

## **RQG – [192] – [Sown Seeds]**

### **Content Warnings**

- Arguments, memory loss, infection & pandemic, hiveminds.
- Discussion of: panic attack, food, undead & zombies, apocalypse.
- Mentions of: death, quarantine, human remains, tentacles, kidnapping, physical violence.
- SFX: high pitched sound.

### **[Show Theme - Intro]**

#### **ALEX**

Hello and welcome to episode 192 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**

I'd like to congratulate you on not immediately just freaking out and all running into the top of London and then making things a lot worse for yourselves! I am very happy to have reconvened you all here today so that we can continue the game.

**HELEN**

Thanks!

**ALEX**

How's everyone feeling? Are you all okay? Everyone ready for, er, just lots of new questions with no answers yet?

**BRYN**

Well, I'm hoping this is going to be a whole 45 minutes of you just info-dumping at us!

**LYDIA**

Yes!

**BRYN**

And the rest of us can stay silent for a while, while you spend 45 minutes in different MPC voices explaining everything!

**(Laughter)**

That's what I'm banking on!

**LYDIA**

Yeah!

**HELEN [laughing]**

Yeah, we'll just have a nap!

**LYDIA**

All I'm planning to role play is what drinks Cel drinks...

**ALEX**

I mean, I thought what I'd do is provide you all a text file and then we don't need to bother to record it, the audience can know that you know now and then that should be enough for their needs, right?!

**(Helen laughs)**

**BRYN**

No, no, you have to say it out loud!

**(Alex laughs)**

It's a podcast, Alex!

**ALEX**

I mean, ideally via some kind of socratic dialogue with myself, right?

**BRYN**

Yeah.

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**HELEN**

Mmm.

**ALEX**

Yeah, yeah, sure.

**BRYN**

There's lots of MPCs here, we don't need to participate!

**ALEX [laughing]**

I'm looking at a room full of people who have immediately kicked back from their mics and are just, like, yeah, go on then, fine! Thanks for that! Lovely!

**LYDIA**

And Sumutnyerl asks Wilde, what on earth is going on...

**(Group laughter)**

... and Skraak summarises...

**HELEN (laughing)**

Skraak and Gragg have an animated conversation for 15 minutes.

**ALEX**

You are all on the steps of Barret's once-estate in what used to be Other London. I am assuming you're going to go inside, but I'm should probably ask. Do you want to go inside?

**LYDIA**

Yes!

**BEN**

Yes.

**ALEX**

[*Shouts*] The trap goes off... ! No, I'm kidding!

**HELEN**

Good god!

**ALEX**

So much build up for a basic trap!

**HELEN**

I will say that Azu is looking up at Gragg very impressed and awed, the same way that you would look at, say an elephant or... you know when you go to, like, the Natural History museum and you see the skeleton of the big blue whale? She's like, corrr... cor, wow! That's very cool!

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**ALEX**

Sweet games, bro!

**(Group laughter)**

**HELEN**

Yes! That's the attitude!

**ALEX**

I'm going to go ahead and say Gragg notices, just kind of gives you a little side eye and then a thumbs up, and is just, like, [*grunts*].

**(Laughter)**

Nothing beyond, like, 'thanks for noticing. I try! It's difficult on a diet of Other London, but I manage!'

**LYDIA**

I name this Grazuu!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

At which point, then, basically, one of you opens the door – I don't really care who – and you head into a very familiar-looking hallway. It would appear that the windows have been blacked out with heavy cloth, and stuff, and there's

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quite a lot of soft materials pushed up against the wall, like mattresses and things like that, but it is...

**LYDIA**

Oh, so when you say familiar-looking, it's because we all record in that kind of set-up, not because...

**(Group laughter)**

Ben is literally surrounded by mattresses.

**ALEX**

Ben reaches out and touches his soft, squishy walls!

**(Group laughter)**

What I mean is, you are in the hallway of Barret's, which is where I know were all able to see and have a look around. Obviously, Helen, this is all new for you. Barret was a lovely person, you'll really get a long with Barret...

(Helen laughs)

**LYDIA**

No, no, no – she has met Barret...

**HELEN**

... and she told him that she didn't think he was a very good person!

**BEN/ZOLF**

That is a point as well – where we walk in, Zolf will be, like, under his breath, ‘I wonder what happened to Barret.’

**HELEN**

Oh!

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

Heading into the hall, it is all squished up against the sides, and there is a large empty space in the middle at which is stood Wilde with his arms spread wide, and then he’s just, like, ‘Hey everyone!’ He, sort of, turns around and just shows, like, himself and he’s, like, ‘I realise we normally have quarantine and stuff, but I feel like the ship might have sailed a little bit here.’

**LYDIA**

Oh wait, is he also naked?

**(Laughter)**

**ALEX**

No, no, no – he’s wearing his basic clothes, but he’s just, like...

**LYDIA**

Oh, right...

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

... he's giving as non-threatening a thing as possible and just saying, 'I'm aware quarantine is a thing, but the ship's sort of sailed on that one.'

**BEN/ZOLF**

'Well, and if we wanna trust, oh, who...' I look at Azu, 'Who was your mate back at the...?' And I'll pull my eye down to show the inside of my eyelid.

**HELEN/AZU**

'Oh, Chinau, yes. I mean, we still don't know about that, but the veins things that we saw were very obviously affected. And also, also, it seemed to infect a rat by touching it, so maybe...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'We have a lot more answers now.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'It's only been, what, 15 minutes? How...?'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Okay, there's quite a lot of things at play here.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'I have apparently been here for three days, but, er...'

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Wait! What?!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh!’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Really?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

That would scare. Okay, everyone? There’s food prepped in as safe a room as we can manage. I have some explaining to do and some people to introduce you to. We are not in a rush, er, just so you know, everyone’s fine. Sumutnyerl and Skraak and actually on patrol at the moment and they’ll be back soon.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh good!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘We were all here longer than you have clearly been.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Right. We’re not having to work with Barret, are we? That guy’s a dick!’

