technically we are still in initiative because there are still two planty creatures and Sumutnyerl, in dire polar bear form, is also in dire straits by virtue of having failed a save and getting silver plant to the face. With that in mind then I am going to pick up where we left off which wasn't actually at the top of initiative order. It was Sumutnyerl next. So the first thing that Sumutnyerl does is make another save.

HELEN

Ooh

LYDIA

Such thrills.

HELEN

Good luck.

ALEX

Ok makes that one at least.

HELEN

Good.

ALEX

Then, basically, just immediately attacks the thing that went [puffing noise] in her face

HELEN

Oh excellent.

BEN

Fair

ALEX

Makes sense. She does have to move out of the immediate group in order to do it because it was a little bit further out but that's fine. Dead easy to do in which case she will...she has rolled horrendously. Misses. You get the impression that she is missing by virtue of some kind of effect is happening on her. She's moving slower. She's a little bit clumsier than she was before but again she is a bear so you haven't got a lot of frame of reference here but it is obvious. It's not subtle. It's like, ok, something is affecting you. At which point then Azu you are up. There are two visible plant dealies but there's bells everywhere.

HELEN

Ok. I'm going to attack the plant nearest to me.

ALEX

Yep that's fine. You'll have to move towards it so you can't do the full attack thing but that's fine.

HELEN

That's fine, yeah.

BEN

Helen you were gonna heal Hamid!

ALEX

Nah! Hamid's fine!

HELEN

Oooh. Oh no. Plant or Hamid?

ALEX

You can't see how messed up Hamid is so it's fine.

LYDIA

He is invisible.

BEN

Oh that's true.

ALEX

Presumably Hamid's absolutely fine.

HELEN

I can't...Hamid has your invisibility...is your invisibility still on?

BRYN

Oh yeah.

HELEN

Then I can't see him to heal him so I'm gonna have to kill the plant.

ALEX

I'm gonna do this. Wahh, wah, you have to walk in my way and get healed.

BEN

Your own fault.

(laughing)

HELEN

After the plants are dead, I'll do a channel positive energy and hopefully that will hit Hamid at some point. Anyway, so that's just the one attack after I've moved to the plant, yes?

ALEX

Yes

HELEN

Ok. So that'll be D20 +16. Ok. That is 28.

ALEX

That's a hit. It's a really good hit as well.

HELEN

Ok. This is what I want. I want to roll above 25 at all times.

ALEX

So do I Helen but here we are!

HELEN

Alright and then that'll be 2 D12 +6 then. That's a 14.

ALEX

So yeah this creature you take a big old swing at it and it manages to sort of move slightly out the way so you only clip it but you still do huge amounts of damage to it. A couple more hits like that and you get rid of all of them.

HELEN

Alright good.

ALEX

At which point then Skraak's turn.

BRYN

Skraak moves up to the same one to flank it.

ALEX

That's easy to do. That's fine. And would be able to do so if you used the entire move action without provoking attack of opportunity by basically just going around the houses a little bit.

BRYN

Yeah, yeah. 23 on the attack roll. Oh no, 25.

ALEX

It's a hit.

HELEN

I love it when you do that Bryn

BRYN

Once again forgetting bonuses. Sneak attack is activated. Only 18 damage.

ALEX

That was the one that's just been hit yeah?

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Skraak manages to just basically lop the head off. Like as the flowerhead of it. It drops to the ground and it sort of shrivels slightly and then petrifies into what looks like solid metal. And then the strand that came from it you can see it petrifying back along that tendril.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

At which point then Hamid you're up.

BRYN

Hamid casts magic missile on the other one.

BEN

A classic.

HELEN

Yeah!

BRYN

Classic for a reason.

HELEN

Old reliable.

ALEX

Yeah

BRYN

18 damage.

ALEX

Yep similar to the damage that Azu did, it's just like crunch. Another one of them and you'll be fine.

BRYN

Pew, pew, pew, pew, pew.

ALEX

Technically it might seem like we can just wrap this up. I can't. You'll see why.

HELEN

Understood.

ALEX

Zolf, you're up.

BEN

So I am going to use calming touch on Cel. 1 D6 +9 points of non-lethal damage which I think is irrelevant but you are no longer fatigued, shaken or sickened.

ALEX

Ok cool. So you're not...your shaken is no longer suppressed. It's literally gone.

BEN

It's just gone, yeah.

ALEX

Yeah very sensible.

BEN

And then I will move up to the other plant so that it is 10 foot away from me. So basically I'm moving up to threaten it.

ALEX

Yep understood that's fine.

BEN

And that's my go.

ALEX

Ok at which point then Cel you're up.

LYDIA

Hmmm. I'm going to shoot the crossbow at the plant. They're not in melee so
8 plus the whole 3. 20.

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ALEX

Hit.

LYDIA

20, yeah. Another 20.

ALEX

Two hits.

LYDIA

Cool. So then I do 1 D10 + 1 D6 electric.

BRYN

You're still getting the Wilde bonus.

ALEX

Oh Wilde's still there going [singing], jazz hands. Battle jazz hands.

LYDIA

11 for the first and...that's a 1 and a 2 + 3. So 6.

ALEX

That's enough

LYDIA

Does that kill it?

ALEX

It kills it, yeah.

