

RQG – EPISODE 191 – FRIEND IN LOW PLACES

Content Warnings

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 191 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

So you are all, as far as Cel is concerned, in a large underwater base populated by some people who are really into their like morse code, that is an accurate summation of the situation as far as I'm aware.

LYDIA

I mean it makes sense given the evidence that they have available.

ALEX

So with that in mind I'm going to provide no more context because I don't feel like it today so I'm just going to ask you to jump straight into it wiiiiiiiiith Azu and Hamid first, I'm going to pick up exactly where we left off.

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

Which was a large, clawed hand clicking away and tearing a chunk out of the doorway.

HELEN

Oh God Hamid can't see this, only Azu can see this.

BRYN

Well no because it's glowing so.

HELEN

Oh God ok.

ALEX

Really helpfully it's glowing blue, that way I don't have to waste the horror on like unseen things, none of that nonsense nah. So with that.

HELEN

Azu begins to try and move away.

ALEX

A second claw comes out on the other side of the doorway, this thing is big for medium sized. It's not a large creature but it is you know stooping through a doorway kind of thing and then it pokes its head out and it stares seemingly blindly. It looks like, it's hard to explain the initial reaction as at first you think oh you know person, scary monster person, it isn't though it doesn't behave in that way. At best it looks to be some kind of skeleton or corpse of some kind that has been completely taken over by glowing blue plant matter. It is, the plant matter that is omitting light and it has a skull like a chunk of exposed skull that is looking but there are no eyes in the sockets whatsoever and it doesn't appear to have any replacement things for the eyes but it does [sound effect] as it turns its blank staring face left and then right and then left again.

HELEN

Oh it's using echo location, it's like a bat.

ALEX

As it moves you can see that it has tiny little sparks jumping from the claws to the metal that might be embedded in the doorway like nails and things like that and where it is standing and then looking left and right you start seeing small plant growth coming out of the woodwork.

HELEN

Oh God.

ALEX

It doesn't appear to be fungal.

BRYN

Oh my God.

HELEN

It appears to be like, almost like blue clover growing up out of the doorway.

BEN

So sorry just very quickly and other people who have made this connection and I might just be behind but are you telling me that that mould that we found in the **Shohin** Institute wasn't just a trap it was actually a clue?

ALEX

You're going to have to narrow it down, I've thrown a lot of mould at you over the years Ben.

BEN

The one.

HELEN

The exploding mould.

BEN

The one what got Cel quite badly?

BRYN

Wasn't that prismatic mould?

BEN

Oh that was prismatic mould. Ok I was just wondering.

ALEX

Like I said I've thrown a lot of mould at you over the years, some of them yes, some of them no, I lose track, I'd have to break out my mould prep table.

LYDIA

There was a big mould in Q.

BEN

That's true.

LYDIA

Cold mould.

BEN

There's the cold mould from Q.

HELEN

Yeah there was a mould that sort of like went off in Cel's face or something.

ALEX

See here's the thing this is a confession I've never had to say on this, on this gaming recording, I'm a real fan of mould as a hazard like legitimately moulds are just really interesting as a hazard ok.

LYDIA

It's very much like magnus in that much of the horror is tempered by young creatives attempting to make a living in London like oh look our housing stock it's mould. Ah fun.

ALEX

So one other thing that does happen again is with the [sound effect] starts looking around and then it sort of steps its way out into the hallway and even though it is out of the doorway it is still hunched over, it seems to have unusually long arms, unusually long legs and so on but it is a humanoid skeleton that has had joints extended between the bones so look there's a, there's a femur but it just has an enormous amount of elbow let's put it that way.

HELEN

This is disgusting.

ALEX

It isn't, it doesn't appear to be sort of wet or like gooey or anything like that.

HELEN

[Crying sound effect] wet skeleton!

ALEX

It's just thick plant matter integrated with a skeleton and it's just [sound effect].

HELEN

I know technically all of our skeletons are wet right now but you know what I mean.

LYDIA

They are not actually a skeleton is dry because it's inside sacs.

HELEN

Ah.

ALEX

Bones is dry until they are not dry and then when you get wet bones and wet bones are bad. You don't want wet bones.

HELEN

Anyway.

ALEX

Anyway the clicking menace is there.

HELEN

And on that comforting note.

ALEX

As a final detail wherever the feet stand as well appears to be those similar, those blue clovers growing up from solid metal.

BRYN

This is, I'm scared.

HELEN

So am I.

ALEX

It's not like a whole bush is growing out it's just like a patch of it just grows and then stays there sustained and sort of moving gently.

BRYN

I'm going to whisper to Azu as softly as I can, hide or flee?

