

RQG – 186 – For Whom The Bell Tolls

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 186 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

You doing okay Ben? You forget your name for a second?

BEN

I ... you said **unclear 0:00:32** I was like ... wait, I do go first do I? I don't wanna ... well hang on ...

ALEX

Oh, where am I, everything's just soft spongy surfaces and I'm lost and confused.

BEN

I didn't wanna talk over anyone, but then I was like ... wait, no, I do go first, oh no.

Group laughter

BRYN

I mean you also, tried to restart number expression discourse that I thought we were 75 episodes beyond but ...

BEN

We're actually 75 episodes beyond it!

Group laughter

ALEX

Thank you Ben!

HELEN

God no!

BEN

Well played sir well played.

ALEX

Well, all I'll say is ... good confusion and fair will serve you well today.

HELEN

Oh no.

ALEX

Trust them, you know fair leads to anger, anger leads to hate and hate leads to XP. So, we are broadly speaking at the Centre of the Garden of Yerlik. We may or may not have found some unnecessarily large plantesq things in the middle, it's kinda hard to call. You may have had to pick your way through ... vast array of some kind of petrifying vines or similar as we've established. You're still technically in the vicinity of some weird interdimensional thing that has it in for you. As far as I am aware, we left off with you having a nice festa, you know and now it's time to consider ... you know, do you want a picnic? Is it time to head back already? Do you have a bit of time to mooch around that kind of thing. Everyone, everyone on board with me so far? Have I forgotten anything?

BRYN

That seems pretty accurate. I'd like a time check.

LYDIA/HELEN

Yes.

BRYN

I want to know ...

ALEX

Oh, I did ... no I did forget ... a hoard of petrified dwarves, but you know, minor, minor afterthoughts here like ... barely worth mentioning.

HELEN

Yeah, we came in at like dawn didn't we?

BRYN

Yeah.

HELEN

And then I think you said it was like early afternoon now?

BRYN

Do we still have time to get out of the forest before nightfall, or at least close to doing so?

ALEX

Categorically yes. You are past midday at this point.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

You are around the sort of, 1.30pm mark etc. Thankfully with the trees being more spaced in the blight area ...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

You can be like, okay ... sun good. It's not like direct line of sight but you have a good sense. You're not worried that you've been ... lost track of time or anything like that.

BRYN

Sure.

LYDIA

And it is less than ... 2 hours since the ... Cel's still got big teeth and wings?

ALEX

Yes, as far as I'm aware, unless you did it earlier than I thought.

BRYN

That was my other question is ... yeah, how far past are big power up initial spell, prep thing are we? Cause a lot of our effects last for 90 minutes and, I

feel like we're still less than an hour from that but I ... it depends how far warped ...

ALEX

I was ... I was playing around with about an hour, so if you're at 90 minutes you're still on the right side of stuff.

BRYN

Yeah, yeah.

ALEX

If you have something that lasts an hour, I'm gonna rule that it's expired.

LYDIA

Okay. I mean, Cel's thing lasts 2 hours, so the fact that it has been 1 hour rather than 90 minutes is important.

BRYN

Cool.

ALEX

Yep, that's fine. At this stage, I can't progress much further than ... I gave you all effectively first impression of the situation? I kind of have to respond to you, I don't have further things to drop in your lap now, I need you to have a think and then I/you can ... you basically, you can trigger all manner of horrible things but I can't trigger it for you.

BEN

The first thing I do, is turn towards Sumutnyerl, and see what ... their response to this is?

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You are witnessing someone, beholding a blasphemy so profound ... it's half revulsion, it's like outraged revulsion ... half fear that something that's meant to be untouchable has been so warped, and its writ large on her face!

HELEN

Right.

ALEX

She's not saying or doing anything, she's just like ...

BEN

Stunned?

ALEX

Yeah.

BRYN

Well, that definitely seems to be the centre of it, maybe we should ... circle round it and see what all three faces/elements look like?

HELEN

Well, Sumutnyerl, is this ... meant to be here? Like, was this here before, or is this ... a new thing?

ALEX

You'll all be noticing that Sumutnyerl is starting to cry.

HELEN

Oh no. Azu puts ... well, gently, like sort of tries to pat their shoulder, but will stop if ... if they don't want it.

ALEX

You don't really get a response.

HELEN

Okay, she'll stop.

ALEX

"This is ... wrong. This is wrong."

LYDIA

Can yer, can yer give us a little more ... more detail about ... the level of and the kind of ... the kind of wrong ... what sort of ... what should be here?

ALEX

"The heart of the ...".

She drops from her feet down - literally she just ... her legs go weak and she just drops (**imitates sound**).

LYDIA

Sumutnyerl ... if you can be clear? Like what, what were you expecting? What is this? We don't know what to be expecting, so we don't ... we don't know what to ... if we try and fix, or, or fight something, we wanna make sure that we're ... we're attacking the right thing, you know?

ALEX

"The garden is a ... it's, its, it's not just a place of communion, with those that have come before ... it is ... IT IS those that have come before to find this, in the heart of the garden where one would expect to find ... those that have come before waiting to offer guidance."

LYDIA

So these plants shouldn't be here at all? There should just be some kind of ... some kind of oracle or, or?

ALEX

She looks, she looks around in all directions ...

"None of this, none of this is right."

LYDIA

None of it at all? Okay, so we ... we've gotta get rid of ... the big bulb things and the ... stone dwarves and the ... the plants that shoot ... stone dust stuff ... all of that is wrong. None of that is ...

ALEX

"It's all wrong."

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

"It's all wrong."

LYDIA

Okay.

HELEN

Alright.

BEN

I think as Hamid said, we should ... have a look, get a better idea of ... what this is if we can work it out. I'm assuming none of us have any idea at all what this might be? And I kind of look around including like Wilde ...

BRYN

Yeah can we make any knowledge checks? For more information?

ALEX

Yeah ... I'm gonna ask for ... basically a few now. So, I'm gonna go through people one at a time because, there's interaction now with so many different elements that I can ... pass different pieces of information based on the knowledge so it's quite interestingly.

LYDIA

Cool.