**ALEX**

Wilde, sort of, gives a piece of body language that you have learned to spot immediately, Zolf, which is both his hands, he sort of gives a little flourish of the fingers. You may be ahead of me on that one, Zolf.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

Barret was in a jail in Damascus.'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Yeah, Grizzop put him in an Artemis Temple.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Again. Food. Sit. Talk.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Wait! Wait, wait, wait!'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'I mean, I've already eaten.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'How long has passed?'

**ALEX**

Okay, I can at least put that... like, Wilde is starting to head towards, basically, a dining room, but he is talking along the way...

**BRYN**

Hamid is starting to hyperventilate...

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

... it's okay, no, I know, I know. Wilde's like, 'It's fine, it's fine! Sumutnyerl and Skraak were here the longest. They've been here about a week...'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Okay...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

I've been here about four days. Cel must have come in more or less the same time I did.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Okay, and Zolf, you said a few hours...'

**BEN/ZOLF**

'Oh, it's been, like, 15 bloody minutes before I met you.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Okay. Okay, okay...'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Alright.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It seems to be a side effect of the transport, but...’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Yes, because we got punted. I’m assuming you didn’t?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

Not really. I just, kind of, fell straight up.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘It’s plain old rubbish, you know, time and distance all the same thing.’

(Helen laughs)

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Pretty much. Look, I know for a fact it hasn’t been years, the whole world hasn’t changed...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Okay, okay...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... in our absence. It’s still what it was. It just seems to be a minor side effect.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Probably broadly [0:06:39]’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Can we please not jump into any weird Plane of Portals again?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I second that!’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘If the alternative is death, no.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Well, I’m not sure that alternative was death.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Then... Sure, then you can think that.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘And we could well have died in the Plane of Portal, or been stuck for years while the world got even worse.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Incredibly, a lot of things we do is dangerous. Now, I’m going to go eat.’ And I walk off.

**ALEX**

Wilde has opened the door at this point to a comparatively inviting-looking dining room.

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘So good to know you’re learning from your decisions these days!’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Likewise!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Hamid!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘No! Zolf, no! You come back here! I’m not... no. Look, you are the leader in the field, I followed you even though I thought it was a terrible decision, but if you’re going to stand here and tell me that it was still the right thing to do after we all got trapped in some sort of nightmare dimension, and we’ve lost time again, and been scattered, potentially, to who knows where in the middle of these blue beasts, then if you still think that was the right decision, you need to examine that because, I’m sorry, it was not!’

**BEN/ZOLF**

Er, Zolf turns around and looks at Hamid while he’s saying that and just goes, ‘Ughhh!’ and then turns around and goes to eat.

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Okay, Hamid, this is probably a conversation to have later.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘He doesn’t want to talk to me at all. He doesn’t care what I’ve got to say. Look, I did it this time. He said to do something, so I did it, even though I disagreed, and he still won’t accept that he needs to actually think through the consequences of his decisions. This is completely... okay, okay. We don’t have time for this, do we? We don’t have time.’

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

Wilde, sort of, puts a hand up and goes, ‘We have some time. We’re not in any immediate danger, for a change.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Ooh, that’s a novel feeling!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I mean, don’t go for a jog outside, but, er, apart from that, we have some time to regroup.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Hamid, let’s eat something...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yes, that’s a good idea.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘... take some deep breaths. I completely understand what you mean, but it can be resolved in a little while, perhaps.’

**ALEX**

Who heads through to the dining room?

**LYDIA**

Well, Cel does, exchanging awkward looks with Gragg, like, ‘Yeah, they aren’t always like this...’

**(Laughter)**

**ALEX**

Oh year, Gragg’s... Gragg has zero tact whatsoever and is really there making himself look small and is just like, [*grunts...*].

**(Laughter)**

**LYDIA/CEL**

Cel raises her eyebrows, like, ‘Yeah, I know! This is what they’re always like, really!’

(Helen laughs)

**ALEX**

Gragg, kind of, sidles to the dining room and then ducks inside. I am happy, by the way, for you guys to have it out here, it's just that I need to know who is in rooms and out rooms, and so on.

**BEN**

I pre-walked into the dining room.

**ALEX**

Okay.

**BRYN**

I mean, Hamid will follow and get some food.

**ALEX**

Understood.

**HELEN**

Yeah, I'll go in with Hamid.

**BEN**

Also, he ain't gonna turn down food!

**HELEN**

Azu's probably going to, like, talk about exercise with Gragg. I mean, for some reason I'm assuming it's a buffet situation? So...

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

Pretty much, actually. It's very... I'll tell you what, I'll describe the set up and then let you play through that!

**(Laughter)**

It is a modest fayre. You're looking at, like, tins. You're looking at, like, maybe some stale rolls or something similar. It's not much. The actual dining room itself seems comparatively plush. It is, at first glance, it appears to be not originally a dining room, but has been made as such and is in the centre of the building, so it isn't towards an exterior wall, and it has a long table set up. It does have some, like, posh-o candles and so on, and Wilde takes a seat and says, 'Yeah, help yourself, there's not much, but we can talk freely here. You don't need to worry about things hearing us and, apparently, there's been a lot of work to make sure of that.'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Okay.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'For now, it's just me. Others will join later if you're okay with that, but we thought it would be a good idea for you to start with friendly faces.'

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright. Hmm.’ Azu’s going to try and sit, like, next to Hamid, but also next to Gragg, because this is like her good old friend, and also she now has a new friend!

**(Group laughter)**

And it’s going to be, like... ‘Have you ever bench-pressed two Halflings because they can be, like, really fun because they...’

**ALEX**

Do you legitimately ask that?

**HELEN**

Yes!

**ALEX (also as Gragg)**

‘Oh yeah, yeah, no. Er, so there’s the Other London games which hasn’t happened in a while, obviously, but yeah I used to hold a couple of records.’ He goes over to a chest of drawers and kind of looks sheepishly, and then with astonishing ease just lifts up what’s clearly a full chest of drawers in a hand, like it’s a light piece of paper and puts it down.

**HELEN/AZU**

Ohh, Azu applauds, though! Azu's just, like, 'I'm sorry, I never meet people, well, very, very rarely meet people who are taller and as strong as me, so this is a delight! You're very...'

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

'Oh, how do you think I feel?!'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Gosh, gosh! Isn't it hard...' And now she's going to start taking about tall people problems!

**ALEX**

Yeah, yeah that's fine!