ALEX

It's head immediately turns and angles towards where you are.

HELEN

Oooh.

ALEX

It starts moving slowly closer.

BRYN

That's kind of what I wanted to happen because the thing is if it's going to react to sound the second we start moving it's going to react like I can move almost silently, Azu cannot like just so we're probably going to have to fight it.

ALEX

You do you.

HELEN

Azu is going to stay completely still.

ALEX

It doesn't leap forward, it does creep forward and then stop again in.

HELEN

Because we're behind, aren't we behind like an overturned cart thing?

ALEX

Yes you are.

HELEN

Azu is hoping that she's like being mistaken for part of a market stall.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Just stays completely still.

ALEX

It steps forward and then you see it [sound effect] and it suddenly leaps forward and grabs what appears to be a rat or something similar that is in one of the market stalls basically, holds it up for a moment, you see plant matter growing from the living animal.

HELEN

Ugh.

ALEX

And then it puts it down again.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

And the rat scurries off trailing plant matter as it goes and then it seems very fascinated by the market stall that the rat came from and it is just very [sound effect] examining it and moving its head around and just generally examining it and poking it.

BRYN

For the listeners at home Alex is performing a lot of these movements for us on this video call.

LYDIA

Extremely inhuman.

ALEX

I'm not actually conscious I apologise.

HELEN

No it's great, it's wonderful.

BRYN

No it's great, it's raising the atmosphere.

LYDIA

You're just revealing your true nature and we're all glad to be recording at a distance.

ALEX

So what do you do?

HELEN

Azu is going to continue to do nothing.

ALEX

Understood.

BRYN

Hamid is going to very slowly and very carefully take a coin out of his bag of holding, a single coin.

ALEX

Give me a stealth check.

HELEN

Alright Hamid we know you're rich.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

It needs a tip Azu that's all it wants. 25.

ALEX

25 yeah you manage to do so, it doesn't seem to be reacting, it seems primarily interested in whatever the rat was doing and it's still poking around that market stall.

BRYN

I think we both continue to wait if that's what Azu is doing, that's what Hamid is doing but he wants to have something to throw to create a noise elsewhere if he needs it very suddenly.

ALEX

Ok at which point then eventually you do hear some more distant of that larger [sound effect] further out into the cave and then this one sort of puts her head up and [sound effect].

LYDIA

Oh they are friends!

ALEX

And then backs it way, it walks actively backwards.

LYDIA

Oh they're not friends?

ALEX

Reaches the doorway, the skull pivots 180 degrees and the joints invert themselves.

BRYN

Oh my God Alex.

ALEX

And it claws itself back into the tunnel.

LYDIA

Oh did you have to do the movements?

(Group laughter)

HELEN

That's right Alex just turned his head 180 degrees.

LYDIA

I didn't even know it could turn like that.

HELEN

Oh no. Alex has been an owl all along.

ALEX

And it starts crawling away taking its blue glow with it.

HELEN

Ok Azu is still not going to say anything to try and avoid bringing it back but you said there were other exits and entrances in this big market place right?

ALEX

Oh yeah it moves beyond, it's beyond the realm of your dark vision and even with the dancing light further out it's a large sort of cavernous industrial space.

BRYN

Well I mean the dancing lights went off.

HELEN

Yeah we turned them off.

ALEX

Yeah so you can see what with 60ft is your dark vision? To all intents and purposes you're in the middle of a steam pump market until you hear otherwise.

HELEN

Azu is going to take one step and then stop.

ALEX

Doesn't seem to be anything.

HELEN

If she doesn't hear anything she's going to do another step and then stop and wait and she's going to continue like that until she begins to be able to see any kind of way out.

BRYN

Hamid will probably gently descend back to the ground and hold Azu's hand rather than floating and clinging to her shoulders.

HELEN

Yeah she's holding your hand, not tight enough to hurt but like she is freaking, very quietly freaking.

BRYN

Hamid is too but he still squeezes reassuringly.

HELEN

Aww.

ALEX

Are you moving in the opposite direction to the tunnel?

HELEN

Yes.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

I'm going to jump to Zolf. Zolf you were trying to make your way to Other London proper right?

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

Yeah that's fine to your eye based on the original survival check you think you're going to have to go down a little bit but not much and you start heading down I'm going to assume.

BEN

Hmm mm.

