

RQG – 189 – Reality Check

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 189 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

Well a couple of people at the moment I guess...

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Do 'um both... do 'um both...

BEN

Oh OK... Zolf Smith and Tjelvar Stornsnasson... but mean!!

LYDIA

The late!!!

ALEX

Mean'er!!

BEN

Yeah...

ALEX

Who else have we got?

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom

HELEN

And Azu

ALEX

And how's everyone feeling? Everyone feeling nice, welcomed, supportive, you know, just generally in a good place?

BEN?

I'm feeling pretty good, apart from what you're doing to poor Helen.

HELEN

I am feeling pretty good, because I am going to do well despite you.

BEN?

Yes Helen.

HELEN

Yeah...

LYDIA

Yeah, he's going to give you a situation that you absolutely cannot win, and you're going to BEAT IT!

HELEN

Yes I am!

ALEX

It wouldn't be the first time.

[Group laughter].

ALEX

Right, with that in mind, I'm going to be picking up where we left off, which is each of you, in your own little special time, having interesting conversations with exciting people... I use the word... with that in mind, I am going to jump

straight into... let's call it "bunny ears Rome", and pick up exactly where we left off which is between Grizzop and Azu.

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

So, err... yeah... I'll hand over - Ben. You are my vassal in these matters. I trust your judgement.

BEN

I hate this.

HELEN

I believe the last thing that Grizzop said was that maybe it is what Azu deserves, right?

BEN

Yeah, I think so.

HELEN

Ok. Azu's going to say... "I don't think you're the real Grizzop actually".

BEN

"What? So don't care what you think... right... I... I care what you've done". By this point Grizzop is like vibrating with anger. And you can see like tears appearing at the bottom of his eyes.

LYDIA

Oh...

HELEN

Azu is going to approach slightly.

BEN

He backs off.

HELEN

Ok.

BEN

Because of what you did, because... because you weren't able to keep on, my life has been wasted. I'm trapped here, for the rest of the time I have, and I can't do anything useful and it's all your fault. I've just... I've just wasted away here.

HELEN

Hmm... I don't think your life was wasted. I have it on fairly good authority that it wasn't.

BEN

But there was so much else I could have done. I had more time. I had more time, and you... nicked that.

HELEN

You could have had more time. Yes. But it wasn't entirely up to me.

BEN

You could have just held my hand, and not let go. I wanted more time, and you took that away from me.

HELEN

You made choices as well though Grizzop.

BEN

What to come with you, to Rome, when I didn't want to even go? You put me in this situation and then you killed me.

HELEN

No I didn't...

BEN

You can pretend to yourself that you didn't. But you let go. There's nothing more to say. And I have all the time in the world, to sit here, and think about what I could have done, and what I can't do. And now you're here as an extra insult.

HELEN

What do you want me to do Grizzop?

BEN

You can't do anything. I don't want you to do anything. I want you to have been better.

HELEN

Well, I can't do that.

ALEX

Can you give me a perception check? Helen?

HELEN

Yeah.

BRYN

I recount my previous objection. I think this is meaner to Ben then it is to Helen.

HELEN

[laughter]

BEN

What are you talking about?

HELEN

It's hurting his voice box

BEN

I'm having a whale of a time. I mean it's a bit of a problem with my [unclear: 4:10] form, because I'm balanced for Zolf, but I don't think it's too bad, so I think we're alright here.

ALEX

Oh God.

BEN

You did this Alex.

HELEN

That is 29.

ALEX

29.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

As you're saying that, there's a... distant shudder. You hear it... a gentle rumble and maybe the sound of something... I don't know... finally giving up the ghost and collapsing in on itself, faraway in whatever this place is.

HELEN

OK.

ALEX

Maybe a slight tremor under foot, but nothing more.

ALEX

I'm going to ignore that. Azu then says "I did my best, just like you would. And it wasn't"...

BEN

If it had been up to me, I would have done better. But it wasn't up to me, it was up to you, and you couldn't do it.

HELEN

I think it was up to all of us, and I think that if you were the real Grizzop you would understand that, because I think the real Grizzop is a lot more practical than to blame someone else for all of his problems.

ALEX

There is a very loud rumble, from a different part, distant from this room, and clearly a few more buildings are struggling with the strain of the years, maybe, but definitely they're giving a bit of a rumble. On that, I'd like to jump to a different conversation.

HELEN

Okeydokey.

ALEX

I am going to jump to you, Cel.

LYDIA

[unclear: 5:30] conversation...

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Does the diary entry say anything beyond day 37 still looking, or whatever it was?