ALEX

I'm gonna start with you ... Lydia, given that you've got in/out of **Awarzu** ...

LYDIA

Yessss.

ALEX

What knowledges do you have as trained? I'm only accepting ... trained submissions for this one, no blunt brute force knowledge checks.

LYDIA

The key ones that have ranks in?

ALEX

Yeah, only the ones that you have ranks in.

LYDIA

Arcana engineering, geography, history, nature, and nobility.

ALEX

Okay, Bryn, same question?

BRYN

Arcana.

ALEX

Okay.

BRYN

Skraak has dungeoneering and engineering.

ALEX

Okay, Zolf same question?

BEN

Arcana, history, nobility, planes, religion.

ALEX

And ... Helen?

HELEN

I only have nobility and religion.

ALEX

Okay, I am going to tell some of you which one you can roll and others I'm gonna let you choose amongst your options.

Azu ...

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

You can role nobility.

HELEN

Oh really? Okay.

ALEX

Zolf, you can pick between Arcana, planes, or nobility.

BEN

Planes.

ALEX

Hamid obviously has to be Arcana. Cel, interestingly enough ... any of the ones that you picked are ... able to be used.

LYDIA

Well, then I would go for Arcana as that's the highest, but if other people are doing Arcana would they get different things by rolling on a different stat?

ALEX

So, what I would say is ... if two of you want to use the same knowledge, one of you can assist the other for a higher total but, otherwise I would say use different. I'm not gonna ... otherwise your kind of blowing your opportunity here by duplicating roles.

LYDIA

Okay. So, Cel's got 17 in Arcana and 12 in nature ... which seem the most.

BRYN

Yeah, I've got 16 in Arcana, so I'm a tiny downgrade but, no-one else has nature!

ALEX

Metagaming ... you'll get more information from rolling a nature check than you will from a minor tangential boost to ... Arcana on this one.

LYDIA

Okay.

ALEX

In which then ... everyone please give me your rolls ... I'm gonna go with all of you one at a time. You're gonna tell me the knowledge that you rolled and then your number ... okay?

BRYN

Natural 20.

HELEN

I also got a natural 20.

BEN

Ooo, I got a 17 which is not a natural 20 but is high.

LYDIA

I got 15.

BRYN

That's really ... solid roles from everybody, that's good!

LYDIA

Well done dice! Or rather dice apps.

BRYN

Right Alex, time to explain the entire campaign to us.

ALEX

Yes. Honestly ...

HELEN

We're ready.

ALEX

You couldn't have picked a better time ... gosh.

laughter

BEN

That was a very good time to have, the big rolls!

ALEX

I am going to start with ... Helen's knowledge nobility, cause I haven't had a chance to do knowledge nobility ... I think since James left!

HELEN

Yeah because every time I've rolled it before I've been absolutely crap at it!

ALEX

Yeah.

Group laughter

ALEX

You recognise a number of ... the petrified dwarves. Both by insignia and some by face. I leave it to your good judgement as to how you would have known this ... whether this is things that you would have been told by previous mentors, things you would have taken an interest in! But, you actively know these are the case, there are multiple ways you could know these things, I'm gonna tell you what the info is but I'm gonna allow you to retcon how it is you know this information, okay?

HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

You recognise ... that the majority of the people who seem to be running around ... are Svalbardian nobles. Now nobles doesn't mean in the aristocratic sense, by nobles what we mean is ... that there's a ... you know that there's a sort of ... system in Svalbard you've been made aware of which is quite interesting where, it's a vote base system a lot of it as to who gets you know high priority positions. But there are certainty dynasties where, okay, this person is the son of this person and the daughter of this person who were both the best at this thing ... they're more likely to be voted up into that position. There's this pseudo nobility that kicks around a little bit, insofar as they're more likely to be voted up etc. You recognise large number of notable "nobles" of the Svalbardian people. You also recognise the current (as far as you are aware) dwarvian leader of Svalbard ...

HELEN

By face?

ALEX

Yes. The current leader, bearing in mind that this is information that you had ... prior to the world going wrong ... you know your 2 year gap? Sorry, your extended gap I should say ...

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

And also, on the understanding that ... you haven't had chance for any updates in this I'm gonna say like, so your info might be a little bit old but you know that that's **Yofa Jongson**. You know that **Jongson** is, effectively a surname title. Whoever is the leader is **Jongson** which loosely translates from dwarvishes like son is son of ... like, the iron son of the ore ... it almost translates of ... it basically means like, instead of being patronymic or it's like, you know son of this person, it means ... son of ... like the ore, like the rock itself.

BRYN

Son of the concept of iron.

ALEX

Yeah that's the best way to translate it.

Group laughter

HELEN

Son of FE ... alright.

laughter

ALEX

So, **Yofa** seems to be one of the ones who is basically, holding ground against a retreat. Looking around you realise that, assuming that all of these, sort of dwarves are, you know ... people who found themselves here or are fleeing

something ... whatever happened must have happened pretty much in the centre of Svalbard. You would not get all of these people ... in fact, looking around you start to realise, this is a Svalbardian ruling counsel. These are the key decision makers as you are aware of it, from Svalbard. Almost all of them, there might be one or two that are missing but, for the most part this is ... if you want to consider this as the, sort of ... head of the Svalbardian City let's call it ... this is ... if you, if you wanted to cut off the head as it were, this'd be a good way to start, you know what I mean?

HELEN

Oh dear.

ALEX

The other thing that you are aware of is, although you know I mentioned that a lot of them are wearing sort of like, indoor garb ... like those furs and so on? You're starting to recognise it given it a bit of time ... a lot of these are counsel garb, this is ... this might have been literally people, in counsel when something happened. You know that ... the Svalbardian City prides itself on, effectively, its security. The whole point of Svalbard is ... it is the "safe" place! Like, that's sort of its thing ... it is "the safe" place, the rock, the hard place. If everything else is going to heck, like Svalbard will stand, it's their thing it's how they roll. So the idea that this is in the centre is ... kind of big.

HELEN

Base treachery.

ALEX

However, I would love to know Helen ... how do you know this knowledge nobility?