ALEX

And yeah as you're making your way down the stairway you can see that it appears as if all of the doorways are closed, not like chained or anything but just actually like maintained and closed rather than left open so there's not a huge amount of extra info you can get but you make it down and then you start seeing signs of basically more Other London habitation you know a few symbols carved into walls, a couple of signs, a lot of like you know Terry's Pies = Good that kind of stuff posted around the place and as that kind of detrita starts to be a bit more apparent in the stairway you find yourself facing a much larger doorway and to your eye it looks like it would lead into the central market as you once entered into other London once upon a time.

BEN

Cool do that then.

ALEX

Ok.

BEN

As long as there isn't like a horrible blue glow that's going to be like.

ALEX

There is not.

BEN

Big monsters.

ALEX

There is not, can you give me a perception check though?

BEN

Yes. No. That is 13.

ALEX

You hear from the not immediate other side of the doorway but like within that large space that you know is on the other side of that door you hear that larger [sound effect] but it's utterly impossible to place where it could be, it's reverbing around the place, it could be anywhere.

BEN

Ok I mean is there anywhere else for me to go?

ALEX

You could continue down, there's plenty of other doorways but this is the one that you think leads to what you know as Other London proper.

BEN

Sure so the other things would just be like random wandering?

ALEX

Literally yeah.

BEN

Yeah ok.

ALEX

Or back up towards the surface.

BEN

Nope yeah I'll start trying to make my way through this area.

ALEX

As you open the doorway you are greeted with, you're not carrying any natural light sources are you?

BEN

No and I have dark vision.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, you're greeted with a similar situation to what Azu and Hamid had which is yeah some abandoned market stalls at the edge of your dark vision and so on and I would say yeah you can just extrapolate the same info that I gave them because it's yeah it's a very similar set up.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

However.

LYDIA

The skeletons of a long dead orc and halfling.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Little more than dust.

LYDIA

With a calendar that says 18 [sound effect].

BEN

Speaking of skeletons can I see the skeletons plus flesh and clothes kind of moving around at all? I mean Azu is still quite tall.

ALEX

So the space that you are in is far larger than the range of your dark vision.

BEN

Oh right fine.

ALEX

You do not see any blue glow within this large space.

BEN

Good.

ALEX

However what was the original perception check you rolled sorry?

BEN

13.

ALEX

13 yeah you're in a large, abandoned marketplace.

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

That you recognise as where you got jumped ages ago, it is definitely the same space.

BEN

Yeah I'll start exploring the market this has given me the best sight line so hopefully it increases my chances of bumping into something that won't try and kill me.

ALEX

Speaking of bumping into something.

BEN

Oh good.

ALEX

Azu and Hamid can you please give me a perception, in fact could everyone, Hamid, Azu and Zolf all please give me a perception check?

BEN

21.

BRYN

29.

HELEN

22.

ALEX

All three of you believe that you are drawing nearer, you can feel something moving around in the market space with you.

HELEN

Ok.

BRYN

When you say feel is it through the floor like how does?

ALEX

Gentle, gentle shuffle of metal, a little bit of disturbed thing over there.

HELEN

Azu is still not going to speak because she still doesn't know what that is but she is probably going to be ready with her axe just in case she suddenly turns a corner and there's something there but otherwise she is just going to keep making her careful way.

BEN

Zolf doesn't say anything because he knows dark vision is the only possible advantage he has.

ALEX

In which case I am going to jump to Cel.

LYDIA

Hello.

ALEX

The last thing you saw was a big hand reaching into the firelight and basically saying the equivalent of shhhh with a handwave.

LYDIA

Yeah and then Cel was like ah friendly quiet, hey do you understand English and then runs through all the other languages you know draconic, in draconic, Japanese all the.

ALEX

A face comes within the firelight but it's not really looking at you, it's looking elsewhere and then it just goes, you need to lose the light.

LYDIA

Oh. Er ok that's not scary at all, what, ok.

ALEX

The face comes brighter into focus it appears to be an aged, to your eye probably half ogre.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

They appear to be quite grizzled, very large build even for half ogre.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

And they appear to have a shaved head.

LYDIA

Hmm mm.

ALEX

Quite messily shaved and they appear to be wearing yeah western European garb that is utterly filthy but seems very serviceable so like a coat that is quite tight fitting leather and you know so on and is wearing gloves on the other hand and is putting a glove on the first hand that sort of reached out. He appears, this is going to sound odd, he appears to have a comparatively kindly face despite the very, very large like this is as big as a creature can realistically get before they start having you know magical qualities effectively.

LYDIA

Ok Cel you know what I'm going to make a decision, I'm going to make a decision to trust you because I like your eyes.

ALEX

The creature looks concerned at you for a moment.

LYDIA

But yeah.

ALEX

It happened again didn't it Cel?

LYDIA

Oh ok I'm going to call that a sinking feeling.