ALEX

Oh yeah...

LYDIA

Yep?

ALEX

It's... it seems to be... you know... a personal account.

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

It mostly starts with the logistics. You know, we're running low on food now and I'm having to convince them to stay. They'd do the same for me.

LYDIA

Cel puts the letter down and again shouts into the void, this is not a very good character study of Hayley. Just to give you some notes, she cared about the town, more than...

ALEX

There is a distant raw from the depths of the wilds...

LYDIA

Yeah, like this is what I'm getting at. I just... if you... she cared about other people. She had big dreams... She wasn't someone to turn back, you know? In a way I wish she would, but I... of all the things that I... I feel bad about, the idea that she couldn't look after herself, and look after the others and... no...

no... she... she was so strong... and... and she would have got them somewhere safe. Even if the boat went down a whirlpool or something like, just don't show me a [unclear: 7:02] here. She wouldn't have come back. She wouldn't have come back.

ALEX

There is a very loud roar from the wilderness, and the tremor of something huge, moving closer.

LYDIA

Right, Cel is going to turn into a parrot and is going to fly up, if they can. This is of course a potion, not a spell, but it does, yeah...

ALEX

As Cel drinks the potion

LYDIA

Yep...

ALEX

Cel knows what this feels like. They've done this plenty of times before, and they are very familiar with the process. This feels very different...

LYDIA

Oh dear...

ALEX

They are... it tastes rancid, in a way that Cel doesn't remember it tasting as such, and it's almost nauseating. And it leaves them staggering, ever so slightly. And vision blurring a little bit. And then they start to hear cries, and screams in fact, and flames all around.

CEL

Right, yep. OK, so this is a lot more like it... yeah...

ALEX

Their vision clears to find themselves far larger than they have been at their largest. Claws the size of machetes, protruding from their arms... and a lot of familiar faces fleeing from them as the village burns around them.

LYDIA

Yeah, Cel kind of turns to wherever the roaring has been coming from.

ALEX

Sure.

LYDIA

And says... yeah... so this is actually a lot more accurate. This is... this feels bad, you know, this was... this was a very bad day, and I... this should have been top of the nightmare list, you know what do you want me to say to everyone? I'm sorry?

ALEX

I am going to jump to Hamid. I believe I left you hugging Aziza.

BRYN

Aziza I... I love you and I miss you, and I always will, and there's so many...

ALEX

That's not enough. That's not enough. You always give the big speeches, you always... you always want to just rattle off enough words to make the problem better or go away. OK? The truth is, you can talk all you want, but it's not going to change what happened.

BRYN

I'm not fixing anything. I'm not changing anything. I can't. I'm just telling you how I feel, how I am. There's so many times in my life I wish I could have made different decisions, but I did everything I could, everything I knew how to, to save you, and if I had those moments again, I would have done the same, and

I'm sorry that that's not enough, and I will always... always feel terrible about that.

ALEX

Good.

BRYN

And if that's all you need to hear, then yes. But I don't... I'm not going to sit here and agree with you.

ALEX

As you finish saying that, the spotlight grows a little bit dimmer. Where before you could see even to the back row, just because of the ambient light, you lose a little bit of the back row of that theatre, as you say that. But she pushes you away quite vigorously. It's just the same as always, it's just words. You just keep spewing words and thinking that it changes things. Great, you feel sad. I'm still dead.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Always the same. You were the same at uni. That was your fault, you talk a big game, then the problem goes away, and everyone else is left to pick up your baggage.

BRYN

Yeah, that was worse. I made a terrible mistake, which I should have known better.

ALEX

And then you didn't learn from it, and you let the same kind of thing happen again... and again...

BRYN

More than... once...

ALEX

So why even bother? I love you Hamid, I do, but you need to actually start to realise that you keep talking, and you keep saying that you feel bad, and you keep saying that you're going to change, but you don't. You keep doing the same things.

BRYN

I'm not the same as I was...

ALEX

Why keep that lie going? What's the point? You're not even falling yourself, never mind me. Never mind everyone else.

BRYN

I've done more good than the harm I've caused. And I have so much power, because of the abilities I've inherited and that comes with a responsibility to use it to do as much good as I can and I've made missteps... I've made mistakes and I've hurt people, but I understand now that I have to keep doing the best I can in every new situation, and I have to keep working to make things better and...

ALEX

And what makes this speech any different than all the ones you give before? Every time... do you not see it? You're doing it right now. You let the horrible thing happen, then you talk about it afterwards, and then you magically make yourself feel better, but you don't fix the problem. You never did and you never do.