LYDIA

Very glad I saved my bombs then because that...

BRYN

Would've been overkill.

ALEX

Would've been gross overkill.

BRYN

That's why I used magic missile for the same reason.

ALEX

You take out the second one. I can't drop out of initiative but what I can do is do a little bit of metagame so that we don't just waste a bunch of time. I can't drop out of initiative because there is an ongoing effect on Sumutnyerl, not because I need you all to keep doing perception checks over and over and over again. It's because there is an ongoing affect. I rarely do ongoing status illnesses which is why I'm explicitly flagging it because otherwise you're gonna

misread this as, you know, I guess Sumutnyerl's just gonna die because we've got to be ready for whatever this initiative's for. You know what I mean.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

So I'm going to stick in initiative because I have to but I'm going to rattle through it a lot quicker now. Well done on taking out the plants though because that could've been a worsening situation. I'm glad you did that. So Skraak is technically up.

BRYN

Skraak don't do anything to help Sumutnyerl directly so he will take up a ready position and scan for new threats but we already know that there aren't any immediately.

ALEX

In which case then it is now Sumutnyerl's turn.

BRYN

Are you inserting Skraak into the initiative order twice?

ALEX

Yes that was a test! It isn't Skraak's turn. It's just Sumutnyerl's. Ha, ha.

BRYN

Hamid let Skraak just do it...do things twice in previous...

ALEX

Skraak is an ambitious kobold on the up and up. Who am I to drag him down!
You're fine, it won't really have broken it that much.

HELEN

Yeah I think it's ok.

ALEX

I'm not too worried. You're right though that Skraak actively is now after Azu in initiative so it is Sumutnyerl. Sumutnyerl is clearly struggling to breathe and gives a [grumbling noise] and is stumbling down a little bit and is shaking more. Also you can see the silvery colouring seems to be spreading from where it hit further out across the face. Like actively moving out across the face.

LYDIA

So this looks like a polar bear in Mad Max Fury Road

(laughing)

ALEX

Could everyone please give me, who can, a knowledge nature.

LYDIA

28

ALEX

28 in knowledge nature is useful. Thank you.

BEN

Oh would you allow a heal check?

ALEX

Yes I would allow a heal check. Not to cure but to find out what's going to be clear.

BEN

Ah no. 16.

HELEN

18

ALEX

Ok so in terms of the knowledge nature, you have come across stuff like this or vaguely similar types of plants in the Americas. This isn't the right climate for it but then again you are in a garden that is warmer than the surrounding area but it's...you wouldn't have expected to find it here. It is definitely some kind of ongoing poison. And for the healers, I will just say for free because I'm

feeling generous, this is possibly a magical poison or if it's not a magical poison it's generating an affect that you would normally see in a curse rather than via a poison which actually is going to make it more difficult to heal. This is something where you'd be like if it was a spell, you'd be like alright remove curse or whatever. But it's not a curse. It's a poison and you just know that. You can tell by the way it's behaving. It's not...it's not moving the right way and that kind of thing. But I would say then Azu you are up because Sumutnyerl's entire turn has just been spent feeling worse basically.

HELEN

Aw. Well I shall move to Sumutnyerl and lay on hands.

ALEX

Ok what does your lay on hands do specifically? It's been a little while since we've had to engage with the other stuff like the mercies and so on.

HELEN

My lay on hands heals 4 D6, harms undead and delivers mercies deceived, enfeebled and poisoned.

ALEX

Fabulous. So you do that and immediately the movement of that silver stops. It remains upon her face however and she sort of looks at you, in a way that polar bears can. A real sad polar bear face.

HELEN

Aw

BRYN

Aw! Not the sad polar bear.

ALEX

She looks exhausted as a bear. Not mechanically exhausted to be clear. She just looks like she's gone through the ringer very quickly...like really quickly and there's still powder across her snout and so on and she just lays down and just rests for a sec. I can now drop out of initiative. She still does not look well.

HELEN

Oh

BEN

I have a thingamy that may well...

ALEX

Yes I thought you might.

BEN

So I have liberty's blessing. Basically I can grant a willing creature a boon. The boon can, as a swift action, allows the creature as a swift action to make a saving against a single spell or affect its suffering from that grants a save. The

DC is equal to the original. If the saving throw is successful, the affect ends. I don't know if this is any different.

ALEX

Unfortunately that's not really....no. It's not really going to apply like that. What I would say is the initial healing check I got you to do was, you have an ongoing affect you need to stop ongoing. I will give you both the chance to do a fresh healing affect to now fix whatever is not worsening but there.

BEN

I will assist Azu.

ALEX

Yeah that's absolutely fine.

BEN

So I need to roll and see if I can give a bonus.

HELEN

Ok

BEN

I rolled a 17 which I think the DC is 15 on assists.

ALEX

Yep you've succeeded.

BEN

Azu gets +2. I'm helping.

HELEN

Ok. So do I lay on hands again?

ALEX

No, no. Just give me a heal check.

BEN

Because I don't think Sumutnyerl's actually taken any hit point damage.

ALEX

No. That's the weird thing here. Truth be told this combat came out very oddly.

BEN

Oh. I also just channelled positive energy because there are hurt people here and it's cheaper for me to channel than it is for Azu. So I'm gonna roll 5 D6 and tell you how many hit points you all get back.