HELEN

I know this because ... the first Paladin of Aphrodite that Azu ever met is a dwarf called Zoogie Brighthouse ...

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Who I'm going to say now because I never specified this in the back story ... was from Svalbard.

ALEX

Helen, let me just say ... what an excellent leap of logic that I couldn't possibly have led you to ...

Group laughter

ALEX

But I couldn't be ... happier about!

HELEN

It's almost as if ... someone had been planning this!

laughter

ALEX

Very happy. What can I possibly say? I didn't connect these dots, Helen just saw two dots and decided to draw a line ... it's not my fault that that completes a rather large elaborate picture!

laughter

HELEN

Yes. I will say that ... Azu knows this amount of detail, not just because ... Zoogie told her so, but because Zoogie was later lost at sea and Azu, did indeed go down a research hole and had, at the back of her mind, some plans to go to Svalbard one day and sort of see if she can find Zoogie's family etc.

ALEX

Oh Helen, you can remain my favourite!

HELEN

Thank you. Although I shouldn't be thanking you, cause that usually leads to really bad things for me.

ALEX

Yeah, you don't want to be my favourite! It's like golf, you're not aiming for a high score, you don't want to be my favourite!

laughter

ALEX

Okay, I'm gonna jump across then to ... Benjamin Zolf Meredith. What was your knowledge and what did you get?

BRYN

It was planes and I got a 22.

ALEX

Okay. So, you are not familiar with these ... specific things whatever they are. But you know ... I've said this before, you know what to expect when, planes are going a bit weird and when you were entering the Garden of Yerlik I said that there are areas where those planes become condensed and you can get some bleed across.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Whatever's happening here, this isn't a bleed, this is a full blown intrusion. This is something that is poking its way in and by virtue of poking its way in, is

dragging all these other problems with it. To your eye, it looks more like these big, huge things (whatever they are) are imposing upon this plane as opposed to being native to it. And probably the other things that are not to be expected in the Garden of Yerlik are symptomatic of them, rather than being separate things. They're sort of the, the wake of a big ship passing through a channel, do you know what I mean?

BEN

Yeah ... its aerial still or, or possibly other like ...

ALEX

You know that these aren't of ... these big, huge things aren't of the athermal plane.

BEN

Okay. Is Zolf drawing any connections between the Cult of Hades, the fact the Garden of Yerlik isn't just a ... you know is like ... repository potentially of souls or spirits and, the fact this campaign is called erasing the line quite frankly.

laughter

ALEX

You are connecting some dots but not, in the way that I think you're leading to.

BEN

Okay, fine.

ALEX

These plants are not a thing you would expect to interact with afterlives ... there are certain planes that have sort of, you know, like celestial beds and things like that ... what you're seeing here, you would not expect to connect with afterlives with sort of the ... religious spiritual celestial planes ... these are more things of "outer planes", the weird spaces, the bits between areas ... things like that. However, the Garden of Yerlik, you definitely were earlier going ... okay, this is interacting with some celestial planes and stuff like that. This is something that is not of the afterlife thinking ...

BEN

Sure.

ALEX

That's been plopped in the middle of it ... as far as you can tell.

BEN

So, this is potentially like ... people doing things with afterlives but they'd use this as potentially a weapon or something like ... I don't know what actually happened, but that could be a ... reasonable assumption?

ALEX

Yeah, absolutely. It could be a ... deliberate weapon, it could be a planer hack that went wrong, there's so many ways that planes can go wrong, but sufficed to say some bright spark, somewhere has managed to make ... just the worst

kind of situation where they've gone "Right, why don't we get the material plane afterlives, compress them down and then bring in a bunch of other random catalysing elements!". Grr ... it's a mess. Plainly speaking, it's a mess and it's a bad mess. Things should not ever be like this and you know that this is a situation that will continue to worsen.

BEN

I am assuming that I haven't got a bloody clue how to solve it?

ALEX

In terms of the plainer stuff, it depends. If there is a centuon thing at bay, generally speaking ... banishment's always a great start! Banishing something to the plane from whence it came ... it's always a good start. You know that if you can remove the causes of planer disturbances, they have a tendency to heal and right themselves given enough time ...

BEN

Okay.

ALEX

But that's as far as you know.

BEN

Cool ... that's great thank you.

ALEX

Bryn ...

BRYN

So I rolled Moletracana ... and I rolled a natural 20 for a total of 36.

ALEX

Okay. There's definitely wild magic elements at play ... this not intentional magic. The context that its happening within, the nature of the complications and so on ... there doesn't appear to be intentionality attached to the magics at play here. There's no way that what could have been happening, would be happening in an area that did not have large amounts of wild magic, which says to you, that as an art, like as an expert in Arcana ... yes, this might have like ... I know that Ben was sort of, proposing that maybe he has connections to other places in the world and so on ... certainly to sustain this as a static thing requires large amounts of wild magic ... it should not be able to sustain itself in this manner, without consuming wild magic. So you would expect therefore, that either this is propping up - whatever this is connecting to elsewhere that does not have wild magic, cause you're in a very wild magic rich area, or that it is connected in some way to other areas of wild magic. Long story short ... if Zolf was coming to the conclusion that, if he can remove the source things will naturalise ... your instinct is ... think of it like a fire. If you manage to cut off the oxygen the fire will go out on its own. There's a lot of wild magic at play here. You have seen, like papers on this and so on as well in your formal studies never mind from what you've seen in the world.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Things exposed to wild magic tend to go ... a few ways. 1. Bonkers, weird, wrong, bizarre, like the ship did.

BRYN

Yep.

ALEX

2. They tend to ... scale up.

BRYN

Sure.

ALEX

3. They tend to have increasingly important sort of ... secondary symptomatic effects. So Rome was a lot like that ... you cast a magic spell in Rome, there's sort of wild magic at play, things are maximised or minimised or they go awry ... things like that. Those are realistically the three options for wild magic, you're looking at these enormous plants going ... "Okay, this ... this stuff is feeding off wild magic". What it is feeding off it for ... difficult to tell. Your guess would be, definitely interacting with the planes potentially planer travel, something akin to what you saw ...