BRYN

That's not true. I have fixed things, and I have saved people.

ALEX

The light of the spotlight grows dimmer again, in a way that's very tangible to you at this point.

BRYN

And if there's some great reckoning, and one of the gods weighs my sins against my accomplishments, that will be the moment when I truly know where the balance is, and until then...

ALEX

Listen to yourself. A great reckoning? How arrogant are you? You're just a child that goes through and makes the same mistakes over and over and just makes evermore grandiose lies about yourself.

BRYN

I'm not saying there will be, but...

ALEX

Just give it up. Just accept the fact that you're not actually going to be improving. This is just a downward spiral and all you're doing is justifying yourself to yourself.

BRYN

Yes, I am justifying myself to myself. I know myself better. I know who I am. I know what I've become, Aziza. And the real Aziza would see that understand me too.

ALEX

The light dims even further. You're starting to lose sight of the audience entirely. No, you can say what you want. I'm not going to let you talk yourself out of this, where you talk your way out of everything else. This is your fault. This was all YOUR fault.

BRYN

I'm not trying to persuade you. I guess I'm just explaining it to myself [unclear: 13:37].

ALEX

This is all your fault Hamid. All your fault. All your fault HAMID... all your fault... ALL YOUR FAULT... ALL YOUR FAULT...

BRYN

But not this...

ALEX

All your fault Hamid... ALL YOUR FAULT [sound effects] ALL YOUR FAULT...

BRYN

I [unclear: 13:51] to change that.

ALEX

ALL YOUR FAULT HAMID.

BRYN

Goodbye Aziza.

ALEX

As she's talking about this, and she's crying as she says it, the light grows darker, and darker, and darker, until eventually you're just left alone in the dark. I'm going to jump to Zolf. Zolf was having a good time. Zolf was having a fun time.

[laughter]

BEN

Yeah, it was great.

ALEX

So I believe you were having an argument about the nature of sort of existentialism versus phenomenology via the virtue of just telling each other you were wrong, in increasingly loud ways.

BEN

Err... it was more telling Feryn that he needed to up his game.

[Group Laughter]

ALEX

Fair... maybe if you'd up your game, I wouldn't have been trapped down 're... umm?

BEN

Game had nothing to do with it. I was bored. I kicked the support beam, and I caused the cave in.

ALEX

Yeah, and then you didn't fix it. You just left me here.

BEN

What do you mean fix it?

ALEX

You didn't even try.

BEN

Of course I tried. You were crushed to death.

ALEX

No, this is always you.

BEN

What do you want me to do?

ALEX

I want you to have been the brother, that I was to you.

BEN

Oh, bloody hell Feryn.

ALEX

What?

BEN

The brother that I was to you?

ALEX

I was a good brother. I was always watching out for you. Always.

BEN

That's as... I can't believe I'm being dragged into this. Look, that's as maybe, but that's not what our parents thought. You were the golden boy. You know, oh Feryn, he'll take over the mine.

ALEX

Don't you dare... don't you dare just try and just flip this on me.

BEN

I'm not flipping anything, Feryn. This is what happened. Because we're talking about things in the past. That we can't make any difference about. Like anything you say to me is something I've thought to myself thousands of times over my life. And I've had to come to terms with it. Like... what... what... give me your best shot. Go on... what can you say to upset me.

ALEX

You want my best shot.

BEN

Yeah, go on.

ALEX

Well I'm not the only person you've killed, am I?

BEN

No, I'm a professional murderer.

[Group laughter]

ALEX

I'm not the only person that you killed through being incompetent?

BEN

Probably not. No.

ALEX

Or weak...

BEN

We destroyed the World's economy... or Europe economy... or Europe and North Africa's economy. Economy for a lot of people.

ALEX

That's a lot of bad you've don there.

BEN

Yeah it is.

ALEX

Do you not ever think the wrong brother was left down here?

BEN

I don't know. But you got crushed and I didn't. Like... I don't know... I didn't have control over that, nor did you. That's dumb luck.. or whatever you want to call it...

ALEX

Yeah you did. I got crushed, because you did it.

BEN

Yeah, but I could have knocked out the support beam and it fell on my head. Look I'm not... look I'm responsible for your death, I know that. I've never pretended that I wasn't responsible for your death.

ALEX

The distant rumble that you heard up ahead, if you remember back then, is coming from the opposite direction. It's louder, it seems like a pretty substantial cave in. Feryn doesn't seem to notice.

BEN

Great, OK. And now you're trying to bloody cave in me.