BRYN

Yay!

HELEN

Ok. Also that was a 20 on the heal check.

ALEX

So I will give you a mechanical answer. Sumutnyerl appears to have taken basically a bunch of dex damage.

HELEN

Ah. Azu understands that.

ALEX

Yep. Azu is like I've played this game. A lot. Given that it was only active for a short space of time, 6 dex damage.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

That's not enough to paralyse her by any stretch but this is closer to Azu after the paralysis was wearing off back in Egypt. That's what you're dealing with. However for the heal check I would also say that is a secondary affect for this

poison. You think this is some kind of petrification affect that you've managed to stave off. If it was left to run its course...

LYDIA

Bear statute.

ALEX

Basically she'd have ended up paralysed, then petrified.

BRYN

That is a nasty poison.

ALEX

Yeah as a bear statue. So as a result you've managed to stave it off getting worse and you now know that there is dex damage however I'm going to have to be a bit meta in this in that it isn't just a...I can't use a normal heal check to fix that dex damage. I need magical rest basically.

BEN

So just FYI everybody get 22 hit points back.

BRYN

Yay!

HELEN

I never lost any in the first place!

LYDIA

Cel is 18 over their usual amount!

ALEX

This combat went so weird.

BEN

Yep, yep. Well I'm now back on full so that's great.

BRYN

Hamid is not quite back on full but he's doing fine.

LYDIA

Yay

ALEX

I need you to know if that first portal had held up longer, this would've gone very differently.

HELEN

I'm sure it would have young man!

BEN

That's why we used the big guns. That's why we used the big guns on the first portal. So if this is a petrification affect Zolf will say – I've got something that can help with the effects of the petrification. I don't know if I can reverse the petrification but I might be able to. I don't know.

HELEN

Well give it a go.

ALEX

You don't think the petrification has taken, to be clear. It's not like...

LYDIA

She doesn't have a stone nose.

ALEX

Yeah like it's not that Sumutnyerl now has a stone face. Doesn't quite work like that so you're not reversing petrification.

BEN

Ok

ALEX

You're dealing with a secondary affect. If the primary affect is petrification the lay on hands effectively stopped that by stopping the poison.

BEN

Oh ok, fine.

ALEX

You are now dealing with a secondary affect. It is worth spelling out because that means very different things.

BEN

Yeah I can get rid of it but I'll need some time to meditate again and we'll have to wait until the end of the day. So I dunno, Sumutnyerl can you deal with this for now? I mean I'll fix it as soon as I can but there's a limit on what I can do.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl looks up, gives a very, very sad look and then gives a nod.

BEN

Right, ok.

LYDIA

Poor bear

BRYN

Hamid is visible again.

HELEN

I have a question.

ALEX

Please

HELEN

How strong is the celestial mount?

ALEX

You...

HELEN

I'm wondering whether if Sumutnyerl cannot walk...

LYDIA

Bear on a camel!

HELEN

...I can put her on the camel

BEN

Also Sumutnyerl can turn back into a person.

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Oh yeah, ok good.

ALEX

Yeah I would say yeah, you're fine. Sumutnyerl sort of sits, but is not sat as opposed to just like flat out.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

And is kind of sat and hunched. Wilde stops support music as it were.

HELEN

What breath control.

LYDIA

He was providing a backing track!

ALEX

The ringing of the bells has lessened but is still sort of all around.

HELEN

Our guide has been hurt so maybe we should go.

BEN

Sumutnyerl can you not be a bear for a bit and we can have a conversation. Is that something you can do right now?

ALEX

Sumutnyerl turns, looks a moment, closes her eyes. Stands but in the process of standing starts to shift down and converts back to as she was. She starts wiping off the...it's almost like pollen off her face. This isn't my intent but I'm aware that it will have a certain Mad Max Witness Me vibe.

(laughing)

But yeah she's wiping it off. As a material it seems very reluctant to leave the face but she doesn't appear to have any permanent scarring or something.

This is all wrong. This is not what I would've expected but...

BRYN

Do you know what any of the things were? There were so many different...

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

No. They're not of this place. None of them. Even this is...

LYDIA

Those plants shouldn't...shouldn't really be in this environment and I don't even mean the like frozen waste environment. They shouldn't be in a temperate forest environment. That's a jungle thing.

HELEN

Maybe we caused this. Maybe it doesn't want us here.

ALEX

It's impossible to tell. We made a lot of noise.

BEN

What do you think we should do?

ALEX

Sumutnyerl takes a moment. My instinct would be to proceed though I am wearied, we've not even found the centre of the blight yet.

HELEN

Really?

ALEX

And better this journey is completed than abandoned.

BRYN

Doing everything again will only increase the risk.

ALEX

Indeed.

BEN

We're burning daylight.

ALEX

Indeed.

BRYN

We need to get out again before dusk.

ALEX

Wilde speaks up – I agree. At the risk of sounding callous, we came out of that almost fine.

BRYN

Yes thank you Zolf. I'm almost back to normal I think.

ALEX

I'd rather get something useful from this journey basically.

HELEN

Alright.

BEN

Well Sumutnyerl if you're willing to keep going we should keep going and we should do it now.

HELEN

If you can't walk I can get a camel and she'd be happy to carry you.