BRYN

In the broken gates spell in Rome?

ALEX

Yes ... similar to that. It's ... you are aware that you, there are ...

BRYN

Cause remember I helped the Eldarian study that ... as well.

ALEX

Exactly. There are two ways that you can connect ... distant locations -
teleporting which is where you move ...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

And planer is where you can basically make two places appear in the same
place at the same time. You aren't moving, you are forcing the world to ...

BRYN

Yeah. You create an Einstein Rosen Bridge.

ALEX

Basically, that's what I'm riffing off, yeah.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

To your eye, this could be ... it might have been assisted by external forces, but this could be a very odd confluence of events, leading to a naturally occurring gateway of such ...

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

But you're not aware of plants and such being a necessary part of that ... that's odd.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Your experience of that is, this is what happens when you assemble an entire cabal of wizards who are all experts, with a single purpose or, you know, an enormous research institute pouring years of their work into it. Not, special plan, you know what I mean that's odd, that's unusual.

BRYN

Yeah. So, previously we talked about the difference between the Aurora and the effects in ... Rome. That one being wild magic and one being a term we called corrupted magic. Are you now saying that Rome's corrupted magic is a sort of different form of wild magic? So what ... I'm sort of thinking about this as ... wild magic to me is a bit like background radiation and areas of ... you know very high, but essentially natural background radiation ...

ALEX

Think of it as different types of radiation then.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

To go into my D&D law, cause obviously I needed to kind of know this stuff. In this universe as is the case with like D&D and Pathfinder and so on ... they all kind of come from the same idea of ... you can either take energy from other planes or something called the Weave, which is ... I'm gonna over, like over simplify ... its basically the force but magic you know? The energy that combines blah, blah, blah, blah. Wild magic is a situation where someone's getting the Weave and they're shaking it so, you get unusual shapes, you get unusual ... situations and you can ...

BRYN

But it doesn't have to be a person ... it's the Weave can just be ... vibrating ...

ALEX

Exactly.

BRYN

Cause of natural effects, yeah.

ALEX

But, if you know what you're doing, you can choose to be at the peak of a Weave, or the trough of a Weave. Corrupted is where ... the Weave has gone wrong, it has dropped a stitch, things like that and you have odd holes poking through and things like that.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

It's all technically, pertaining to the Weave ... whether it is, sort of celestial or not, but it's very gift ...

BRYN

And both will create very strange magical energies in that area, but more different types.

ALEX

But it's a spectrum and you are now at one opposite end of the spectrum, where Rome is at the other opposite end but, as with most of these things, they can both to the uninitiated look like ... magic's weird.

BRYN

Horse shoe theory.

ALEX

Basically that.

BRYN

Yeah, so this, this thing is feeding off the very high, natural background magical energy in this area.

ALEX

That would be a very sensible assumption.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Lydia ...

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

Now that you've got a bit of time to look around ... you think you recognise the big bulbs ...

LYDIA

Oh dear.

ALEX

They look like a "grossly" grossly oversized version of a plant that you have seen native to The Americas. It is a plant that you have seen have some ritual usage in Elven societies, specifically to do with ... magical communication, unlimited to ... just people on this plane.

LYDIA

Right, okay.

ALEX

I don't mean as a component ... I don't mean you just grind it up and use it ... I mean like, there are rituals that you are aware of, tied to these large plants which, if used correctly, people have used to both commune with the dead and commune with the living.

LYDIA

Right. So, it's pretty advanced stuff?

ALEX

What it is ... is astonishingly rare. You have run into this once. You heard a lot of stories of a story of a story of a story ... natural curiosity may have driven you to sort of, like, seek it out if you were nearby at some point, its up to you. But all I would say is is ... exceedingly rare. If you ignore the scale, the idea of three of them being in the same place is ludicrous.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

These are ... incredibly coveted plants, that are incredibly difficult to cultivate if you are trying to do so deliberately, they require incredibly specific situations, and ... it is considered ... you know how there are certain crafts that have like a master work? You know what I mean? Where it's like crafting a brand new spell, it can be considered like a master work. To be able to cultivate one of these plants would be considered, either druidic, or herbalogic masterwork.

LYDIA

Right, right.

ALEX

Also, you are noticing there is small amounts of flora near them which seems to have a North American origin which is a lot less rare.

LYDIA

Right, right.

ALEX

I mentioned before that, at the distance you thought you could see like a, a large cat petrified or something similar? I said it a little while ago ... you see, a decent amount of North American flora with maybe a couple of small fauna ... petrified of course, near, and this is the last piece of info I'm gonna give you ... a specific one of the bulb. I said that there were three of these large bulbs ... a nearest one ...

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

One that's sort of partially obscured, and then one that's, sort of heavily obscured by the other two. The middle bulb seems to be the one that has ... more sort of North American flora taking root ... the nearest bulb is the one that seems to be quite heavy in silver dwarven statutes let's say. The furthest bulb is one that doesn't necessarily have much identifying features beyond what I've already described.

LYDIA

Yeah, the boring one, it's a middle sibling ... laughs.

ALEX

What I would say, is I realise that I've reached half an episode and all I've done is give law and I'm feeling itchy, I'm feeling uncomfortable, I'm feeling very seen, so I could do with a break ...

LYDIA

Oh no ... things might start to make sense!

ALEX

Exactly.

laughter

ALEX

So, I'm gonna take a break ...

HELEN

We can't have that.

ALEX

I'm gonna re-establish some arbitrary mystery and then we can be back in a couple of minutes ... okay?

.....

ALEX

And welcome back. Ooooo, ahhh, mystery, yes, I haven't just accidentally realised that I've opened a knowledge door that could just ... reveal the entire campaign!

LYDIA

Alex has realised that you can't run a five year successful RPG podcast without submitting to the mortifying ordeal of being known!

Group laughter

ALEX

It is odd, it is odd. So, what I'm gonna say coming back from the break is ... you are not under sufficient time pressure that you can't have quickly shared this information with one another and said ... "Oh, I recognise that, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

BRYN

That's definitely what we spent the break doing! Was sharing all our knowledge stumps in character, so we all character shared with the same basis level of knowledge.