ALEX

Ok one moment. The creature pulls a note, like an envelope, puts it on the floor in front of you and then backs away trying to show look I'm not aggressive or anything.

LYDIA

Ok I need to keep the light on to read this but then ok.

HELEN

What's on the note?

ALEX

So you open the envelope ok cool, you recognise your own handwriting and it says it's effectively a bullet pointed itemised list of useful contextual information.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Right cool.

ALEX

Point one you have been exposed to a form of obliviate moss.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

Number two you are experiencing severe but temporary memory loss.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

Number three, I know this is true I'm the one that did the research.

LYDIA

Right.

ALEX

Number four this is Gragg, Gragg is pretty cool.

LYDIA

Ok cool.

ALEX

Number six, no sign of the others yet.

ALEX

Number seven, if all of this is news to you I'd listen to Gragg.

LYDIA

Well.

ALEX

Oh and it has your signature at the bottom.

LYDIA

Right. Right well great to meet you again. Cel buries the torch in the ground you know like presumably since other people have said the ground is damp and industrial as wet mud.

ALEX

Yeah it's not especially difficult to do.

LYDIA

I'm not going to set everywhere on fire, anyway, puts the torch out.

ALEX

Gragg then passes you what appears like he's like guiding your hand to it, it feels like a hooded lantern of some kind, something that is going to give you way better direction for light and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and then you hear him picking up the letter and putting it back in the envelope and pocketing it again.

LYDIA

Right so where now?

ALEX

Er we should hmm do this again at the Inn.

LYDIA

Oh right yeah that seemed like a nice place, so yeah what do you do?

ALEX

Shall we jump out of RP for a moment and I can give you some gentle chatter as you're walking back to the Inn. Gragg more or less keeps giving like short

answers and Cel tries not to talk too loudly. The only reason I'm not RP-ing it is because a lot of this is going to be straightforward stuff and it's like hello I am Gragg.

LYDIA

Hi Gragg.

ALEX

I am an Other Londoner which is where you are.

LYDIA

Ok cool yeah.

ALEX

Avoid loud noises and bright lights, food is waiting back at the Inn.

LYDIA

Ooh nice, nice.

ALEX

And he'll tell you more there.

LYDIA

Cool the one thing that Cel will ask, how long have I been here?

ALEX

I know you've been here about three days.

LYDIA

Ok cool. Right did I seem like I was very hungry or lost before that, did it seem like I?

ALEX

No, no, no.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

Well confused but you were looking for your friends.

LYDIA

Right, right I just you know it's was I bouncing around for six months before, I think it's unlikely I would have lasted that long.

ALEX

I would have known.

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah you seem very on it Gragg. Have we got any games we play to pass the time?

ALEX

Poetry.

LYDIA

Ooh lovely.

ALEX

He takes a moment, closes his eyes and screws up his face. You can see little bits of it through the lantern as he is leading you away and then he just starts. I'm curious does Cel have any kind of experience of this or is just going to be coming new?

LYDIA

If just mean poetry that we're writing as an impromptu game?

ALEX

No, no, no I mean actual poetry like.

LYDIA

Yes.

ALEX

Is Cel very, very experienced in the literary field?

LYDIA

I do not think they are very, very experienced but they will have a couple of things like there will be perhaps some elvish poems that their mother drilled into them to learn reluctantly as a child in a rather failed kind of attempt to get them to connect with their mother's kind of culture then there might be some funny and romantic ones that they shared in several different languages with first their fiancé from their youth and their husband.

ALEX

You can choose between knowledge local, knowledge history or linguistics.

LYDIA

Linguistics.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

No history, history. Yes.

ALEX

Ok give me the roll.

LYDIA

Ok, ok I can do this. 27.

ALEX

27 whoa.

LYDIA

Cel knows some good poems.

ALEX

I'll start reading the poem, if you Lydia recognise the poem you know everything about it if you don't I'll give you some limited facts.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

Just as he is wandering along and at some point I think during the recitation of this you might hear a distant [sound effect] but you know he doesn't seem to react too much. So we'll go no more a roving, so late into the night, though the heart be still as loving and the moon be still as bright. For the sword outwears its sheath, and the soul wears out the breast and the heart must pause to breathe and love itself have rest. Though the night was made for loving and the day returns too soon, yet we'll go no more a roving by the light of the moon.

LYDIA

I do not know that poem but I just need listeners to know that Alex has done no editing on his voice that is just what he sounds like.

BRYN

Yeah well we don't know that.

LYDIA

Reading poems.

BRYN

He might edit it later.

LYDIA

Yeah could you make it more?