ALEX

I'm not familiar with what...I can walk.

HELEN

Are you sure?

ALEX

Yes I can walk.

HELEN

I just...you don't have to force yourself to.

ALEX

It is fine.

HELEN

Alright. Alright then.

ALEX

I will not slower. I will just be clumsy. In fact one moment. She kneels, tries to reach for soil but there's just bare earth under it. She sighs for a second. Stands back up, reaches into a pouch and pulls out some soil, rubs it between her hand, basically muttering some kind of incantation or something similar. There's a glow of green light coming from the dirt between her hands and then she rubs it across her face. Think more like a sand bath type deal and with it the silver pulls away and she adopts her...I was going to say stands up straight. She's still hunched over etc. but straighter, I guess.

HELEN

Yeah

BEN

A natural pose.

HELEN

Yeah I mean they're quite elderly aren't they.

ALEX

That's a good way of putting it. I am fine. It is a temporary affect. Difficult to remove oneself whilst it is still...the ringing concerns me.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

I think we should proceed but if we do I think we should proceed very carefully. One of these plants is not a problem. Even two is sensible but dealing with these at the same time, this is a problem.

BEN

Yeah, makes sense.

HELEN

Ok, alright.

ALEX

Beyond this point I have no more advice. I've never been able to proceed any further than here – she gestures at the swathes of ichore that are still coating the poisoned ground – for obvious reasons.

BRYN

Should we spread out a little bit or continue to stick closer together. You know there's benefits to both tactics.

HELEN

I think we should probably stick together so one of us doesn't get separated and blown up.

ALEX

I agree.

BRYN

We've still got to worry about the distractions and stuff I guess.

ALEX

This is still the Garden of Yerlik. Corrupted yes. But it is still the garden. To travel into the garden alone is to invite visitation and I do not believe we should necessarily be upon one another but certainly do not stray.

HELEN

Alright.

BEN

That's a good point. I've been tied to Wilde this entire time haven't I?

ALEX

Yeah you had enough rope so it's fine but you've been zipping around the place like a bungee cord.

BEN

Yeah, yeah

HELEN

I love that! Just dragging him around the battle map.

ALEX

You've kind of got him on a little kiddy leash

(laughing)

No wandering off. Oh ok.

BRYN

He was just moving in concert with you because you're so in sync.

HELEN

Aw

ALEX

I mean that's a far more elegant way of putting it. You know what, let's take this as a break. It feels like a natural breakpoint and then we can press on after the break.

And welcome back. So pressing onwards yeah?

LYDIA

Mm huh.

ALEX

Ok what I am going to ask then is, are people going just as a sort of loose bunch, are people going in single file? How do you want to do this?

BRYN

I would suggest a slightly looser bunch than previously personally. Like I might be 10 foot away from people rather than 5 foot away.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah that's fine. In that case then as you're advancing through can everyone please give me a perception check first and then we'll go from there.

LYDIA

Ok

BEN

27

LYDIA

29

HELEN

23

BRYN

21 for Hamid. 28 for Skraak.

ALEX

Ok so everyone, as you're moving forward, start to see the silver forms distant at the edge of vision in your direction, sort of hidden behind trees. Everyone also hears the distant bells and so on. For Zolf, Skraak and Cel you still have...you remember those portals were prefaced by just a sense of hostility.

BEN

Uh huh.

ALEX

You still have a lingering sense of hostility in the area but it doesn't seem to be so much following you as it is moving. It's hard to explain. Sometimes it feels like it's a little bit closer and sometimes it feels like it moves further away but it

does feel like...you know when you enter into a room and you could swear that there was someone in that exact spot, not that just oh I think someone's there. It's that kind of thing where it's like something doesn't like me over there but there's nothing there. But it is a nonphysical...like this isn't something you're hearing, this isn't something you're seeing. It is strictly spiritual perception on this one.

BEN

And also with its movement is this a single thing moving around or it's like it's here and it disappears and it reappears over there or like what's the...what's the feeling? I know it's abstract but...

ALEX

What was the highest perception?

BEN

29 was it from Cel?

ALEX

It's very hard to place. Cel thinks it's probably a thing moving around rather than a thing just popping around the place, do you know what I mean. It's quite difficult because there is a sense to the movement but you can't trace lines. It's not that consistent do you know what I mean. Interference is the best way to put it so it's almost like a spiritual concealment is at play a little bit.

LYDIA

Nice. Cel's going to...I've just checked and drinking their alchemical allocation dragon breath elixir, they can use it for an hour afterwards. So...

BRYN

Nice

ALEX

Good idea.

LYDIA

So they're just gonna swig that and spit it back into the jar. Nice.

ALEX

Nice

LYDIA

And just say something is moving around and it doesn't...it doesn't seem to like us very much. I'm not sure what...I mean Cel's currently on charisma -2.

ALEX

Wilde speaks up – could this be the thing...the portal thing?

LYDIA

It's the same kind of feeling isn't it. It's the same kind of feeling as something that doesn't want you there but I dunno, is that just my anxiety? I don't know. can you feel it?

ALEX

Yes

LYDIA

Ok that's useful. That's useful to know.

BEN

I can.

LYDIA

Yeah because...