ALEX

There is one extra piece of knowledge which Sumutnyerl can bring to bear which is, I'm not going to RP it ... the seed that you are carrying, as far as Sumutnyerl is aware, is related ... think sort of like Kingdom filer etc ...

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

To both the trees of the Garden of Yerlik, and those large bulbs.

LYDIA

Okay. Right, so there're all, say, in the same kind of family but ... in the same way that you, you do not want to put some of the relatives of Aloe Vera on your skin, but some of them have other medical effects.

ALEX

Thank you for a very good analogy that I was struggling to get to. Basically, that's exactly what I'm going for.

HELEN

Oh, or it's like bananas where there's only one kind of banana we can eat and a wild banana is actually really terrifying and full of seeds.

BRYN

So wait ... does that mean the seed wouldn't grow one of these weird bulb things, but at a normal size, or it would? I'm still confused!

LYDIA

It might grow a different variety ... like, there are lots of different Aloes ...

BRYN

Like onions and shallots or?

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah. Onions, shallots, elephant garlic, leek they're all ... presumably the same.

ALEX

Can I ask for a ... centre motive from everyone please?

LYDIA

Oh yeah.

HELEN

That's a 22 from me.

ALEX

Oh Azu, you're so helpful in me basically doing ... you know, tell, don't show ..
thank you!

HELEN

Laughs.

LYDIA

That's a 15 from Cel, which is actually ... I think unclear 0:27:49

ALEX

That's okay.

LYDIA

Because they got nought wisdom.

BRYN

8 from Hamid, he's too consumed with all the new ideas.

BEN

25.

ALEX

Oh, so both Zolf and Azu ... Sumutnyerl isn't lying, you are watching someone completely re-evaluate every single thing they know. It isn't that Sumutnyerl is lying, it's that Sumutnyerl is going ... "Well I thought it was this, but every ..." like there's a big glaring testament to my ignorance staring me in the face! Sumutnyerl's confidence is clearly, like collapsing like a sandcastle in the sea. Not to the point where she's going to be necessarily a liability but you can see that she is ... there is a hesitance in every answer that was not there before.

BRYN

So, so, Cel ... you think these are three separate plants? Not like one plant with three ... shoots?

LYDIA

Presumably Cel will know? I mean I can roll another knowledge nature but, from what I'd heard, I'd presume that there three separate ones, so Cel would say that?

ALEX

Well, there's an interesting weird little glitch when it comes to these plants ... which is, people have theorised that, though they are clearly on the material plain separate plants. Like you can have plant 1 over here and plant 1 over there ... people have theorised that they may share a root structure no matter where the other plants are provided. But no-one has a definitive answer to that ... yes or not, its very kind of wishy washy. But, you know that physically speaking, here is a plant, here is a plant. You know this. But you also know that the experts of these plants are the right, you know, the masters who have a tendency to cultivate them ... kind of share a pet theory that all of the plants are the same, in some way and that if you care well for one, someone else's plant will do well etc but, it's very, unsubstantiated in terms of explaining things.

LYDIA

Cel explains that, almost as exactly as ... ramblingly as that was.

laughter

ALEX

You're welcome.

LYDIA

Also draws on, examples of like, mycelium sprouting up mushrooms in different places ...

ALEX

Between us ... yeah, I'm basically talking spiritual **mycelios** is kind of what I'm getting at there.

LYDIA

Yeah ... woo woo.

ALEX

So, there's your info, thoughts/feelings, pet theories.

BEN

Well, yeah, one thing I was wondering about is ... whether or not like, if our seed hadn't been in the Plane of Hades when this happened, the same thing would have happened to the party, and whether like these are ... seeds ...

BRYN

Oh my god.

BEN

That are around the world.

HELEN

What a horrible way that the campaign would have ended. Just all of a sudden, Alex goes ... "You're all turned to stone"!

Group laughter

BEN

Well I think, no I don't think ... I don't know if turning to stone was the ... I think that was then they got attacked by the stone, turn to stone plants and were massively under prepared so we'd have had like a ... you know big fight or something.

LYDIA

We got loads of hip coins.

BEN

They weren't playing ...

laughter

BEN

Characters and therefore they died.

HELEN

Oh dear.

ALEX

I might slightly co-defy that in universe as not saying the words "play a character", but sure.

BEN

Alright ... have the will of the fate, however the hell you wanna ... justify!

Group laughter

LYDIA

We are ... very skilled people. We have spent a lifetime cultivating certain skills and ...

BEN

I've got lots of numbers written on my soul.

LYDIA

And we will hunt ...

laughter

LYDIA

And find XP.

BEN

But yeah, whether there's a seed like, in pride of place in like the Svalbard Council Chamber cause it's super rare, and then maybe there was one in America somewhere, and then we've got obviously this third part that we have no idea but maybe it was ... maybe like, I don't know ... Tesla ran through America, maybe it's Tesla seed!

ALEX

At the risk of oversharing, I'm happy for people to propose pet theories and for me to say ... if there's any information over the last 5 years that you would probably remember as a character that would disprove your pet theory, okay? I'll keep it big and broad.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

There is currently nothing in your knowledge base that would say that what you have just proposed is impossible or incorrect.

LYDIA

Would any in Cel's knowledge base ... you said that Cel thinks they're related but, would Cel think that in normal circumstances the seed would not grow into ... oh no, it's Sumutnyerl who thinks, who knows they're related! Wait, I'm confused.

ALEX

Correct Sumutnyerl has shared that information with you all so ...

LYDIA

Right. And Sumutnyerl is not confident of anything anymore so it would not ... but Cel also knows what these plants ... should look like so ...

ALEX

What you know is that these plants aren't behaving the way that they should, as far as you are aware so, asking, would this have happened is kind of awkward cause you're asking ... "In this unprecedented thing what's the precedent?"

LYDIA

Okay, okay.

BRYN

I mean they're definitely feeding off the wild magic so ... everything's a bit unpredictable. Let, lets get a better look at these other two bulbs.

ALEX

Wilde speaks up ...