ALEX

I'm not doing anything. This is all you. and it's always been you.

BEN

Whatever... this... OK... this might work, because I'm pretty claustrophobic so...

ALEX

No, what you are... what you are is stubborn and you're just trying trying to fill the space. OK. You're just trying to bash your head against the problem. OK. Maybe if you just didn't do this. If you didn't just stick your heal in, and plant your flag in a random place, you might actually get somewhere.

BEN

Then what do you want me to do? Hang on a minute. You present a lot of problems here. So what else do I do?

ALEX

What do you mean what else you do better...

BEN

Better at what? In what way? What do you mean? Because what you're doing is pointing at bits of random chance of things that we couldn't have possibly known and said do better. Do better how? Do better at what? What do you actually mean? This is generalised like guilt tripping.

ALEX

Give me a perception check.

BEN

That is a 28.

ALEX

The longer that you're talking with Feryn, the less they look like Feryn.

BEN

Ah...

LYDIA

Oh...

BEN

Are they turning into someone, or?

ALEX

The best way I can describe it is... you know when someone's upside down...

BEN

Yes

ALEX

If you keep them upside down too long it stops being a person's face and starts being like... nose, eyes... I don't mean like terrifying... it's just... you don't really see the person... you see what is making their face. It's a recognised phenomenon.

BEN

And then you stick googly eyes on their chin and it becomes really funny.

ALEX

Yeah exactly. Exactly that. We're not at the googly eye phase yet. That's what I'm saying.

BEN

OK, OK. No fair enough. But it's becoming alien to me.

ALEX

Yeah. It's the components are Feryn, but it's becoming actively alien. And the rumbles are growing louder. And just look, OK. All you do is you just keep saying that you're doing the right thing and that you keep telling and naysaying him and putting everyone else down, because you can't face the fact that you're the reason everything goes wrong. Always have been.

BEN

Hang on a minute. I don't think I do the right thing. I'm trying, but I don't know if I'm doing the right thing. I've never pretended to know if I'm doing the right thing.

ALEX

Well why bother.

BEN

Because you've got to try.

ALEX

Why? I mean I don't actually think you need a reason.

BEN

Because you do. Because that's what people do. Because, if you don't try, things can't get better. For you, or for the people that come after.

ALEX

And what happens when you try and things get worse? Like they always do.

BEN

That's called life.

ALEX

Feryn is starting to not even look like a dwarf anymore.

BEN

Fair enough.

ALEX

Sorry I'm just... I have to occasionally drop in a detail, otherwise it's just in the wind a little bit.

BEN

I don't have anything to say to that, I think I'm getting at.

ALEX

The rumble is growing dangerously close. As far as you're concerned a sensorily speaking, a cave in is coming your way.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

Some catastrophic.

BEN

OK. I just like sit down.

ALEX

Look OK. fair enough...

BEN

Whatever you are, just shut up and sit down for a second.

[Laughter]

BEN

Just sit and be quiet.

ALEX

Why?

BEN

Why not? All you're doing is shouting at me, for no particular reason. I'm shot because it was your fault. Yet you've already tried, it ain't worked.

ALEX

Yeah...

BEN

Choose a different angle or shut up.

ALEX

Right you can have your little chat if you want, but it's still going to be your fault. Because it's all your fault and it's always been your fault.

BEN

[unclear: 19:56]

ALEX

And everyone under your command, it's their fault.

BEN

No. Just... just...

ALEX

Which means it's your fault. Because it's always your fault.

BEN

Just sit down.

ALEX

It's your fault. I'M NOT GOING TO SIT DOWN. It's your fault. It's always your fault. It's always been your fault. It's [sound effects]. You see where I'm going with this?

BEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah... and so while he is doing that, I'm like sitting down. I'm eyes closed. I'm trying to regulate my breathing. I know a cave in is coming. I know it's probably not real. I'm still terrified of it. But I'm trying to just be calm because there is nothing else to do.

ALEX

The cave in sweeps upon you.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

As we Segway TO OUR NEW CHALLENGER. I am going to jump to... Helen.

HELEN

Yes. I think the last thing I said to Grizzop was that I thought Grizzop would be more pragmatic than to blame me for all of his problems.

ALEX

Yes, you did.

HELEN

Azu is just going to sort of look at Grizzop for a little while.

Ben

He looks furiously back tears leaking from his face.

HELEN

Umm... err... Grizzop, for what it's worth, which appears to not be very much, but I'm going to take the chance, while I have someone who looks like you here, I'm really sorry. I'm really sorry.