ALEX

Because it's over there. Wilde just turns and points and you both have a vague sense it might be in that direction. Wilde's like it is there. Bang. He just seems to have a bead on it.

LYDIA

You seem to be a lot clearer on it. Do you have any idea...can you see a thing? Is there a thing that you can see there? Is there...

ALEX

I think I can hear it.

LYDIA

What's it saying or doing? Or singing?

ALEX

Wounded animal. I don't know how to explain it. It's not speaking.

BEN

Sumutnyerl is that something we should follow up?

ALEX

You ask questions of things that are beyond my knowledge. My instincts say the blight comes from a source, a centre. The centre has not moved. To guess, I would guess this is a symptom of the sickness and not the sickness itself.

BEN

Alright this is your garden.

ALEX

But this is a guess. If I knew these answers I would've solved this problem.

BEN

Fine it's a better guess than what we've got so we'll stick with going to the source.

ALEX

Could everyone please give me a stealth check. Bear with me there is a logic here which is very simple which is I'm assuming you are trying to avoid fights rather than invite them. This is not a stealth check to avoid the thing that you can't really avoid. This is more like you've got bell plants all over the place. Might be good to avoid them. So I'm just kind of wrapping all of that just in a stealth check rather than doing survival and this and that and blah, blah, blah.

LYDIA

16

BEN

16

ALEX

Ok

BRYN

22 for Hamid. Skraak rolled a natural 20 for a total of 37

LYDIA

Woo!

HELEN

12 minus, I don't know. Let's say 7. Let's say that I rolled a 7. Big, clanky...

BRYN

Clonk, clonk, clonk.

HELEN

...lady.

ALEX

Yeah so you're clonking along. It's clear to everyone else it's not possible for Azu to be quiet enough in a way to help. This is just a fact. There's too much stone. There's too much leaf litter. There's armour.

HELEN

There's too much metal. Too much pink.

ALEX

As you're moving your position is clearly being given away. This does not mean you're immediately under attack but it means that the ringing does not stop. It is still surrounding you and seems to be moving with you. There are a couple of moments where Sumutnyerl put up a hand to stop, will point out again, a

hanging vine or something and then gesture quietly to move around. She must have astonishingly good eyesight by the way. Like far better than she has any right to have. But she seems to be doing a decent enough job of navigating around but there is a lot of navigation around because you are effectively moving through a live minefield. There's a lot of circle, circle back or whatever but you are making clear and steady progress and as you do so it becomes clear that there are far more than two of those silver figures. You're starting to get the impression there is a crowd of silver figures if you can just get past this tree cover.

BEN

Are they moving?

ALEX

No.

BEN

Are we entering a Medusa's cave sort of situation?

ALEX

That's certainly the vibe you're getting.

BRYN

Mmm

HELEN

I was thinking of the Snow Queen or whoever it is from Narnia.

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Similar vibes where you're going along and it's becoming clear there are figures.

LYDIA

Are they all human sized and shaped?

ALEX

Everyone give me a perception check please

BEN

20

HELEN

Ooh 31

LYDIA

Mine is also 31

ALEX

Woah!

HELEN

I got a 20!

BEN

Nice!

HELEN

Yay!

BRYN

22 for Hamid. 20 for Skraak.

ALEX

Only Cel and Azu can spot this. In fact even Sumutnyerl, that's quite a high roll. Sumutnyerl's not sure. I don't think Wilde could. Nah. They're all dwarven.

HELEN

Ooh!

ALEX

In full battle armour it looks like to your eyes.

HELEN

Oh no! Svalbard's full of dwarves. Maybe they think...oh no! Oh no!

BRYN

Everything was fine until the dwarven nation attacked.

(laughing)

ALEX

That's exactly the vibe. The Medusa's cave kind of thing I'm going for where some of them are slumped on the ground, some of them are face down. Most of them seem to be in various forms of either fight or flight. But there's a crowd that it's becoming apparent...like a decent chunk. You can't see the edges of it because there's too many trees.

LYDIA

Cel's going to say all of that especially pointedly to Sumutnyerl so were there this many dwarves...dwarf statues before? Is it a tradition with your people to carve dwarves in battle poses or are these frozen people? Is that something that you...Cel's on a massive minus charisma thing. They just ramble.

ALEX

I do not like to guess but it...I would doubt that these are statues given our predicament.

BRYN

It seems like a force of dwarves attacked and maybe got caught by the flowers.

ALEX

Attacked what?

BEN

How would a force of dwarves attack without you lot knowing about it though?

BRYN

Yeah

LYDIA

A portal?

BEN

We've had portals yes but maybe they're been...we dunno.

LYDIA

Or a teleport in. That guy...the...the

HELEN

Yes we saw...

LYDIA

...the fleshy friend. Non friend. Said that...well he...that was a teleportation.

BEN

But that was an undead one. Look, yeah, fine but whatever it is, it doesn't matter. They're all dead. So let's keep going to the source.

ALEX

Well we have – this is Wilde – we have one advantage

LYDIA

We're not dead?

BEN

Yeah that's one.

ALEX

Well I at least think that we might have an edge in that we have a solid guess as to what caused it. That looks like petrification to me. We've run into it. At least we have a warning. I mean I don't know how it would happen but if they didn't know what they were dealing with think how much damage all of this could've done if we'd have run into 100 of them.