"Hamid, well Cel as well I suppose. Are either of you aware of way to ... at scale ... block wild magic?"

LYDIA

Do I roll for that? It'll be an Arcana role.

ALEX

I would say ... I'm just gonna give you this one for free, because its already come up previously on the ship and so on. Short of building the equivalent of a massive faraday cage over them, it's not really a thing unless ... there's one other option which you would just both know without thingy ... anti-magic stuff exists. If you could get a massive, great anti-magic boulder like what was in the cell of the Japanese tavern, if you remember? That was a tiny little chip of a thing, if you can get an effing great boulder, you're not aware that there's anything like that that exists, but something like that would have a similar effect.

LYDIA

Cel excitedly proposes building a giant magical faraday cage.

BRYN

I mean a simple anti-magic field would work, but generating ... one at this size, and if you wanted to sustain it, that ...

ALEX

That's a massive undertaking.

BRYN

I don't know of anyone who's ever achieved anything of that scale ... in that, area.

ALEX

I'm not aware of anyone having achieved anything close.

BRYN

I mean Cel's right. You know, the ... a cage similar to what we built on the ship, but with a bit more time and a bit more resources I guess? When we've worked out the principles ...

ALEX

"Could we just burn it down?"

BRYN

Behind that.

ALEX

"We just burn all of it down".

LYDIA

Yeah, I'm quite, I'm quite in favour of the burning, so long as that burning then doesn't ... go ... I mean ... so that, middle one, I can see that's an American cat and unless you guys ...

BRYN

Let's go and take a closer look at it!

BEN

Yeah also, remember this is ... you know this is like, a planar intrusion effectively! If we burn off anything that's here, more stuff might just come through ... you know. There's not necessarily ...

ALEX

Could all of you please give me a ... perception roll.

LYDIA

Okay.

BEN

12.

ALEX

I secretly kind of want all of you to fail this one so, I'm still on board with you Ben.

HELEN

Well screw you! 26.

LYDIA

33, sorry Alex!

laughter

BRYN

16 for Hamid, 18 for Skraak. Those were both baad rolls.

ALEX

So Cel and Azu ... Alex goes to his GM mind palace to remember character back stories ...

HELEN

Oh dear.

ALEX

Azu and Cel ... while other people are talking and you know ... chucking out pet theories and so on and blah, blah blah ... you hear the tolling of a distant bell.

HELEN

Oh.

ALEX

It seems to be playing a short tune (**imitates sound**).

LYDIA

Cel immediately mentions this because, they are concerned of course that there are ... hallucinations or things coming from the dead or whatever, but ...

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

Oh yeah, tolling bells has loads of sig ...

BRYN

Alex, for whom does the bell toll?

LYDIA

Azu and Cel, that's been established.

laughter

ALEX

It's me! Goodness me, Bryn what a good question! Gosh, you're also my favourite! You're all playing so well! Good! The bell tolls ... 8 times, then stops.

HELEN

Did the rest of you hear that?

LYDIA

Do you think it's a clock?

BRYN

No, its announcing how many deaths there are about to be and there's four player characters and three NPCs here, so there's one person we haven't noticed.

BEN

No, Sohra ...

BRYN

Oh it could be Sohra yeah. Look, can we please start looking at the other bulbs! I've been wanting to do this since the first minute ...

ALEX

No, I'm gonna keep throwing ...

BRYN

Of the episode!

ALEX

Arbitrary law!

BRYN

You're about to cut to the next ep before I've had a chance to look at the other bulbs

LYDIA

I think we can walk while we talk?

BRYN

Yes.

ALEX

I'm absolutely fine to have said that. It will have been slow going, cause Sumutnyerl admittedly, shakily, is still guiding you around ...

"There's a vine that will petrify you! There's a vine that will petrify you ... that one's moving, we'll have to go this way".

So, it's very slow going.

BRYN

Also apart, I don't know for anyone else, but I'm kind of afraid of getting too close to the bulbs right now?

HELEN

Oh yeah.

ALEX

I'm assuming that you're giving them a wide berth?

HELEN

Extremely wide.

BEN

I'm immortal, I don't know what you're talking about!

ALEX

There is something odd to ... at the third most distant bulb.

LYDIA

Is that the one that the ... bong, bong, bong, bong, bong, bong, bong, bong ...
came from?

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

Right, okay.

ALEX

I'm gonna have to start using different terms than nearest and furthest because, as you circled it ... that things change.

BEN

Yeah. Dwarf Bulb, America Bulb and Bong Bulb!

Group laughter

ALEX

Bong Bulb ... right. So the Bong Bulb ...

LYDIA

Err ... the Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong Bulb.

BYRN

The Bbbbbbbbbb Bong Bulb!

ALEX

Sorry yes, that one ... has less flora around it than ... the basic background of the blight. So you know how the bulbs have like, certain flourishes of whatever? That bulb not only doesn't have any special flourishes, it actually has less than ... what is kicking around in terms of like leaf detritus and so on. It's more, its more like someone has gone and, you know, raked up the leaves and cleared it out.

BEN

When you say that, do you mean that it looks more manicured or more baron?

HELEN

Yeah, that's a good question.

ALEX

Closer to baron, but it's actually surprisingly hard to tell! Because it's ... you're looking at actually like, some bare dirt.

BEN

No, no sure, but with the raking thing it's like ... is it "I kill things near me or someone's looked after it"?

ALEX

No. To be clear, there aren't clear signs of cultivation ...

BEN

Right.

ALEX

But it wouldn't be impossible that someone had deliberately salted the ground around it, or something like that, that's as much as I can give you.

BEN

Right.

HELEN

But also, trees do a thing where like directly around them is often ... like a big bare patch because they suck all the nutrients down.

ALEX

Cel ... do you still have advanced scent?

LYDIA

If Cel still has wings and teeth, Cel has a sniffy nose.

ALEX

So, I'm gonna say that in order to get all this talking and so on ... obviously we're gonna be burning through some time, you're drawing near the end of that, however, could you please ...

LYDIA

So we've been there an hour! Cause ...