BRYN

The voice is very impressive I mean obviously.

ALEX

Gragg is never edited, Gragg has no effects.

LYDIA

Oh.

ALEX

You recognise it as from the Western European tradition, you recognise it as a very recent style based on your knowledge you think it's probably, probably a living poet but you're not familiar with this specific poet.

LYDIA

Right yeah I mean you know out of character I'm going to like it's probably going to be a poet we've met isn't it so.

HELEN

Yeah.

BEN

I thought Byron out a bit of narrative irony but I don't know the poem.

LYDIA

Yeah it doesn't sound like him it's not, it's not like pompous enough but maybe he accidentally wasn't pompous in some. Right yes well anyway Cel has a lovely time humming along.

ALEX

I'm going to say you make your way back to the Inn then and re-join everyone else. Sorry as in everyone, I will re-join everyone else, not that you re-join everyone else.

LYDIA

Ah I thought we'd saved some time there.

ALEX

You know because they are all dead so that would be really weird.

LYDIA

Yeah.

ALEX

Yeah that's fine.

LYDIA

I mean in another plane.

ALEX

So jumping back to the market place there is a particularly loud [sound effect] and then one of those creatures steps out into the market place at a very, very high walkway like up and up and up and away but enough of the light gives out that it suddenly is shining quite a bright light across the room. All of you simultaneously become aware of each other converging at opposite ends of the market to one another. I'm going to, for the sake of narrative say you were all go still for a second, but the sudden bright light just warmth filling the room from up top for a moment just exposes you all creeping towards one another.

BEN

I guess I'll point at the thing and kind of give a wah gesture and then probably a shake of the head.

HELEN

Azu is going to try and gesture to like stop.

BRYN

Yeah Hamid just holds a finger up and is staying as still as possible. I mimic them [sound effect].

ALEX

If you're all staying still it starts navigating the walkway for a moment and then it reaches the end of the walkway and just starts navigating the side of the wall as easily, seemingly flawlessly.

LYDIA

Well literally flawlessly there's no floor?

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And then it crawls its way and then it navigates its way through at first what looks to be a solid wall and then you can see what is happening is it's actually very, very dense piping and so on and it seems to be, what is peculiar, flexing it out of the way as if moving through vines, solid metal.

BEN

Oh my God.

BRYN

Oh.

LYDIA

Ah.

ALEX

And then disappears through that dense intricacy. The thing stayed bent so then it disappears through as close as solid wall as makes no difference leaving you all back into pitch darkness.

BRYN

Zolf, Zolf?

BEN

I'm not going to say anything until we're closer.

HELEN

Ok Azu is going to start moving towards Zolf then.

ALEX

It is easy to navigate towards one another once you're aware that there's someone else in the space just you know a light little tap here, a little scratch there, it's enough to hone in on one another comparatively easily.

HELEN

Ok.

BEN

Where's Cel?

HELEN

Don't know.

BRYN

Right.

BRYN

Haven't seen them.

BEN

Ok then we go look for them.

HELEN

Yeah absolutely.

BEN

Where have you come from?

BRYN

A tunnel up there.

BEN

Right.

BRYN

Hamid points in hopefully the right direction.

ALEX

Yeah it's been pretty much a straight shot so it's quite easy to do that's fine.

BEN

Right I came from that way so let's go another way.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

Ok at which point Hamid you receive another sending. We'll convene your party soon, avoid the lights, you have friends here. And I'll take a break there.

BRYN

That seems a nice chilled.

LYDIA

That's cool not terrifying at all.

HELEN

Oh Alex.

ALEX

I don't know what you mean, I gave you like the nicest, gentlest welcome ever.

LYDIA

Yeah Cel's having a great time.

ALEX

You've got poetry, you've got nice gentle faces but we'll talk about that over the break.

[BREAK]

ALEX

And welcome back I am going to use that creepy moment to jump across to Cel.

LYDIA

Yay.

ALEX

I'm going to say that you have made it back to the Inn.

LYDIA

Hmm mm.

ALEX

As you do so Gragg sets up a few more perimeter traps and so on. Steps inside, locks it up and then sets to in the kitchen through the back doorway. He encourages you to you know, take a seat.

LYDIA

I just, I just have a couple of questions just I know I probably would have written it down if it was a really big thing but like what have I been up in the last few days and I notice that like the traps, you've made the traps, usually like often I would make the traps was there a reason, was I unwell, why did I not make the traps. I'm really worried about past me.

ALEX

Help me with the cooking.

LYDIA

Oh ok, ok.