BEN

Yep

BRYN

Watch out for more of those vines.

ALEX

I think we're going to have to be very, very careful not to set them off.

BEN

I was thinking of not being very careful but now you've said that.

(laughing)

ALEX

I'm just thinking...thank you for that Zolf. I missed your sharp rapier with.

HELEN

It is good to have you back Wilde.

ALEX

It is, isn't it.

HELEN

Yeah

ALEX

Gosh I'm fabulous. But in all seriousness, Azu I'll be honest. That's a large crowd meaning there must be a large amount of these plants.

HELEN

Mm

ALEX

With the armour you're a bit of a liability and I mean that with the most care in the world.

HELEN

I'm not sure it's a good idea for me to take it off.

ALEX

So as far as I can tell and people correct me if I'm wrong, our options I can see are we either split so that we can get closer without...basically without running the risk of setting them off with your armour. We doff the armour which I don't think is something that's necessarily a good idea either or a third option that I haven't really arrived at.

LYDIA

Well I...is there anything that we can do to potentially make Azu less noticeable? I'm thinking Hamid was able to make himself invisible. I can make myself invisible. Unfortunately my potions tend not to work on other people.

BRYN

I can make invisible but it's mostly the sound.

HELEN

The sound. We need a muffling thing I suppose but I don't know if that's...I don't know. Maybe I should just...

BRYN

I think Azu should be with us and I think that that's part of the risk we're taking coming here.

BEN

Yeah we live or die together. We ain't leaving anyone behind.

HELEN

Thank you Zolf.

LYDIA

Or anyone's armour behind.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl speaks up – I have much like yourselves ways that can help but not such that would solve this problem.

BEN

Then we keep going.

ALEX

I concur.

HELEN

Alright. We'll just be alert then and I'll...I'll have my axe ready.

ALEX

I feel I must lead as your guide. Anyone who is able to help those who might get sprayed might need to be at the centre of the group so that they can help the ones at the edge.

BEN

Yep

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl starts moving on very slowly. Very cautiously.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

I am not going to require checks from people because basically you've managed to save Sumutnyerl who's doing a lot of the looking out for you but the going is painfully slow. I don't mean that you're burning hours and hours but I do mean that there's no straight line. You're having to curve quite widely out of your way and loop back and it's taking a long time. She resorts to picking up a rock and hocking it in a different direction. All of the survival tricks she has at her disposal, she is using to get you there but I am happy to just jump ahead to she succeeds.

HELEN

Ok

LYDIA

When you say a long time, how long?

ALEX

At least half an hour.

LYDIA

Ok half an hour is fine.

ALEX

Half an hour but to cover a couple of hundred feet. It's just awash.

LYDIA

I've just got several affects on that only last an hour or 90 minutes.

BRYN

Yep

ALEX

And it gets that dense that even with all of the, basically the camouflage that a plant hidden amongst plants has, it becomes very clear that this place has a decent awash of them. Eventually though you are drawing closer, you are drawing closer. This is...you're looking at a dwarven route. This is not a battle. This is people fleeing with some people trying to stand their ground whilst others flee. As you're approaching closer the ones that you're first seeing are the ones who are just mid flee effectively or flat on the ground where they fell. With a couple of people covering their backs and so on.

BEN

I am not really, as a person, hooked in to dwarven culture but given that I am a dwarf and had dwarven parents, is there anything that I can glean from the

way they look, the way they're dressed? I was not exactly a Merson, I spent most of my time in the navy and pirate ships.

ALEX

I can give you a bunch. I can give you a bunch and also a check might come in soon. Does anyone have knowledge history, Ben you're going to be getting a free info because of heritage stuff.

BEN

Ok

LYDIA

Cel's got quite a bit.

ALEX

Can I have anyone who has knowledge history first and then I'll give an additional sprinkling of personal information for Zolf.

LYDIA

29

BEN

Should I also roll knowledge history to supplement the personal information?

ALEX

Do you have knowledge history?

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

Oh right then yes please do. That'll make it easier.

BEN

It's not great but...

ALEX

Sorry I didn't know you had it. In which case then I can add you a bonus for your personal history.

BEN

I mean I rolled a 7 so...

(laughing)

ALEX

Ok cool. Cel I don't think you would've encountered the cultural markers that are on display here. There's insignia that you don't necessarily recognise. You

might've run into them as like an obscure trading partner kind of thing but you've not really had any direct contact.

LYDIA

The way that Cel has skill points I assume that they read lots of things and wherever they go, ask questions, notice things and study up.

ALEX

So that's what I'm leading to, is that you don't have any first hand personal experience with this however based on a couple of things to do with...things as simple as armour shaping. The fact that they're all wearing heavy, heavy furs. They seem to be wearing a lot of interior clothing as well. They don't look to be like they are set to run out. they're wearing house furs if you know what I mean by that. You know, if you're in a house that has no windows and it's cold but you're still interior. You have those big sort of, almost like a fur dressing gown and so on. Some of them are in armour. Most of them are in interior clothing. The ones who are in interior clothing are more often the ones who seem to mid flee. Zolf, you are aware that there is a....you already know this obviously that Svalbard has a heavy dwarven population. It's a specifically dwarven stronghold. Not for wartime but it is a stronghold is the right word. You will have been over the course of the time jump, reading up on Wilde's instruction on Svalbard and stuff like that. You would make a very, heavy educated guess that these are Svalbardian dwarves and even if there are some that aren't, it's still the vast majority that are. These are people who...this is everything you would've expected. I don't know how else to put it than that. All of your research which would've been even just tangential for any kind of

hints, these are Svalbardian dwarves. How they got here, god knows but they're there.