**(Group laughter)**

Basically, Gragg is right there with you, to be clear!

**(Laughter)**

**LYDIA**

Are you comparing forehead scars from all the times that you've walked into doorways?!

**(Laughter)**

**ALEX**

Yeah, Gragg's like, oh my god, I know, right! I would say Wilde is not being deliberately, like, guarded or anything, but he is kind of letting people pick when they want to start talking. So if you guys want to have some RP prior to that, that's fine. He's not pushing the fact or anything, but he's there just, kind of, giving people a calm in.

**HELEN**

Sure.

**ALEX**

Does anyone want to pursue any other RP before big important stuff? As in, bit important law stuff.

**LYDIA**

Cel's going to be awkwardly quiet.

**BEN**

Yeah, Zolf is focussed on eating.

**BRYN**

Hamid's said what he had to say and Zolf has dismissed his opinion as not mattering, so... !

**ALEX**

Yeah, the tension is palpable.

**BRYN**

Yeah, there's definitely some tension there!

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

Wilde, eventually, is like, 'So how are people feeling? Steady enough for a bit of a discussion?'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Er, I should flag up, is it okay for me to me to make some notes because I keep losing my memory and it would...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

Wilde looks a little bit concerned at that one. 'I was only made aware that you'd arrived recently.'

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

Gragg puts a hand up and is, like, 'Er, yeah, I couldn't make contact for a little bit, erm, I should be... I mean, I've seen it happen. It'll wear off, if not now, then any moment.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Oh, okay. Yeah, feel free to write notes.'

**LYDIA**

Is Cel beginning to remember what they had done in the last three days or so?

**ALEX**

Yeah, you're starting... in fairness you are starting to get patches as you look back. It's nothing especially remarkable. There is a brief period where Gragg had a bit of a scare with a beastie and you, like, I'm going to say you caved in a tunnel or something similar.

**LYDIA**

Oh, okay.

**ALEX**

That's the most exciting thing. It's mostly been meeting Gragg, Gragg doing a little element of initial nursing because you were actively incapacitated – nothing huge really, just like, you know, food and drink.

**LYDIA**

It is worth flagging up that this is, like, memory things and taking control of a character is something that one, like, needs to be done very carefully.

Obviously, we have been doing this for five years together and we can, like, pause and discuss things off recording, and stuff, but it is worth being explicit about how it something to be careful with.

**ALEX**

Yeah, it's a good point to remember that, yeah, we do pause and discuss things and have had a pause and a discussion of this, but yeah, as a general rule, you want to avoid that. I will be explicit now though and say, it really was a case of day one consisting of, basically, just being brought back round. Day two consisting of, you wanted to go and look for people and Gragg would help, and day three being, basically, the day that you're at, more or less, now with maybe a little, like, scary moment for the sake of flavour, escaping one of the beasties at some point, and that's it.

**LYDIA**

Oh, okay.

**ALEX**

You can choose to add extra elements of conversation with Gragg if you want, but Gragg will have repeatedly gone, basically, I probably shouldn't be the one to explain things, just because I always muck it up. That will have been Gragg's, sort of, repeated phrasing.

**HELEN**

Aww...

**LYDIA**

I choose to add that we had very nice evenings making traps together and teaching each other poems that we knew.

**ALEX**

Gragg's well into poetry, *well* into poetry!

**LYDIA**

Having spent quite a long time working on small boats and, while there were trading vessels, you know, not really fishing boats, but in small fishing villages and stuff, like, Cel expresses interest in eels which Gragg still, even if they're not in stock, Gragg, I assume still likes this...

**ALEX**

You know that Gragg is a sucker for a sea-shanty, though? He knows none.

**LYDIA**

Ohhh, ah!

(Bryn laughs)

Cel has sung one that they heard Zolf singing with full credit.

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Yeah, you're going to go ahead and just be fast friends with Gragg then, because Gragg's a very easy person to be friends with anyway.

**HELEN**

Yeah!

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

So, Wilde, I'm going to say is sat there. He is joining you and eating, but he's being comparatively calm and going, 'Okay, right. Quite a lot to cover here again. Sumutnyerl and Skraak will be back. We weren't sure when you were going to be back. Very quickly, yeah, it seems to have been about a week's difference of time, and there don't seem to be any other complications in that regard. I am guessing all of you fell through what we're thinking are various Planes?

**BEN/ZOLF**

'Yeah.'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Yes.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'But one of them was full of clockwork, which, I have to admit, I'm keen to return to!'

**BEN**

Is that something that Zolf would know? Because Ben knows what it is.

**ALEX**

Yes, yes.

**BEN/ZOLF**

Okay. 'Oh, that'll be the Plane of Lawfulness.

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Plane of Lawfulness?'

**BEN/ZOLF**

'Yeah, Plane of Order.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Oh, I just thought that there might be really useful, intricate clockwork mechanisms to play with, but...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'I mean, I suspect you could probably have a lot of fun, but you'd be playing with an entire Plane.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Okay! Something maybe to consider another time. I won't derail, as you know...' You know what, let's cut that because Cel would never say that!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Yeah, I'll tell you what, I'll give you this. Wilde presses on. How about that?

**(Laughter)**

**LYDIA**

Yeah, yeah, there go you. That's much better!

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'It seemed to hit Skraak the hardest, but he's okay. Everyone's recovered well. So, you'll have seen the...'

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

'Beasties...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'... yes, the beasties wandering around. Those seem to be what happens if you take blue-veins and you add them to remains instead of living creatures...'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Ohhh...'

**BEN/ZOLF**

'Right...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Don’t get hit by them.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘It looked like a skeleton animated with plant matter.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Yeah, so that leads to... you may have guessed where we are, obviously, looking around, so...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... Other London, it would seem that the Simulacrum that you originally were commissioned to track, protect, etc. may have flowered, which is what kicked everything off.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘I beg your pardon? Do you mean that bloody head I couldn’t find is the entire problem?’

**ALEX (as Wilde) [Quietly]**

‘Yes. And it’s not your fault, either.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Er... Okay?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Let me give you some more before you react. It would have gone that way either way. If you had found it, it would have just gone off in a different place.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Not in the business of what-ifs anymore, but I need a moment and I will get up and leave.’