BEN

You're right. it doesn't matter much, because I'm here, Sasha's gone...

HELEN

Yeah...

BEN

You... aren't good enough. You can't save anyone really. You can't do anything right. Like Eryn obviously knew that. You've seen how he speaks to you. He thinks you're good for nothing. He actually...

HELEN

No he doesn't.

BEN

He does. He actually has faith in Aphrodite. He's such a powerful spell caster. You... you can hardly get anything going, when the going gets tough. You might have... look I'm not going to say... you might have faith in Aphrodite, but... I don't think Aphrodite has faith in you.

HELEN

Ha. Grizzop would you like to a... would you like to leave this room at all with me or do you want to stand here and have a go?

BEN

What you think I haven't wondered around? You've think I've not tried. I've tried. There's no way out. I'm trapped. I'm trapped, and you trapped me.

HELEN

Hmm...

BEN

Sasha was here. But she left, and she ain't come back. She's gone. Just gone...

HELEN

Yeah... Sasha had a really good life, actually.

ALEX

Big old rumbles in the distance there. That was definitely a whole district that went that time.

BEN

Do you really think that? Do you think...

HELEN

Yeah, she told me so...

BEN

Do you think a letter, that came to you after thousands and thousands of years, was definitely her? Right?

HELEN

Oh yeah... it was her.

ALEX

Would you stop destroying such large amounts of my elaborate like...
hellscape...

[Laughter]

ALEX

It's quite tricky to build in the first place, and you just tearing through it.

HELEN

Look, one of the things about Azu is, she's kind of like me, which is when she's
sure of something, she remains sure of it.

BEN

It's making it tough, I've got to say.

ALEX

I believe in you Ben.

[Laughter]

HELEN

I know, that's your problem Ben!

BEN

It certainly is...

[laughter]

ALEX

Feel the hatred surge through you Ben.

BEN

You don't think that was just somebody pretending? A meritocratic trick?

HELEN

I think they probably had other things on their mind... But you know what Grizzop, I'm going to go...

BEN

Yeah fine.

HELEN

You can come and try and fix things, if you want, and I will do whatever you think I can do. Do you think I can do anything?

BEN

From experience, no.

HELEN

Yeah, you're not Grizzop. Alright, I'll see you later, alright. She's going to turn around and walk out of the room.

ALEX

Well, as you start heading off the building that you in itself even starts... you start seeing chunks fall, pillars start to crumble, and it starts to... basically, cease to be.

HELEN

Azu's fine with that. She's like... "Well, if I'm dead, then I'm already dead and it's clearly not real here so... let's just see".

BEN

I'm assuming, as you're leaving, back inside the space, your hearing "it's all your fault... it's all your fault.... It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..., It's all your fault..."

ALEX

Yeh... thank you. Wow...

HELEN

[unclear: 24:19].

ALEX

OK. Now that seems a sensible place for a break. We'll take a break, and then I'm going to give Cel my best shot... but you know... I'm... I'm... you know... swinging and missing and I'm at least two strikes down. I don't think I can count Ben as my own but... I really don't want to go two for three... so... I'll see what I can come up with in the break.

ALEX

And welcome back. Right. I'm limber... I'm limbered... I'm oiled.

BEN

He had a rocky montage in the break.

[laughter]

LYDIA

But would like meanness and grief...

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

It was just lots of unreasonable demands, that couldn't possibly be met.

HELEN

Drawing angry faces on things...

[Laughter]

ALEX

No, putting lots of full stops at the end of text, so that the tone is ambiguous...

HELEN

And no kisses at the end!

[Laughter]

ALEX

OK. So jumping back in to Cel, we are jumping back with basically screams, terror, everyone running and some big approaching monster coming from the wilds.

LYDIA

Cool.

ALEX

People seem more afraid of Cel then they do of the monster.

LYDIA

Yeah, Cel's going to kind of look down interestedly at the claws...

ALEX

Covered in viscera by the way...

LYDIA

Covered in blood, I'm sure... "Hey... so... I mean this is interesting. I wonder if this is what I actually looked like that night, or whether this is like my nightmare's version of what I did that night, because you know it's... it's... but maybe you don't know, but it's always been kind of unclear to me, and so... yeah I don't...". So Cel moves through this as if it's like 3D cinema... like...

ALEX

Oh my gosh, I've realised what's happening.

LYDIA

Yeah?

ALEX

I accidentally just made a lucid dream simulator for everyone, and it's watching you all... How would you deal with a lucid dream? This is fascinating now... yeah...