BEN

These dwarves are from Svalbard.

LYDIA

Ah, well thank you Mr Smith. It reminded me of a thing from a book that I...huh...how do...so just clarify something for me. They look to me like they're wearing things that you would wear inside the house. Am I...am I out of date or incorrect there?

ALEX

There's no way that these people knew that they were going to be here.

BEN

It looks like some sort of teleporting affect and they suddenly found themselves here and were trying to get away.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl speaks up – no that can't be the case.

BEN

You say can't be but this one's in a dressing gown.

ALEX

That should not be the case then. It makes...the garden doesn't – Sumutnyerl starts moving on for the first time without warning people to catch up or anything like that and just starts moving on towards the centre past them.

HELEN

Well while this is happening I think Azu has been murmuring like, I don't know, like funeral blessings that kind of thing. Whatever the Aphrodite rituals are for that. Once she's understood that these are all dead people then...

ALEX

Wilde sort of comes up to Azu specifically, puts a hand on Azu's shoulders – I don't know if this is better or worse. That might be premature.

HELEN

Oh Wilde! Oh no.

ALEX

Petrification isn't death. It is an imprisonment.

HELEN

That is worse

ALEX

It can be but it isn't always. I don't know. It depends on...it depends on what's going here but I know there are spells. Hamid you'll know this, flesh to stone. Stone tot flesh is a thing.

BRYN

I mean it's impossible to say whether this was lethal or not.

HELEN

But wouldn't they have starved?

BRYN

Part of me hopes that it was in a sense unless...I mean finding a way to reverse this for this many people would be...

ALEX

A monumental task

BEN

Best not to dwell on it until we've dealt with whatever the immediate problem is.

BRYN

There's some sort of...we know that the portals that open something...location, space and it doesn't mean but yeah we need to keep going and find out what we can.

BEN

Oh I don't think I mentioned, that...those tentacles and stuff that were the ethereal plane so make of that what you will.

HELEN

Really?

BEN

Yep. I mean my best guess. There wasn't a sign but...

BRYN

What's the ethereal plane?

ALEX

Azu specifically can you please give me a knowledge religion.

HELEN

Yeah that's only a 13 sorry.

ALEX

13. Alex is going to give you a very bad crash course in your teachings on plainer cosmology because you just...every religion roll I get you just did not pay attention in seminary. You kept blowing it off for axe practice and it keeps coming up.

HELEN

It was axe practice and kissing girls

(laughing)

BEN

Paladins they're just, you know.

ALEX

Ok here's Azu's understanding of planer cosmology right. Existence is basically a sandwich

(laughing)

So in the middle you've got your meat which is the material plane and you can go in that direction and then you've got other planes. You've got stuff like the ethereal plane which is a bit more like ghosts I guess but not like religious ghosts. It's more like a ghost monster ghoulie kind of place. But you've got the hells as well. That's like the bottom, that's your tomato at the bottom right. And then you've got the outer planes, they're like your bread. And then

heaven isn't the ethereal plane it's...and then your knowledge of the plane and stuff starts to break down because you're not sure how heaven fits into the sandwich.

HELEN

Yeah

LYDIA

That's when lunch actually...the bell for lunch actually went off.

ALEX

But I'm afraid that with that roll this is broadly speaking your knowledge of planer cosmology. It's not a core part of your religious teaching. You know enough to know you can travel around the planes without literally meeting the gods. It's more complex than just hopping in and saying hello.

BEN

Very quickly how about me because I know enough to identify it but Ben has no damn clue.

ALEX

So I know that you have knowledge religion. Do you have planer knowledge as well as a thing.

BEN

Yeah that's what I rolled to get the...

ALEX

Ok could you please give me another knowledge planes.

BEN

Ah!

ALEX

I know that you already know it. This is just going to determine specificity.

BEN

Oh that's not terrible actually. That's a 21.

ALEX

Ok cool. Sandwich model's not really accurate. It's an oversimplification that's useful and it would be the kind of analogy that you've heard people use before.

BEN

Like the flat electron.

ALEX

Yeah. The ethereal plane is not a plane. This is not the, you're dead plane. It doesn't work like that. The ethereal plane is more a plane where spirit is material and material becomes spirit. You can move through the ethereal

plane and distance goes a little bit wobbly but you could enter the ethereal plane, move through a wall and then pop out the ethereal plane. It's like the rules of spirit and material are almost reversed in ethereal specifically. It doesn't mean it's full of gods.

BEN

Is it the space that people effectively go to when the cast dimension door and stuff. Like briefly.

ALEX

Yes. Broadly speaking. There's other elements at play. I'm oversimplifying and again Einstein would have a whole field day with this but broadly speaking teleportation affects involve minor movements through the plane sometimes and things like that. The more elaborate the teleportation, the more elaborate the transposition, the more likely it is to interact with the planes.