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

‘That’s fine.’

***[sound of door shutting]***

Wilde takes a moment. He’s like, ‘I would suggest that I don’t carry on until Zolf comes back. There’s a lot to cover here, but I have it on good authority that this was an inevitability. The fact that bits of it were lost track of, it would have just gone off in someone’s vault, but it would still have had the same effect, so... It’s best not to dwell.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘So was it deliberately rigged?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I can tell you what I know...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Let’s just recap. When we were in London we found an arm in one of the big, what were they called, silos, I guess, and we suggested that they dredge it fully. Did that ever happen or did it...?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘From what I gather, yes it did, and that’s when the first people were exposed.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Right.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Again, I don’t want to go into huge amounts of detail until Zolf gets back, but I will say I fortunately was found by friendlies, not enemies, and I have been gaining info from them. I will be introducing them soon, but, again, I will wait for Zolf. You’ve got a little bit of time.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Of course.’

**ALEX (as )**

‘If anyone has any pressing questions until then, I’m obviously happy to answer.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

'I might go and... I mean, should I go after him?'

**HELEN/AZU**

'I think he'll come back when he's ready because...'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'I think he'll come back himself.'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Yeah.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Okay.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'I'll go grab him if I need, but...'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'The question is how long does somebody wait before somebody goes and gets him?'

**HELEN**

Yeah!

**ALEX**

I'd say Wilde would give it a solid ten minutes, and then if Zolf doesn't come back at that point, Wilde would excuse himself and go try and fetch Zolf himself.

**BRYN**

Does the ten minutes elapse?

**BEN**

Well, yes, obviously!

**(Laughter)**

**LYDIA**

Zolf's like, this is baby sulk talk! Ten minutes!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Wilde heads out of the dining room. Does he have any idea where Zolf has gone?

***[sound of door closing]***

**BEN**

Well, I didn't leave a trail of breadcumbs!

**(Laughter)**

**ALEX**

No, what I mean is, is Zolf loitering in the hall? Has Zolf left and gone running, crying into the dark...?

**BEN**

No! Zolf is not in the hallway. Okay, I don't know why I'm being coy! Zolf is sitting on the steps outside.

**ALEX**

Right, okay. Cool...

***[sound of creaking door]***

... then Wilde will quite easily be able to find you quite soon and just come and sit next to you for a bit. Doesn't say anything at first.

**BEN/ZOLF**

I will break the silence. 'Look, just go back and give people the briefing. I don't care. I just want to know what I need to do to make it right. I don't... just... Yeah.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'That's what the briefing is.'

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Then give me a summary now and then go back. I’m not sitting in a room full of people.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Okay, fair enough. Barret’s going to be along soon enough...’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Oh, brilliant...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... it turns out the Cult of Hades are effectively our allies these days...’

**(Laughter)**

‘... we know who made the Simulacrum and why...’

**BEN/ZOLF [talking over Wilde]**

‘Uh... No, no, no, stop. What... where do you need to point me to sort this out? If you don’t have an answer, go away, work it out and come back to me with an answer. That’s what I care about.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘There’s going to be a bunch of discussions, Zolf...’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Good.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... if you want to sit them out then that’s okay...’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Yes, then go away and do your discussions. Leave me alone, please.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Okay. Alright.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Just leave me alone, please.’

**ALEX (as )**

‘Just... don’t leave the compound, please. That’s all I’m asking.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

I’ll look at him and go, ‘Well, duhh!’

**(Laughter)**

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

Wilde backs off and heads back into the dining room.

***[sound of door slamming]***

‘So...’ Wilde sits down. ‘I guess we’re doing this without Zolf, then. Um...’

**LYDIA**

Cel has, like, big eyes at Azu and Hamid. I just think there needs to be some eye contact made and, are we okay with this?

**HELEN**

Mmm. Azu kind of shrugs back.

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

Gragg just openly states, ‘Is... is Zolf really upset? Is that why?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Yes. Yes, that’s why. Zolf is very upset.’

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

‘Right, yeah. He was ambiguous...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘No, it’s not ambiguous...’

**(Group laughter)**

Rusty Quill Gaming – [192] – [Sown Seeds]

‘... he was quite upset. That’s why he’s not going to be in here.’

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

‘Thanks for clarifying. I do appreciate that.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Yeah, that’s fine. Erm, I’m going to press on though?’

**ALEX (as Gragg)**

‘Yeah, you do you!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Okay, great!’

**(Laughter)**

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

So...

**(Group laughter)**

You know what, I’m going to use that as a break – I’ve got to!

**(Group laughter)**

Rusty Quill Gaming – [192] – [Sown Seeds]

We'll be back in a couple of minutes...

**(Group laughter)**

**LYDIA [growling, in other character]**

'I don't need you!!!'

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

And welcome back. So, yeah, that concludes the explanation. We did it off air, we just thought it would be quicker!

**(Group laughter)**

**BRYN**

No, no.

**HELEN**

You're not allowed!

**LYDIA**

I thought that was extremely clear and concise!

**HELEN**

Bryn?

**ALEX**

Thank you!

**BRYN**

No.

**LYDIA**

You didn't like that?!

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

It's fine. I'll redo it for everyone else's benefit, I guess! So, Wilde, sort of, sits there and goes, 'Okay, um... I'm going to explain how I have this information, and then I'm going to explain what the information is. That seems the most sensible way of doing it, if that's okay with everyone?'

**HELEN/AZU**

'Alright.'

**LYDIA/CEL**

'Yep, yep.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Apparently, Sumutnyerl and Skraak go here first. I came a little afterwards. I was rescued by someone wearing a cowl and with tentacles for a face... if you can connect those dots?'

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Ohhh...’