ALEX

Oh no, sorry, you'll have half an hour left cause ...

LYDIA

Okay, cool, yep.

ALEX

I'm saying its taken about half an hour to chat, discuss, have a think, blah, blah, blah ... and to circumnavigate. Cel, can you specifically give me a perception check?

LYDIA

Oooo, it's a sniffy nose perception ... what does my nose sniff? Oh, I only rolled a 9, so that is only a 23!

ALEX

Soot, smoke ...

HELEN

Must be London.

BEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Well Cel has not been ... so, Cel would not know. This one, this one smells of ... fire and ... kind of toxins maybe? And smoke? Like the, like the inside of a house that's poorly ventilated and you, you're kind of doing metal work?

BEN

Well that explains the baroness, or its some sort of built up city.

BRYN

It looks like the first one, you know all these dwarves came out of it in some way and ...

BEN

Yeah, its Svalbard.

BRYN

The second one it, it looks like ...

HELEN

Svalbard definitely.

BRYN

The flora and the fauna of America have come out and the last one ... pollution has come out?

LYDIA

Pollution and bells!

BEN

Well then it's pollution land! Like, I don't know.

BRYN

Well that's, is that ... if that explains why some of the, the, the plants has died off there! If its been sort of ... leaking out pollution?

LYDIA

I mean ... is there ...

BEN

What can we do with this information?

LYDIA

Can we go to these places? Can we check?

BRYN

Maybe they do ...

BEN

Well they definitely got here.

HELEN

I'm not sure that would be a good idea!

BEN

What do these bulbs actually look like Alex? Like, are they closed up, are they open, is there a big purple portal?

ALEX

There are ... closed. They are all large, closed bulbs that look like they could flower. If they flowered, they would expand out over a very significant area.

BEN

And when you say bulbs you mean like ... the closed bulb of a flower head not a root bulb?

ALEX

Yes.

BEN

Alright.

BRYN

Oh, I was imagining root bulbs the whole time. That's my bad.

LYDIA

I was thinking like a, rose, kind of ...

BRYN

A flower bud?

LYDIA

Unclear 0:40:10 yeah a bud, not a bulb.

BEN

Oh it's a bud not a bulb, yeah basically.

ALEX

Yeah, okay. I think I might have been misspeaking then. Think of it more as a ... larger bud. What I would say is it has a large root network akin to a bulb as well, these aren't real plants, sorry ...

BRYN

Yeah, sure, sure, sure.

ALEX

Spoilers!

LYDIA

What!

ALEX

But, as a result, it looks like it could flower. If it flowered, it would cover a huge area, however the petals themselves are ... vast, like building sized to the point where even closed you can see that they're not sealed, they're not air tight, if this isn't a hangar door if you know what I mean. They are closed upon themselves but they are not, like smooth and sealed stone. And you can see that their root structure as I said last time sort of extend out, outwards from them.

BEN

Right, well, I guess I'll go have a look then!

HELEN

Well you're not going alone!

BEN

Alright, well any of us, but we need to do something, so let's do something!

LYDIA

Let's ... let's see if we can just ... "burn em, you know, maybe just ... I've just, I can electrify them if you want? But" ...

BEN

I really, I mean, I don't ... a. I don't think we have enough fire to get this, cause its also living matter, and b. I don't think we should just burn something down that's potentially connected to ... other places.

BRYN

I might have enough fire but, what I would be more worried about is if they're feeding off wild magic, it may be that magic will power them and, some plants respond quite well. Now, if we had natural fire, which also have, but not very much of, then that ... I'd be more willing to try that but I don't really wanna try magical fire in case it ...

BEN

Right, so I'm gonna go and check the bulbs then?

BRYN

Yeah, yeah.

HELEN

Well, I'm coming with you.

BEN

Good, alright. We're gonna go check the bulbs.

LYDIA

I mean ... yeah.

BEN

I walk towards the, the poison bulb, smoke bulb.

LYDIA

Can I ask ... Alex if the trees are not covering this area, for instance could Cel fly up above and look down on the ...

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

Bulbs. Cel does that.

ALEX

Okay. I'll actually deal with Cel first cause it'll be quicker if that's okay?

BEN

Yep sure.

LYDIA

Ooo, Cel dies.

ALEX

Flying up, a couple of things start happening in rapid succession. So, first things first, is that your visibility starts to reduce more than you would have expected, it just slightly gets a little bit heat hazy, and then you have a ... hard nostalgic burst of assent from your past ...

BEN

Oh christ, yeah Sumutnyerl said we shouldn't fly.

ALEX

It is, it's potent and it sort of leaves you off kilter a bit, can you give me a reflex save please?

LYDIA

Yep sure.

BEN

I forgot about that.

LYDIA

I'd forgotten about that!

HELEN

I forgot about that too.

BEN

Sumutnyerl's out for the count so ...

LYDIA

Okay, 25.

ALEX

25. You manage to right yourself without like, dropping out of the sky and so on. The second that you aren't accelerating upwards, things start to stabilise a little bit ... yeah, at the risk of metagame overshare, you move too quickly. You could probably still fly up, the issue isn't the upness, it's that you just kind of went "Off I go"! Woah, dizzy head spin blood rush, etc. But, in this kind of spiritual variety!

LYDIA

Being thus able to right themselves and ... stay as near to still as a non-hummingbird bat winged fanged thingy ma bob, is there any new perspective gained? From ... like is there a big portal in the middle?

ALEX

You made it all of 20 feet up and then started to go "Woah" cause you just, you kind of leapt upwards. If you wanna go up, if you wanna carry on going up that's fine, I'll ask for a basic fly check ... but you can do that.

LYDIA

I'll do that, I'll absolutely do that.

ALEX

Okay, give me a fly check.

LYDIA

A fly check ... 30.

ALEX

Yeah, you're fine. You manage to take a more measured pace and be a bit more careful about it and go up. The tops of the buds are closed in such a way that you can't see deep withinside them or anything like that however, you can see that ... I've been saying that you're sort of in an open area, give or take ... to your eye from this vantage point, it looks like this area more or less corresponds with ... yeah if this bud was to open it would reach from there to there ... there's no tree cover between these points. If that one was to open it would go there to there. It looks to you like this clearing, pretty much directly correlates to what these would look like opened.