LYDIA

Grizzop would've known right? That's how Grizzop got to Rome, walking with Eldarian

ALEX

There were planer elements at play there. Yeah. I won't dive into specifically what it was. I know what it was but I can't say because it isn't a material that you would know but effectively it would make sense that if something is going wrong on a planer level in this area, you are more likely to encounter things like outsiders or creatures from the ethereal plane poking their heads into the

material plane. Elementals are more likely to be turning up. You can expect things to be alive that shouldn't be and things that should be alive not to be. That kind of thing. It isn't a plane of chaos. That would be primordial up is down, earth does not exist. There is a void. It's not that. This feels more like a smaller tear but it's very unusual. You're not aware of situations like this before.

BEN

Cool so in character – so the ethereal plane is basically an inversion where the spiritual becomes material and the material becomes spiritual. Basically.

HELEN

Oh

BEN

I reckon that because of all the stuff that's going on the walls between the planes have been weakened so things are like popping through and it's all getting a bit muddled up.

LYDIA

Sort of like an interdimensional hernia.

BEN

Yeah I guess.

HELEN

Ooh hernias are nasty.

ALEX

Wilde looks at Cel for a moment – I'm stealing that.

(laughing)

HELEN

Well whatever happened to these people I think they probably need my prayers regardless so...

BEN

Yeah

ALEX

Of course. Sumutnyerl is a little bit further ahead than she probably should be but not in a way that she's suddenly gonna fall out of sight.

BEN

Well I scooch to catch up then.

HELEN

Yeah I think we all do that.

ALEX

I'm going to ask people to gently catch up a little bit there and then we'll press on a little bit further. As you're continuing you realise that you're, broadly speaking, reaching the base of this cauldron I've been talking about because it's flattening out. and as you look outwards from where you are, you can see curving up the mountainside the healthy trees even if you are currently amongst the blight and there are still things obscuring the vision and so on. But as you start continuing through there's a brief sort of flurry of dead leaves and so on and the visibility is turning a little bit poor again. There's almost a sort of miasma here. I would say the feeling of that unwelcome animosity is still sort of stalking, I guess, but Wilde still has a bead on it and it never really comes close enough to seemingly do anything but there is a second layer at play here and it's just an unease and it is an ambient unease of the world's wrong somehow. I can't place it. It's going into your house and finding that every single thing has been moved one inch to the left. It is...it is knowing, it is knowing...I know I closed the microwave door but the microwave door is open. That kind of thing. And you can't place it. You've never been here before but it's wrong and you don't know why but it's slightly wrong. And the visibility's a little bit poor but as you keep drawing nearer something literally huge starts looming out from the distance. Not moving but there. At first it looks like, maybe a structure.

HELEN

No it's a dragon.

ALEX

Maybe a...you can't place it. Like a cathedral has been dropped there or something and then you realise there's two more. There's three of these big, huge shapes but they seem to be organic, almost curved and then there's a moment where the miasma clears just a little bit and there are three huge, utterly alien plants in the middle of a slight clearing. Again, at the risk of selling out the drama a little bit, you know the Jumanji plant that wants to eat people with the big bulb. Think big. Big, huge bulb. Building sized bulb.

LYDIA

Little Shop of Horrors

ALEX

Yeah times a hundred.

LYDIA

But like Big Shop of Horrors

ALEX

Huge, huge bulbs.

LYDIA

Gigantic Shop of Horrors

ALEX

And you can see that the strands of these ringing bell vines seem to be leading gently towards them as a sort of root tendrils or something. But you can see that there are hundreds, as this miasma clears there are hundreds of these dwarven statues and they all seem to be fleeing one of the large bulbs. Everyone give me one last perception check for the episode.

HELEN

God. Well I'm glad it wasn't a dragon.

BEN

16

HELEN

27

LYDIA

33

BRYN

27 for both Hamid and Skraak.

ALEX

Ok forgive me for this one Ben you just didn't hit my threshold. The three bulbs are not equidistant from you. They are a little bit staggered. The nearest

bulb is the one that you can see all the dwarven statues apparently fleeing from. The furthest one you can't see is almost mostly obscured by the other two but you can see, now that you're looking, now that you're really straining to see there appears to be basically animal statues coming from the other one. What looks to be a large cat of some kind. Cel to your eye I've seen animals like that in the Americas. But there's a moment of stillness as Sumutnyerl is just shocked and she seems utterly distraught as you look an utterly silent sea of silver statues and these enormous, I can't say monstrosity, but alien bulbs sat there warping the world around them.

HELEN

Ooh

ALEX

And I'll end the episode there.

HELEN

Very nasty. I like it.

ALEX

High fantasy is the best fantasy.

LYDIA

Bad gardening.

BRYN

Burn them. Burn them.

(laughing)

LYDIA

Not good garden.

ALEX

So how are we doing? Are we ok? Got a little bit intense there towards the end.

HELEN

Ooh. I feel another massive fight coming on.

(laughing)

I can feel it in my bones.

BRYN

The first one was just the warm up. This is the actual fight.

ALEX

Well I'll leave you all to brew up some theories as to what's happening and no doubt cook up some other ridiculous way to completely annihilate everything that turns up immediately with no effort whatsoever, yeah.

BEN

Hey! Some effort was expended. Some.

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Aw thanks for your pity Ben. Bye!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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