HELEN

In my experience, I fly away in lucid dreams!

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Like that was Cel was literally trying to do!

[Group laughter].

LYDIA

So the... the walkaround... it's as if they're going through a kind of frozen VR... So like... "oh look, that's the town... that's the town hall... like I was... I'm pretty sure that this is, this is as my nightmares, because I... I think it wasn't that colour... I don't..."

ALEX

As you're saying this, I would say that broadly speaking, the population seems to split into two groups...

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

Half, seem to be fleeing you deeper into the wilds...

LYDIA

Right...

ALEX

And the second that are out of sight you hear... awful, awful sounds of... something feeding upon them. The remainder seem to be forming some kind of militia. I think a Frankensteinian mob, to move against you.

LYDIA

Is Hayley anywhere?

ALEX

Yes, Hayley's at the front.

BEN

Also, sorry is a Frankensteinian monsters' mob...

[Group laughter].

HELEN

Ah... but he might have been using Frankensteinian to refer to the novel...

ALEX

I mean. I was. So actually, it's a Frankensteinian novel mob. God, I can't say that quickly!

BEN

It's a modern promethea mob.

ALEX

[Laughter]

LYDIA

There's a [unclear: 27:11] here, in messing up a series of mutagens, Cel plays both Frankenstein and the monster... in this kind of thing.

ALEX

It's a tough analogy, and it's not really coming together how I'd hoped...

[Laughter]

LYDIA

Cel... once Cel spots Hayley, they do kind of pause. Like... OK. This is harder... this is harder than I expected. I... I'm probably not even using words right now, as far as you're perceiving...

ALEX

Saying that, as they're yelling at you, they seem distraught with you...

LYDIA

Yep...

ALEX

You don't understand any words...

LYDIA

No.

ALEX

You don't understand anything from them.

LYDIA

I'm going to guess this is because on that night I... I mean... look I don't know... if you're trying to draw this from my memories, you have to kind of think about the fact that memory isn't really a static thing right? Every time you remember something, you are re-writing it, according to the context of what you've experienced since. So, my belief about how this all happened, you know what... what would be really cool, is if we can go back to...

ALEX

As Cel is doing this... because I have to interject, because otherwise it will go on and on... because I know how Cel rolls...

LYDIA

Yeah...

ALEX

The large creature breaks out of the wilds...

LYDIA

Yeah...

ALEX

Behind Cel. Sorry to interrupt but...

LYDIA

Yeah, no... that's... that's... like Cel is created as a character that requires interruption.

ALEX

Yep.

[laughter]

LYDIA

Like that's a... you know... but from the beginning they were created that way and I trust you all to interrupt at the right point. That's the... that's the point. Cel turns around... what does the monster look like Alex?

ALEX

Cel.

LYDIA

Oh, right. Cool. Oh cool. So like to save space, you've just made two of us... That's... that's efficient. Now...

ALEX

It roars, and you can just make out through the ammonisation of fangs that make up its mouth, something akin to the words... [sound effect].

LYDIA

So, to an extent yes, though I would argue...

ALEX

It charges you...

LYDIA

Yeah... Cel holds the claws up, but doesn't really fight back.

ALEX

It charges, just yelling... [sound effects] ALL YOUR FAULT...

LYDIA

So...

ALEX

I am then going to do something which you may not have been expecting...

LYDIA

Right...

ALEX

Which is... you have no ability to react to this.

LYDIA

Ah... OK.

ALEX

It tackles you to the ground, and begins attempting to basically savage you and as everything goes dark, you see your own face savaging you, before it all fades away.

LYDIA

Grim.

ALEX

With that in mind, could everyone please role initiative?

BEN

[Laughter]

HELEN

Umm... that's a 17. Who'd have thought I could roll so high.

LYDIA

10 from Cel.

BEN

21.

BRYN

22.

ALEX

Nice.

BRYN

Do you want me to roll for Skraak as well?

ALEX

Yes please.

BRYN

5.

ALEX

Hamid, you come too. You are tumbling through a void, there are no stars in this void, but it is full of shards... shards falling along with you, as if are slivers of glass, and each sliver of glass showing... to your eye... a different state, some fire, water, screaming... one over there seems to have all cogs...

LYDIA

Is that the element of surprise! Sorry...

[group laughter].

BRYN

Hey...

HELEN

Very good, very good.

ALEX

Lydia... I am very... very... very impressed! That's the best joke we've had, in weeks. I'm sorry... Fan F***KING tastic... you leave that in, and you bleep it! That was amazing.