**BRYN**

‘Wait, what?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Mmm hmm!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Are they... here?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Mmm hmm. I mean, they’re not in the building right now.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘I thought I... I’ve heard the story and I was pretty sure they were the bad guys.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘So was I.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Okay!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘They still, sort of, are, but then again the world isn’t really split into good guys and bad guys...’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Well, no, no... I just thought that that one was...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I mean, they are the group who kidnapped our families. I’m not so worried about good guys and bad guys, but I do tend to hold a grudge about that sort of thing.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I am not saying not to!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh, Wilde, you must have been so scared.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Erm, yeah. It could have been worse, but, then again, I have a very active imagination.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Huh.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘They basically brought me here, and then a few days ago I had the luxury of being introduced to Barret and...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Great! He’s back in the picture, too.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... the situation here and, as a result, again the quarantine has sort of fallen apart a little bit, but what Barret’s being saying, at least, makes sense and scans. I’ve seen a couple of our cloaked friends wandering around. They seem to be facilitating movement, you know. One of them will have guided you here, from what I understand.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘The Sending I received... that always sounded a little bit familiar.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That would have been them. Yep. And in terms of timelines, then – I’m going to say as much as I am able, but Barret’s going to be our person for real exposition – it’s complicated, I’m going to try and do it as well as I can. It starts with Tesla, obviously...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Mmm hmm.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... so he was exiled, if you remember, after the lightning rail disaster?’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Well, it turns out that while he was out in North America, he might have become aware of a, er, couple of plants that we might all be familiar with by this point. And, when he returned, he began work on the Simulacrum. And then when he was looking for funding, a certain very secretive group may have made contact with him, specifically the Cult of Hades, and they were funding his work. As the work progressed, obviously, Tesla did a bunch of travelling. We already know that. He explored the Garden of Yerlik. It turns out Sumutnyerl had a bit of a... let’s say he was emotionally compromised by him when he was visiting, and...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh! Yeah?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... and then it seems that Tesla may have recognised the dangers of his work and axed the project.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘A bit late, of course, but I suppose...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Well, that’s the point when the Cult of Hades decided that they would just find someone else to finish the work.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Enter Edison.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Correct.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘And these were our friends.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Enter Edison, who then Tesla may have take issue with, and may have made his own private arrangements for the simulacrum to be removed from the picture via the Serpentes.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘So Tesla was behind the attack on the unveiling party?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘So it would seem. I don’t think he was the person pulling the trigger, but I think he was certainly the person who was hiring the person pulling the trigger. As a result of that, a lot of things, sort of, triggered automatically.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Can we just... Tesla was building the Simulacrum just because he could. He’s the kind of, as I understand it, he’s the kind of man that does that sort of experiment. He builds things because he wants to find out if it’s possible, but presumably the Cult of Hades were funding him as a way to create an army?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘The wanted a weapon against the Meritocrats.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Ohhhh...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That’s why you found all those husks out in Damascus. They were already in mass-production before they had the prototype deconstructed for mass production.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Turns out... ha, it’s not just the Harlequins who had an issue, it just turns out that the Cult of Hades are a little more, erm, extreme, hence their friends who none of us particularly get along with.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Okay. Just, er, like, to clarify, the friends, who are friends but we don’t get along with, are the... you called them Squizzards in the past... who had the tentacles, who are now are friends, but were not our friends in the past, and they kidnapped your family and that is why you lost your friends in Rome?’

**WILDE and HAMID**

‘Yeah...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I’m going to simplify. We’re in an ‘enemy of our enemy is our friend’ kind of deal here. The Cult of Hades, it turns out, have been who have been trying to get in contact with you. I know Grizzop drove them off and, er, it turns out our, your ex, Azu...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Yes?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... was brought to us via their powers as a mediator, who we abandoned in, er...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh, is he okay? Is he still...?’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Well, we didn’t abandon him...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘No, not deliberately but...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘No, but you know what I mean.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘So he’s not... he’s not infected or... He’s alright?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘He’s safe. He’s fine...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh! Okay!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... confused...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good news!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... and I’m assured not a hostage, but I’m giving you the info that I have.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Can I... ? So they were trying to... trying to make the Simulacrum, but now the Simulacrum escaped, and there’s too much Simulacrum? Or the Simulacrum is going to help us fight the blue...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘The Simulacrum evolved...’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Oh. OH! Oh, oh...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... the Simulacrum is the blue-veins.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘So the army of Simulacrum in Damascus never would have worked – they didn’t have... Shoin said he didn’t give them a functional fluidic system, and they didn’t have this seed, which seems to have been crucial to the functioning of the prototype anyway.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Correct. The Cult of Hades were beginning manufacture, hoping that they could introduce those elements later – get ahead of the curve, basically. So, as it stands, here is the situation. London’s gone, obviously, and has been taken over. We are in Other London underneath there. There is a large mature seed at the centre of all of this which seems to be connecting all of the people via some kind of, I think Zolf called it a gestalt, which is as good a word as any, and the Cult of Hades have a very specific objective. Again, Barret will be able to tell you more – apparently he joined them a little late, but he knows more than I do. They wanted to overthrow Meritocratic rule by any means necessary, as opposed to, you know, something a bit more subtle. And it may seem that they were very keen to make allies in that goal, no matter how dubious, hence our Squizzards. And it would seem that they enjoy being, er, subject to the yoke of an extra-terrestrial plant. They seem to enjoy that even less than being ruled by dragons, let’s put it that way!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Right. Were they going to try and rule the world once they got rid of the Meritocrats?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Do you want what they’ve said, or what I think, because they’re not the same answer?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Both. Both would be good!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘What they say is no. They just want to restore what they consider is the balance, whatever that is. To my eye, I don’t think they’d have complained if they accidentally ended on top of the pile, if you see what I mean?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Are we going to have to kill them all after we sort this out?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Who’s them, the Cult of Hades?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Yes.’

**ALEX (as Wilde) [sighs]**

‘I don’t know. I don’t think they’re trying to overthrow the world. I don’t think they see themselves as...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘It’s not really relevant anymore. The world has been overthrown. The question is...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... this is my...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘...what comes next, and I would trust any of them as far as I could fireball them, frankly.’

**(Laughter)**

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘I like the... I’m glad that everyone else assumes that there is an easy ‘after we sort this all out’ solution, but I just have to say that I have not picked up on that from the information available so far. Just... if there was, there... how we fix this did I miss, because I...?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That’s what Barret is coming to talk to me, and now us, about today.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Sorry, Cel, it’s just... it’s very personal.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Oh.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘But, you’re right, we should be...’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘No, no. No... I’m not. I think they... it sounds like they... I mean, I’m so sorry about your friends. I don’t think that kind of thing – it’s not that you don’t forgive things, you need to not forget, you know, so it doesn’t happen. If they’re willing to do that, they’re not the kind of people that I want in charge.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘There’s one last piece of information...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oooh! Alright?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... not their doing, but the Harlequins are gone.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘All of them?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Cairo fell...’