BRYN

If they opened, would there be any overlap?

ALEX

No. Good question though. I am now gonna go to Zolf and Azu. So, you are approaching the Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong, Bong Bulb.

HELEN

Yes.

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

Could you all please give me a ... will save.

HELEN

Oh dear.

BEN

Is it against evil?

ALEX

No, interestingly enough.

BEN

Is it a fear or emotion based effect?

ALEX

Also technically ... no.

BEN

21.

HELEN

29.

ALEX

So, with that you both feel effects but you are not incapacitated in any way. As you start approaching the bulb, at first it's fine, then you start feeling a, a, a pressure upon you, the best way I can describe it is ... it is not the sound of being in a large crowd but that that ... feeling of it sort of pressing in on you that that the psychological weight of being in an over dense crowd is what starts to weigh upon you. Its not that you can hear people, its not that you feel pressed in, but that kind of breathless ... too much, too many people, too many people, like this is a dangerous amount of people, I don't enjoy this ... really starts to press in as you start getting closer to the bulb. However, it does not have any material mechanical effects but you suspect that, if someone was caught unaware with this, it might have some kind of effects.

HELEN

Right. Azu, is gonna put her hand on Zolf's shoulder and be like ... just to be like "Err, I feel ... like we could easily swept away in some way so, I'm just gonna hold on to you is that okay?"

BEN

Sure, yeah.

HELEN

Okay.

BEN

Okay.

HELEN

Alright, okay.

ALEX

Are you going right up to the side of the plant?

BEN

Yeah, when I actually get some information.

HELEN

I think so, yeah.

ALEX

That's fine. You are able to approach the remaining distance up, towards the plant proper, without it ... it slightly increases but not in the way that it's suddenly gonna overwhelm you ... you seem to have a handle on things.

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

Approaching it, I'm gonna describe it as a frond, its' technically, its' a petal, but petal implies something small, this is ... like thick, you know beefy thick ...

HELEN

Thick petal.

ALEX

From your scale, you would have to do a sort of, pull up climb which you can do without checks and so on to get over effectively the plant bed, you know, the sort of grounding for the petals? You can see that there is a clear opening that you have approached where you could ... not side step because it is a bit bigger than that but you can effectively head in the parting between those petals, should you choose.

HELEN

Do we go in?

BEN

I want to at least have a look.

ALEX

Give me a perception check please?

HELEN

Both of us?

ALEX

Yes, only you two.

BEN

60.

HELEN

21.

ALEX

You can both smell now the, the, the soot and smoke which seems a little bit more potent on the air. Azu, you also think you smell, something maybe slightly rotten, maybe sewage, something like that ... but there's just a, there's a slight tang to it on top of that ... smoke. The smoke's kind of, powering out, but now you're close you're like ... "there's something else there". But you can't quite place it.

BEN

Because it's the question we're all asking and ... I lived there ... Zolf lived there; does it smell like London?

ALEX

I mean, to Zolf, it smells like London on a bad day.

BEN

Okay, fine.

BRYN

Is it from the body of the Simulacrum that we discovered in the sewer? That Zolf went in, is it the exact same smell of the sewer Zolf was in that time?

HELEN

I will be very unhappy if we stepped through, straight into a tide of ... poo.

ALEX

To revert to what I said previously, there is no information that has been given to you during this campaign that would preclude that statement being true!

HELEN

God.

BEN

Yeah. Get up, poke head in.

BRYN

Okay, so, I've been hanging back with the other ... NPCs, nearish the edge of the clearing and in the meantime I want to re-cast heroism on Skraak cause it will have run out but, if I see them actually begin to put something in I'm gonna shout from the edge of the clearing ... "Maybe don't do that!"

ALEX

Okay, cool, excellent. Give me a second to make a few rolls.

HELEN

Oh!

ALEX

Rolls dice. Cel and, but basically all the characters that aren't Azu and Zolf, could I please get a perception check?

LYDIA

Yep. Rolls dice.

BRYN

Rolls dice. 33 for Hamid. 15 for Skraak.

LYDIA

16.

ALEX

After you yell the equivalent of ... "Hang on a second" ... you realise that you've just yelled ... "Hang on a second". You then hear, and you're facing towards them, behind you, the distinct sound of ... branches moving, something moving between the trees that are a bit back towards the edge of the clearing.

BEN

Hamid is always so consistently helpful in high pressure situations!

ALEX

I just work with what I'm given ... okay?

LYDIA

Cel's concentrating on flying ... this is ...

ALEX

Everyone else, you're not aware of this ... Hamid you do have a ... "That was quite loud".

laughter

ALEX

That's exactly what heads through your mind at that moment. Carry on. Zolf and Azu, you do hear that call, easily.

BRYN

I turn round and look into the ... the forest?

ALEX

So, yeah you do see movement, amongst the nearest trees at the far edge of the clearing! There's nothing moving the tree! It's the tree, the tree, the tree's moving. The tree's, the biggest tree's moving! The big, the big, the biggest tree is starting to glow, bright blue from the inside and is starting to ... there's

another tree, there's ... okay there's two big ... three, four of the trees are ...
the trees are coming, the trees are coming for you!

BYRN

Burning wood doth come to Dunsany!

LYDIA

You've angered the Hence, you fool!

HELEN

Oh no!

LYDIA

That never ends well!

ALEX

And that's your closer as all of the trees start coming for Hamid.

BRYN

Hence love Hobbits, it's a well-established fact!

BEN

You are Saruman in this situation!

Group laughter

BEN

You opened with "burn down the forest".

BRYN

I specifically said I wasn't gonna burn down the forest!

BEN

No, you said you were worried it was gonna get too bad, not that you didn't want to!

laughter

ALEX

Well either way, we can, we can wrap up here. We get the pleasure of immediately jumping on to the next episode to find out what the heck's going on and to all of the listeners out there - ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, you have to wait.

laughter

BEN

I've got to look at a big flower!

laughter

BRYN

Bye.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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