ALEX

Gragg basically sets to some of the pots and pans in the kitchen and starts a little small like effectively lighting up the oven and so on and then effectively again I'm not going to RP all of it, it pretty much comes in at you were found by

Gragg in what he calls like memory moss like a big old patch of moss type stuff incapacitated, he dragged you from there. The long terms effects of that, this is a moss that you like, you've heard it by that name before, it does scan, it can knock you out and then it will leave your memories a little bit patchy for a couple of days.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

In those two days basically Gragg has been assisting you to cast ever wider search patterns for your group with no sign of them so far and the traps are because this is one of a few bolt holes that Gragg has.

LYDIA

So I've made some traps elsewhere, I didn't just leave you to make all the traps because that seems unlikely.

ALEX

I'm going to jump in the RP from here and go oh no yeah you're way better at traps than me.

LYDIA

Oh no that's not what I was trying to say it's just you know.

ALEX

This is the first time we've slept here which makes sense why your memory might.

LYDIA

Right ok, ok.

ALEX

Might reset.

LYDIA

That makes some sense, it wasn't that I think I'm better at this just that I and usually I would help and so if I didn't you know.

ALEX

No my traps are shocking.

LYDIA

Well you know mine are often as well so literally.

ALEX

Yours are shocking in a good way.

LYDIA

Yes literally shocking. Right ok well I'm glad I wrote that note, I'm glad I wrote that note that's good. I seem to have covered all the relevant.

ALEX

I do have some news.

LYDIA

Ooh what?

ALEX

Something's happening, the well the monsters, they are active.

LYDIA

Oh.

ALEX

So someone is down here.

LYDIA

Oh I know I don't want to ask you to put yourself at risk by following them around but I, I actually I think I might go straight away and because if they are trying to find someone that might be my friends. If there has been three days right I just realised Cel would have told Gragg the names?

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

LYDIA

So Gragg knows, Gragg knows Zolf and Hamid?

ALEX

No Gragg met Zolf and Hamid and served them a pie a few years ago.

LYDIA

Ah ok. Ok.

ALEX

Gragg knows Sasha very well.

LYDIA

But I mean when you say know you know what actually you're right because I was going to say but it was quite an eventful day but from what we know about Gragg's life every day was quite an eventful day you know.

ALEX

It's just not, I'm real sorry if Sasha was here it would be like hey, Sasha is not.

BRYN

Hamid helped him invent Keeesh does that mean nothing to Gragg?

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Yeah that is actually a big point, that is a genuinely relevant plot point.

ALEX

That is a relevant plot point that I have already accounted for.

LYDIA

Ooooh.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Always thinking. Always thinking.

BRYN

Gragg might just be terrible at names.

HELEN

Yeah.

LYDIA

Yeah. He's like oh you mean Keeesh boy?

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

So I am going to jump back into RP for one moment which is.

LYDIA

Sure.

ALEX

I'm actually due a briefing today anyway it's likely that they'll know more.

LYDIA

Ok but I just think I should go like right now because they could be in a fight right now and they could have dropped into some moss and not know where they are and then if they've dropped into moss and don't like remember how to use a sword that could be a problem.

ALEX

I just checked the moss.

LYDIA

Ok, ok. Alright.

ALEX

If you want to look you can but.

LYDIA

No, no I trust you, I trust you Gragg that's, I, you're right I shouldn't just shoot off and do things impulsively you know it has got me into, but then not doing it has also got me into trouble. It's hard not to get into trouble in life isn't it?

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

At least I've always found it so. How about I just sit here, stop being, you know losing your memory it leaves you a little unmoored, are we underwater? Cel's not, Cel's going to be Cel for a while.

ALEX

Yeah so Gragg is basically happy to provide a bunch more context. I'm going to do a little bit of a cheat here though as a GM and say I'm deliberately holding back Gragg giving a complete explanation of every single thing that has happened while you've been gone, while people have been gone, because then I'm going to be repeating it so I'll be open and say there's a GM fudge going which is everyone will get answers together.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

Because otherwise I'm doing it four, five times in a row.

LYDIA

Trust you on that thank you for the clarity.

ALEX

In terms of the rest of the party then so you have received your sending and you have managed to evade horrible beasties up to now, what' the plan, where are you going?

BRYN

I mean so firstly Hamid will have responded to that sending with something like what, where, you still haven't told me who you are and then he will have explained to Zolf that he has now received two sendings from this mysterious voice which have contained advice to avoid the light which makes sense but is also a bit confusing and scary.

BEN

Alright well if you're lost and you want someone to find you, you stay put.

BRYN

The monsters seem to hunt by sound so it does seem like the safest thing to do is stay still, it helps you stay quiet.