[Group laughter]

LYDIA

What I like is that once jokes get passed a certain level, other people laugh, but Alex... like, goes over a crest and stops laughing, and just compliments you.

ALEX

Yeah, it stops being funny and starts being like professional respect...

LYDIA

Yeah...

ALEX

That was a well craft... delicious... love it. Fantastic. Would subscribe. 5 out of 5. Moving on from the element of surprise though, these slivers are seemingly moving randomly chaotically around you. Could you please give me a perception check?

BRYN

25.

ALEX

You are covered in **eye core**, or something similar. It is viscus, it is sticky, and you are grabbed by something long and **tentacally**, and as you follow it from where it's grabbing you in your chest, up into the main body, you see, what appears to be, the remnants of the creature that you were facing in The Garden of Yerlick. The one with the multiple torsos and so on. It's larger than you originally suspected. It has wings, a lot of them. But it is not gargantuan or anything like that. It turns out you did see maybe... maybe half of it poking through in the garden, the rest is an assemblage of limbs, wings and faces, that shouldn't be there. The tentacles themselves are grappling you and looking around. You see the rest of your party, similarly held. The only one who seems to be awake is Wild, and he seems to be struggling viciously.

BRYN

If I'm grappled, do I have the ability to cast spells?

ALEX

Time to look up grappled rules...

BEN

The worst sequence of words in the English language.

ALEX

The answer is, not if they have somatic components or material components, because you're grappled.

BRYN

I mean sorcerers do not do material components, but... they do do somatic components. So basically, no I cannot cast spells. Which I guess means, I try and wriggle free of the tentacle? Which I believe is an escape artist check? But that's not a skill that I have, so it's likely to be really bad.

ALEX

Cool. Yeah I'd say escape artist is probably the way to go on this one. Go for it. May the dice be with you.

BRYN

I've rolled a 9. So 13.

ALEX

I am afraid you do not succeed. You remained grappled by the creature.

BRYN

That makes sense. No other actions are available to me. That is the end of my turn.

ALEX

OK. In which case then, we move down the initiative order to... Zolf - you find yourself in the same situation as Hamid.

BEN

Sure, I will attempt to break the grapple.

ALEX

Give me either an opposed combat manoeuvre roll or an escape artist check.

BEN

Yeah, as far as I can see I don't...it's not an oppose, it's just a... I make a combat manoeuvre check with the DC equal to the opponent's CMD.

ALEX

Oh, so there we go then. That's fine. There still wouldn't have been enough for Bryn I'm afraid.

BEN

Combat manoeuvre. OK. So that is a 19.

ALEX

Insufficient.

BEN

OK. I remain grappled.

ALEX

OK. In which case then, Azu, you are up. You find yourself in a dark void.

[Laughter]

HELEN

Well, she's also going to attempt to break the grapple... Good luck me... And that is... 23.

ALEX

Insufficient for this creature.

HELEN

Oh my God.

BEN

We are a bit boned.

BRYN

Yeah...

HELEN

Umm...

ALEX

In which case then, Cel you are up.

LYDIA

Right. Reading the grappling rules, which I've taken the chance to look, there is no mention of drinking extracts, but I'm going to assume that chugging a potion would be equivalent to a somatic component?

BRYN

I would assume so, yeah...

LYDIA

So, not going to do that, just going to wiggle.

[Laughter]

ALEX

So, this is an escape artist then?

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah... this is an escape artist, which it's just given me a black +4 [unclear: 34:49] and since they rolled 5, literally all game, rolling D20s, Cel has not rolled above 6. I am going to restart my dice rolling app... in case there's something wrong... but for now, rolled a 5, so total 9.

ALEX

If you do anything else, that is insufficient, I'm afraid.

LYDIA

Fruitless wiggle.

ALEX

So moving on to Sumutnyerl, who I may have neglected to mention... you know... it's not even that big a deal, is a bear... might have a few little bonuses at play here. Oh fall short, but barely...

BEN

Barely [laughter]

ALEX

So Sumutnyerl is going... oh nice... yeah... Sumutnyerl is struggling and tearing of them seems to almost... and then the tentacle wraps around again, you get the impression that if this was to come round again, Sumutnyerl might well break out single handed. Wild meanwhile, fails. Would you roll for Skraak? This is not Wild's thing.

BEN

Yep. How long has passed in the game?

ALEX

Currently we're in round 1. Do you mean since [unclear: 35:51]?

BEN

Just before the battle with the trees, Hamid cast heroism on Skraak. Heroism lasts at that point, lasted 90 minutes. Has it run out, or is it still effected?