**[Azu gasps]**

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Oh no! What?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I don’t know about your family, Hamid. I know that they weren’t there, but that’s all I know.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘No, they weren’t.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I know Curie’s dead.’

**AZU and HAMID**

‘Ohhh...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I know Cairo’s gone, and to all intents and purposes, the Harlequins have fallen, which means that our list of... We’ve always operated on our own – that’s been the way as long as we’ve been doing this, but the Harlequins aren’t really in the picture anymore as far as I can tell.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘When you say Cairo fell, you mean the blue-veins invaded?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Yes. I know your family were there, but I don’t know what has happened to them now. I haven’t had any word from Einstein and Ed, but that would make sense – they’ve been maintaining a communications blackout, as they should.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘I, sort of, accidentally called Einstein earlier. So he’s still alive!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘So, A) you’re still holding onto a mobile stone, okay, and B)...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oops!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... you’ve literally just spoke with Einstein.’

**(Laughter)**

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘You knew that, Oscar...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘No, I know!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘... we’ve had the mobile stones all along. We never gave them... we didn’t use... I haven’t used them!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That wasn’t an accusation! I’m not angry. It’s just useful information to know. For all in knew they got left along the way. I’m just checking. So you’ve had contact with Einstein?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Yes, he said he was busy, but he sounded like himself.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Okay. Um, a couple of last pieces of information I have been told to make life a little bit easier, but then we’re drawing near the end of what I know.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright, but Einstein’s on the maybe pile.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Assuming by the way that all this intel is reliable, but it’s not like I have exactly many avenues left to explore, it seems that people know a bit more about the infection while we’ve been out of the loop.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Uh huh?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... it seems our ‘behind the eyes’ thing has been verified by a couple of sources, again assuming they’re not all in league, but at this point I don’t really see what our blue-veined friends would benefit from convincing us they’re not, and keeping us in a box down here whilst the rest of the world has already fallen. I don’t see the play there. Assuming they’re intentional at all, but... the other one is, well, that! Infection is intentional. It’s directed. It’s not just an organic action. As a collective, they have wants – if they want to move towards something they’ll infect it, but what that means is you can be exposed without being infected if it doesn’t care. It’s why everything seems to have been getting infected in the worst order possible – why they never seem to be drawn out into a fight that they can’t win.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Ah.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘That makes sense, I guess.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘In terms of the nature, touch – it seems to be touched-based not airborne, but it seems to pretty much come down to whether they want you infected or not, is the primary factor as to whether it is going to come up.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘So is there one big brain out there controlling...?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I think it’s more one big brain spread out amongst everyone who has been infected.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘But what *does* it want?’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Is there one thing we can destroy?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I don’t know. That’s what Barret’s coming here to say. I think so. The way people are talking, they’re being very coy when I ask the right questions. I think they have an idea, and I think what they’re trying to do is sound us out to see whether we would be amenable to chasing it down. But you have to know, that’s it. That’s everything I know. I don’t know what their plan would be. I don’t know how it would work, but that’s the shape of things.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘You said there’s one of these plants at the centre. The same as the one in the Garden?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It sounds like it.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Is, is that how we got here? Are they connected somehow through a trans-dimensional vector?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘They don’t know. I think yes. There are whole chunks of Other London that are awash with the root structure of this thing.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘We have to assume, surely, there were four. The one we saw had three bulbs, or flower buds were they? They connected to different locations. Surely we have to assume there are four of these plants...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Hmmm...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘In different places in the world’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘More or less. Svalbard, London, the Garden of Yerlik, and North America, where he originally made contact with them – that makes sense. It scans.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘So this might have been happening in North America as well?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Yes. But this is assuming that this is all... like, we’re making so many assumptions here. For all we know it’s barely started in North America. For all we know, it’s more advanced in North America than it is here.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘It hasn’t spread from Russia.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Mmmm.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Which isn’t a small thing.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Did it spread from Svalbard? Do we have any information about that? All we know is that it spread from London.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘As far as they’re telling me, yes. You have to remember, it’s not like they’re... I hate the word Squizzards... it’s not like the Squizzards are particularly talkative. It’s like extracting information from a stone.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Really, the easiest way to do that is with very strong lights.’

**[Bryn stifles a chuckle]**

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I mean, I’ll be honest, from my perspective, the way I’d extract information from a stone is by smashing it open, but I think at this point I feel like that might not help us.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘So, speaking of stones, I still have the mobile stone. I still believe my brother has one. I don’t want to do anything that’s going to put everyone here at greater risk, but...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Call them, Hamid.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Is that okay?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘If you want to do it alone, that’s fine, but at this point... I don’t mean to sound fatalist, what difference does it make in terms of, like...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘... thank you.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... if they’re going to be infected, they’re infected. If they’re not, they’re not. For all in know, what’s left is us and some Hades. That’s a very real possibility here.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Okay, okay.’ I get the mobile stone out of my bag of holding. I’d like to give a quick out of character shout out – I don’t have the message open in front of me right now. At some point, a few months back, a listener got in touch with me and told me that I had been pronouncing one of the brothers’ names wrong...

**ALEX**

Oh, go on!

**BRYN**

So, I have been pronouncing it ‘Iss-mail’ and ‘Ish-ack’, and although there are several variants of the name from similar countries in the region, apparently, it should be ‘Iz-mail’ and ‘Iss-ack’, so I’ve tried to correct my pronunciation and I really appreciate that listener getting in touch with me about that. That is, obviously, I thought I was doing it right and I am always happy to receive that kind of correction, and thank you. And I hope I got it right that time, but thank you for people who do that!

Rusty Quill Gaming – [192] – [Sown Seeds]

**ALEX**

I'll have to check my notes. I forget, which of the two is younger?

**BRYN**

I've forgotten, it's been so long!

**(Helen laughs)**

I'm going to roll use Magic Device to try and contact...

**ALEX**

Yep, that's fine.