BEN

Right. Probably the best idea we've got now.

HELEN

Do you think they've got Cel?

BEN

Or Skraak or Oscar?

HELEN

[Gasp] Wilde.

BEN

I mean if they've got an infrastructure enough to send sendings you know they, they what did they say?

BRYN

They would convene our party soon. That we have friends here.

BEN

Sounds like they've got more people. They are the best information we've got so let's get found by them.

BRYN

Yeah if they know where we are which they don't necessarily have to to send a sending but they might have other ways to find us?

BEN

Probably would have mentioned that if they couldn't find us.

BRYN

Ok are you alright Zolf, where did you?

HELEN

You're very wet Zolf.

BEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Oh.

(Group laughter)

BEN

Don't worry about it.

BRYN

Ok.

BEN

I'll sit down.

ALEX

This is absolutely fine ok cool. I am going to do a bit of a mucky GM like top level stuff here which is after about an hour or so as Gragg said, Gragg starts sort of packing up to head out for this briefing effectively and is encouraging you to do the same and so on.

LYDIA

Oh do I go to the briefings too?

ALEX

It hasn't happened before.

LYDIA

Oh.

ALEX

This is the first one since you got here.

LYDIA

Ok, ok, cool, grand, yes.

ALEX

It's good news, they wouldn't call for one unless something had happened.

LYDIA

Ooh.

ALEX

It might be your Azu and then Hamid and that being here.

LYDIA

And Wilde and Skraak and Zolf.

ALEX

Oh yeah all of them.

LYDIA

There's a lot of them. Well I don't really have that much to pack unless I do, have I like, did I like get furniture in the last few days, I don't?

ALEX

I am going to basically say with your permission Lyd that Gragg is going to be leading you to this, this briefing effectively.

LYDIA

Yep. This sounds good yes Cel has told themselves to trust Gragg and thus they will.

ALEX

In terms of the rest of the party can everyone please give me a perception check?

LYDIA

Yes.

BEN

28.

BRYN

20. Not natural.

HELEN

16.

ALEX

Zolf you notice, others do not, there is a slightly distant tapping. It doesn't appear to be the clicking of the monsters or anything like that, it's someone or something basically bashing a bit of metal against another, very light but it's just a [sound effect] ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

BEN

Got some rhythmic tapping, doesn't sound like those things, probably sounds like someone but I don't know if that's a lure so just keep your ears open.

HELEN

Yeah let's see if we hear it again.

ALEX

Suddenly something comes flying out of the darkness beyond the range of your dark vision. It's a paper aeroplane.

BRYN

Oh grand does it land near us?

ALEX

Yes. It seems to have been thrown from outside the range of your dark vision to land within the range of your dark vision.

LYDIA

That's a well constructed aeroplane. That's a good, a 60ft throw. That's approaching world record.

ALEX

They took 10.

LYDIA

Ah ok.

BEN

Also to be fair it could have been a 10ft throw as long as it was 65ft, 55ft.

ALEX

I mean I haven't clarified scale it could be a 40ft paper aeroplane.

BEN

True.

(Group laughter)

BEN

It just crashes through the market stalls and kills us all.

BRYN

It could be a magical paper aeroplane.

HELEN

Ooh yeah.

BEN

That's true.

ALEX

Would you like to find out, there's a spell for that.

BEN

I will like creep over and carefully unfold it.

BRYN

What's there?

ALEX

You recognise Wilde's handwriting.

LYDIA

[Gasp] yay.

BEN

What does it say?

ALEX

So good you could join us.

BEN

He's alright then?

ALEX

We're waiting at Barret's if you remember the way?

BEN

The answer is no.

ALEX

Got some unusual friends and then like all caps, underlined and bold lined,
DON'T FREAK OUT.

BEN

I'll mumble under my breath, when was I going to freak out. I will crawl back and show well Azu the letter and say to Hamid it's from Wilde he wants us to go to Barret's old place but I don't know where that is, do you?

BRYN

No I don't think so, I, we might be able to work it out, I remember, I mean I remember some of this area from when we were here last and for me it was only.

ALEX

Ding, ding, ding, ding from the direction the paper aeroplane was thrown.

BRYN

For me it was only well three or four months ago not longer like for you.

BEN

Right so ok is that a yes or a no?

BRYN

Ish.

BEN

Brilliant so right fine. Which way is it? Point in the direction.

BRYN

Well I can't see so that's quite hard.

BEN

Alright so you don't know, ok fine look in which case it sounds like you don't know so what I mean is we should probably go towards the sounds of where this paper aeroplane came from.

BRYN

Sure.