ALEX

No its still up... Still up.

BEN

Skraak makes an escape artist check, and Skraak has actual points in escape artist.

ALEX

Skraak has a couple of very specific jobs, and this is one of them.

BEN

I only rolled a 10, which means the total is 23, which I think we decided was not quite enough.

ALEX

It's not quite enough unfortunately. But that's just because of a bad roll. In which case then, top of the very depressing round. Hamid you are up.

BRYN

Hamid has an action that does not require somatic components. Hamid breaths dragon fire.

BEN/LYDIA

Yeah... hurray...

ALEX

I knew you had it, but wondered if you'd use it.

BEN

You've still got to do the blooming concentration check though don't you.

LYDIA

Yeah...

BRYN

It's only once a day...

HELEN

Good luck, good luck...

ALEX

How many times do you intend to fall through a chaos void whilst grappled?!
Oh I didn't use it right. We're saving it for a more dangerous situation.

BRYN

Indeed, indeed. Concentration check. I rolled a 19.

ALEX

That will be enough I think.

BRYN

So, something like 29?

ALEX

Oh... it's close, but yeah...

BRYN

Or maybe... because I might also add... also add my charisma bonus. So it might well be 33.

ALEX

That is sufficient.

HELEN

Wow.

BRYN

The creature gets to make a reflex save.

ALEX

Oh, what's the reflex save... I mean it almost certainly not going to make it.

BRYN

I mean it's not too hard. Because I don't... because it's not a spell. I don't get my kind of bonuses to it. DC21 for half damage.

ALEX

Fails horrendously...

[Laughter]

BRYN

55 fire damage.

HELEN

Nice.

ALEX

OK, so as I said before, this was the creature that you were fighting earlier. It was wounded, it was effectively retreating from you tactically earlier. It is clear that you are covered in **eye core** that is still coming from it, and you basically... just manage to square right in its main sort of hub... it's central mass. [sound effects]. The three torsos just separate out from one another, pulling all of you in slightly different directions...

LYDIA

Oh...

BEN

Ur oh...

ALEX

Tumbling away from one another. Can everyone please give me a single reflex... oh no...ha ha... this is what the first of the stacked saves goes off...

BEN

The first... we haven't even got through the... oh no...

ALEX

Yep... I can't believe I've managed to stack saves across multiple episodes... yay...

BEN

Oh, I think I did quite good in that one.

HELEN

Oh, but I did a weirdly good reflex save at the beginning.

BEN

Cel didn't... or did you Cel?

LYDIA

Cel's was low. It's the [unclear: 38:31] save that they got an actual [unclear: 38:33].

ALEX

Azu and Hamid... you manage to grab hold of each other, as all of you are flung randomly out into the chaos. You two manage to hold on to one another.

LYDIA

Ben, this isn't reminiscent of anything at all is it?!

BEN

No, I don't know... I don't know... yeah...

LYDIA

No, it's fine...

ALEX

Every single one of you slams into a different shard, and with that...

BRYN

Oh my God...

LYDIA

I hope I get surprise...

ALEX

And I'll end the episode there.

BEN

Alex!

BRYN

Oh my God Alex...

BEN

We'll be separated across plains...

ALEX

It's fine. It's all fine.

BRYN

Why are you splitting the party, you monster?

BEN?

Across plains...

LYDIA

Alexander explain?

BRYN?

But I can't use plain on a shift, because it plonks you down in a random place within miles.

LYDIA

It's fine...

ALEX

It's probably not fine... It's fine.... It's really bad...

BEN

Oh goodness...

HELEN

This is not fine...

ALEX

Well, as always, we get to look forward to the next one. I hope everyone has enjoyed their journey through, basically trauma town. Like, just... the worst... just the worst...

BEN

No, it's a trauma theme park.

[Laughter]

BEN

We went from attraction to attraction...

[Laughter]

BEN

Being like... does this hurt? How about this? How about this one?

HELEN

Would you like to sample this vintage?

[Laughter]

BEN

Yeah, quite...

HELEN

Harvested from the trauma of Rome.

BRYN

There's definitely things Alex could have hurt Hamid worst with. He didn't do his worst upon me.

HELEN

Yeah...

ALEX

You had already damaged the creature. I had to give you a little edge.

HELEN

So the creature is just like... oh I may as well.

ALEX

Well, I want to know what happens next, so I'm going to call the episode here. Err... for everyone else, you have to wait until next week. Hahaha... time to have some fun and figure out how bad this is going to be.

HELEN

OK.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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