**BRYN**

**[Rolls dice]**

30 total.

**ALEX (also as Ishaq)**

You initially get a response, which is, kind of, a bit static-y and doesn't really come through, and then you get a, 'Hamid?'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Yes, yes. Ishaq?'

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Hey, hey, hey – how are you doing, Hamid?’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I’m alive! Are you all alive?’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Yeah, yeah – it’s okay. We’re, like, oh... so much has happened!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Don’t tell me where you are. A lot’s happened to me, too, but we can’t... if one of us... if something happens to one of us we can’t risk the enemies finding out. Just tell me you’re moving away from Cairo, somewhere safer. You need to get further...’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Oh, yeah, we left Cairo ages, ages ago.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good, good. Yeah, I know, but I wanted to...’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘We’re out in the middle of nowhere!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘It’s quite nice, but erm...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘It might help to go further.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘But are you alright?’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Erm, for now. Still trying to...’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘One sec, one sec... Ed says hi!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Tell Ed hello! Tell Ed thank you so much that he’s... I’m just glad you’re all together and you’re all helping each other.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Oh no – Ed’s been really, really good. He’s the one that led us out. Einstein, he had to head off and do other work stuff, so...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Of course.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘... so it’s really just been the family and Ed for a while, but he said that he’d keep an eye on us.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I’m so glad. I’m so grateful. Thank you. I’m just so glad to know you’re all okay. Okay, we can’t keep talking for long, it’s still dangerous, but...’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Wait, wait...’ Azu, sort of, leans over... ‘Have you heard from Emeka and Vesseek and...?’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Oh yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah! So Emeka and Vesseek – I know that they were at Cairo when everything went bad...’

**[Azu gasps]**

‘... but then they got out. They did get out.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh, oh...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Oh good.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘They’ve sort of re-joined with some of the... I mean, they might have made it out...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah – not too much, not too much. It’s okay.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘And they might be fine and you might not have to worry about them!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘That’s very useful information. Thank you.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘No it isn’t!’

(Lydia laughs)

**HELEN/AZU**

‘No, I am... no!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

Rusty Quill Gaming – [192] – [Sown Seeds]

‘That’s all we needed, all we needed to know.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Are you coming back, Hamid?’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I hope so. I hope so. I really hope I get to see you all again. Okay, we have to go, we have to go. It’s not safe. It’s not safe. Just give everyone my love and keep looking after each other.’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Yeah, ‘course, of course.’

**BRYN/HAMID (fighting back tears)**

‘Okay, thank you.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Awww...’

**ALEX (as Ishaq)**

‘Bye.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Bye.’

**ALEX (also as Ishaq)**

‘Bye.’

Yep, the stone goes dead.

**HELEN**

Okay. Azu offers Hamid a hug.

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Thank you.’ Hamid gratefully accepts. ‘Emeka had one as well. Einstein gave one to everyone who was there. We could try contacting him too?’ Do you want to hear his voice? I don’t know how safe it would be.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘I think it’s more likely that Emeka would be in the middle of something than your brothers. I don’t want to distract him and, I, er...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘There’s another thing. Don’t forget, with the veins, they know what we know.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Yeah.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Right now, what that means is that if we fall, they know your family is safe, but they don’t know where.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah. That’s all we can know.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Which is an acceptable risk. If you want to contact Emeka, I don’t have a problem with that, but you don’t what to say where you are, and you don’t want to know where they are, or what they are doing.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘I... er... I think I would rather not know until... I would rather not.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘That’s okay, Azu.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘It would be worse if I called and... this way, this way I can... you know.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Yeah.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Imagine...’

**BRYN**

I give Azu a hug back.

(Helen laughs)

**LYDIA**

Cel comes over and, like, gives you both a hug.

**HELEN [talking over Bryn]**

Yayyyyyyy!

**BRYN**

I hug Cel and ask Cel to...

**LYDIA**

I’ve got extra-long arms!

**ALEX**

Gragg, kind of, loiters.

**HELEN**

Azu beckons Gragg in. Yayyyy!

**ALEX**

Arms go round all of the people simultaneously. Wilde gives a, sort of, well-meaning eye-roll as Gragg just like... [*grunts*].

**BRYN/HAMID**

Yeah, Hamid beckons Wilde in as well, ‘Come on, Oscar – you too!’

**ALEX**

Wilde comes over and gives a, sort of, pat-pat on Gragg’s arm a little bit. Well-meaning, but he’s, yeah!

**LYDIA**

Cel seizes Wilde...

**BRYN**

Hamid hugs Wilde as well.

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Anyway, anyway, anyway – enough, enough, enough!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘The only other thing you need to know is there isn’t really much in the case of resistance. Er, there’s Gragg here. There’s a few others. Barret’s going to be

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telling us more about it. I know Barret's part of it, but I've only met Gragg and the [*sighs heavily*] Squizzards.

**HELEN/AZU**

'Right.'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'I have one other question, Oscar.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Mmm hmm?'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'In all of this, did it come up who was hexing you?'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'Hm... Hmmm... So that was the Cult?'

**BRYN/HAMID**

'I suspected as much.'

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

'It's almost like they don't like someone interfering with the Simulacrum. It's almost like they get a real bee in their bonnet, especially when that person keeps doing it, even when everyone else says it's a done deal!'

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘They didn’t like any us very much. It’s, er...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘... Kind of flattering!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘... going to be difficult to work with them, but if it’s the only way to defeat the veins, I don’t see what choice we have.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I’m unconvinced either way at this point. I do know how they’ve been tracking us, and how they managed to keep finding you randomly, and keeping tabs.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Oh?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It seems that you didn’t get off scot-free in Cairo with the assault on the heart.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘What?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Locks of hair.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh, that would make sense.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘An arcane link, yeah. I mean, before that I was wearing the ring Barret had me put on until Damascus, so, like, they could have tracked that. We always knew we were vulnerable to that, unfortunately.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘That’s quite skilled because my hair is very short!’

**LYDIA/CEL [laughing]**

‘Maybe it was a fingernail, or something?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Euuuggghhh!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘It might not have been your hair, Azu!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I mean, if I remember correctly, Azu, you had a bit of a rough time. It could have been a tooth!’