BEN

It's either that or sit here because I aren't wandering around getting lost looking for Barret's bloody house.

BRYN

I'm saying if I had some light I could probably figure it out but I can't be certain I know exactly where to go Zolf.

HELEN

Why don't we just go towards the sounds since we don't know, let's just.

BEN

Yeah sounds like a plan.

BRYN

That seems like a perfect decision.

HELEN

Alright boys.

BRYN

I have to rely on the two of you right now.

HELEN

Don't worry, we'll be alright.

BEN

Climb on Azu's back so you don't bump into something.

BRYN

Ok.

LYDIA

Does Azu get a say in that?!

BRYN

Well Zolf doesn't ask so.

ALEX

Do you head towards the tapping?

HELEN

Yeah.

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Ok you make it towards the tapping and just when you kind of start to slow and start to maybe veer off in a direction you get a fresh ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, and it seems to be literally just marking a route for you to take. At no point does anyone enter within your sight range.

HELEN

At some point Azu is going to start like doing dink, dink, dink, dink, dink back with like her armour just to be like we're coming.

ALEX

Sure but for what it's worth it seems to be a system that seems to be quite easy to maintain. Dink, dink, dink, dink, dink and then yeah basically leading you via these pings very quickly leads you to the edge of the market, then down into a comparatively like larger thoroughfare and so on and leading you out of sort of this area and then I'm going to skip ahead to very quickly you are lead to what is left of the Barret compound. The larger walls are still there, obviously there's no guards this time, the gate stands closed but unlocked and you can basically you hear the last tapping within the actual perimeter of that building.

HELEN

So is this it?

ALEX

Everyone please give me a perception check.

BEN

21.

HELEN

23.

BRYN

Should I actually roll?

ALEX

Yeah.

BRYN

Alright.

ALEX

Yeah you've got like four other senses.

BRYN

17.

LYDIA

I taste an enemy.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Something large is moving closer towards you from outside of the perimeter, it is not clicking, it is the sound of something large moving quietly.

BEN

Fine at least personally.

ALEX

Yeah it's all good.

BEN

Yeah I guess so I think and I'll go in.

ALEX

Ok.

HELEN

Azu trusts Zolf, she also goes in with Hamid.

ALEX

In which case then I am going to jump to Cel and Gragg.

LYDIA

Hmm mm.

ALEX

You make your way comparatively easy. You notice at one point a couple of odd turns and then Gragg just kind of points down the long corridor and goes beasties and then keeps bringing along and then quite quickly leads you to the exterior of a, yeah some large compound effectively.

LYDIA

Hmm.

ALEX

And gestures for you to head in through the gate.

LYDIA

Ooh this looks very defensible. Not at all ominous.

ALEX

Cool Gragg closes the gates behind and follows in. At which point as you head in through the gate and head towards the main entry of the sort of almost like sudo manor you remember Barret's place which is like half fortress, half manor, all underground and as you are heading towards you see some very familiar silhouettes standing in the doorway and obviously for the rest of the party you see an approaching lantern light with a very, very narrow focus beam approaching, so you maybe realise that it's Cel a little bit later because of the lighting but nonetheless you all find yourself at the doorstep at exactly the same time more or less.

LYDIA

Hey buddies.

BEN

Oh my God Cel.

HELEN

Oh I'm so glad you're alright.

BEN

Are you ok?

CEL

Mostly fine, I, you, Skraak, Wilde?

ALEX

Cel is accompanied by possibly the largest.

CEL

I made a friend.

ALEX

Humanoid you've ever seen Azu.

BRYN

I give Cel a huge hug.

HELEN

Ah.

BRYN

Go away Gragg.

BEN

Oh Gragg it's so good to see you again. Friends of Sasha's, you served us once.

ALEX

Oh right yeah.

BRYN

We made Keeesh together.

ALEX

We? I'm pretty certain I invented Keeesh.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

And on that I think I have to end the episode. Yes, good, everyone connected, this is what happens when you have to leap across the entirety of existence and the world and skip huge chunks of story, it takes a while to reconvene you, ha ha, it's done, end of campaign right?

HELEN

Well done we're very proud.

BEN

Yes we have a tea party at Barret's and everything is fine.

HELEN

Yes.

BEN

And we're done.

BRYN

Yeah last time we were here everything was fine I'm sure it will be just as good the second time.

ALEX

They all have lemonade.

LYDIA

Gragg and Brutor have got it sorted.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Yes we meet every remaining alive helpful MPC in this one place, it turns out they are all there.

BEN

I look forward to the Gragg tour tag on AO3.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Ok on that I am going to close it and we'll come back next week. Bye everyone!

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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