**BEN**

Or blood!

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh, I did get beaten up. Yes.’

**BEN**

Sorry, that was an OC comment, I know!

**(Group laughter)**

**BRYN**

Yeah!

**HELEN**

Zolf has returned!

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘From what you are telling, me you didn’t get beaten up! What you did is you took lot of people down. That’s my memory of it, right?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Thank you.’ Azu is genuinely touched. I think this is the first, like, over personal praise that Wilde has ever given her!

**(Helen laughs)**

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Oh, and I have one last piece of news to round things out.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Go on then.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Hmm. You all know I’ve been a little bit different since resurrections? Well, it comes up with some pluses and some negatives. One of the pluses being that, apparently, I have a good idea of how the rest of them are doing back at the Ursans...’

**BRYN/HAMID and HELEN/AZU**

**[Gasp]**

‘Oh, that’s good news!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It isn’t like having a conversation.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘No.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I know that they know we’re okay.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Oh!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘And I know that they’re planning to help how they can, but basically that’s all I can really...’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good to have that. It must be quite a strange experience, Oscar. Are you coping with that alright?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That I can handle.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Good, good.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I’m kind of struggling to explain. I am very aware of the people above us.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Is it Sessraa and Carter that you have a specific link with or is it, like, everyone in the world?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It’s like being in a crowded room, and then you hear a voice that’s familiar yell your name.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Ah. Right.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Gosh!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Sumutnyerl says it’s not unusual, and we shouldn’t worry.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Okay.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘So you can’t pass messages?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘It doesn’t really work like that, it’s more, er, ‘feely’?’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Right.’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I don’t know what to say. But that’s it, that’s everything. I’ve got nothing else. Barret will be here soon and we’ll take it from there.’

**BEN/ZOLF**

‘Great.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Alright.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Alright.’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘And Barret’s one of the ones we like? Or...’

**ALL**

‘No!’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘Oh, okay, just checking, just checking!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Barret’s a third kind of person we don’t like. There’s a lot of enemies that we’ve made over the years, now I think about it, actually.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Mmmm. Yeah, but we made enemies for the right reasons, I think.’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘What about Kafka. Was that related? Does the Cult of Hades have anything to do with him?’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘They wouldn't tell me. I think yes.’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘That sounds like a yes if they wouldn't say!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘I know, right?!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I mean, I don’t... I still don’t quite understand... the Cult of Hades... I mean, Hades was the God of Death, as I recall? And the dark magics that the Romans used. I’m not too clear on the details, so I assumed that they would be, you know...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘They do have evil wizard, *‘rrrraaaaahhhhh, I’m going to rule the world’* vibes, don’t they?!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘Or, well...’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘Throne of Bones. That kind of thing!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘The summoning of the undead, you know, typically associated with evil priesthoods, it’s kind of assumed what the Cult of Hades would be doing. I just don’t really... anyway!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Maybe Kafka was summoning the undead to put the blue-veins in them and take over Prague?’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘I mean, it sounds like another army that might take down the Meritocrats, if that’s what they were going for?’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Yeah!’

**ALEX (as Wilde)**

‘That’s my current running theory. I mean, army of robots, army of zombies – maybe they’re just filling their boots, you know?!’

**HELEN/AZU**

‘Hmm...’

**LYDIA/CEL**

‘It’s always good to have a back up plan, you know? Zombies, Plan B!’

**BRYN/HAMID**

‘I’m quite surprised the Cult of Hades haven’t tried to, you know, redirect the blue-veins for their own purposes, rather than just fighting them.’

**ALEX (also as Wilde)**

‘My guess is, they did and failed.’ On that, I’m going to jump to Zolf. Sat on the steps. Obviously, I would say... no, you know what, I’d say if you’re sat on the steps and if you’ve closed the door, and so on, you wouldn't be able to hear even a murmur of conversation. Like, they’ve deliberately soundproofed as much as they possibly can.

**BEN**

Oh yeah, and if the door had been open, Zolf would have closed it.

**ALEX**

Yeah. So I'm going to assume that you're, sort of, sat on the exterior steps, but you ain't hearing anything.

**BEN**

Nope.

**ALEX**

So, yeah, as the time rolls on and people are talking, you will maybe hear a very, very distant, like [*sound of faint clicking*] echoing deep in the cavern, you know?

**BEN**

Mmm hmm...

**ALEX**

A drip of water here, a steam there. And then there's a particularly, er, like a dense cloud of steam brushed, you know, the outside of the gates and then stood there is a short-ish human with two rather elongated cowled figures on either side, stood outside the gate.

**BEN**

I just lock eyes with an absolutely furious stare.

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**ALEX**

Barret gives a, sort of, little two-fingered salute, and I'll end the episode there!

**HELEN**

Just so you know, two-fingered salute sounds like...

**LYDIA**

Yeah!!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

I've never heard that phrase!

**(Group laughter)**

Oh!!

**LYDIA**

Yeeaaaaahhhhh!!

**ALEX**

Yeah! Good ol' Barret just flips you off aannnnndddd jogs on!

**(Group laughter)**

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No, I mean, I mean, you know like a half-salute, like, a lazy, casual, sloppy salute...

**(Helen convulsed in laughter)**

I don't know how else to describe it!

**(Group laughter)**

What an entrance, though, eh?!!

**LYDIA**

But if you'd said a three-fingered one, I'd would have thought, what? Like the Cub Scouts?!

**(Group laughter)**

**ALEX**

Well, okay. Does that count as some answers, at least, right?

**HELEN**

That's some answers.

**BRYN/HAMID**

'Yeah, lots of answers!'

**LYDIA**

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‘Yeah! Loads of them!’

**ALEX**

Fine! You see? How generous am I?!! All you’re now done is trapped in a dying world underground with only enemies as your friends!

**LYDIA**

Cool!

**HELEN**

Lovely!

**BRYN**

I don’t like any of the answers, but I suppose...

**(Group laughter)**

.. they were there...

**ALEX**

Well, hopefully you’ll be able to get some more and more awful ones, and we’ll slowly draw this not-horror game onwards, but, until then...

**LYDIA**

Bye!

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**ALEX**

Bye, everyone!

**EVERYONE**

Bye!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**ALEX**

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