

RQG – Episode 195 – The One That Got Away

Content Warnings

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[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 195 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

And you've made it to the worst place on the planet, or arguably the best depending on your perspective. So congrats on that one.

HELEN

Right.

ALEX

You're in an alleyway. Yeah in a lot of ways we've managed to come full circle. I started with you in a dirty alleyway and you might be richer, you might be

more powerful but you're still, still in a dirty alleyway, in a lot of ways I think that was intentional.

BRYN

But some of us are looking at the stars.

LYDIA

Ah.

BEN

And the stars are looking back.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

I mean I was thinking about how you have managed to bring so many of your podcast properties together Alex with the it's just like oh no look there's watching and interplay now dimensional like terror.

ALEX

Hey I promise ok this was, this was an odd convergence that was not intentional, it turns out I am just a bit of a one note person.

LYDIA

Yeah it's just everyone comes to you with a script and you're just like that's cool I've just got a few edit points just.

ALEX

It won't even seem like that big a deal at first.

LYDIA

No it's not, it's not a big deal but.

ALEX

Have you considered naming the characters after people I know?

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

I'm sorry I have to reject this there's no Sasha in it.

ALEX

Ok so you are all in your alleyway facing the one that got away, oh yes so happy and are about to be entering down into the manhole in front of it. Anyone have anything they want to do before we do so?

LYDIA

No.

BEN

I don't think so.

ALEX

Resounding silence in which case then.

BRYN

We're being stealthy.

ALEX

Yeah I approve, that wasn't a complaint, resounding silence would be like the title of my first album and there wouldn't be any music, it would be wonderful.

LYDIA

Conceptual.

ALEX

The manhole cover is pulled aside and the first squizzard goes down then Barret and I'm assuming people follow with the same tap, tap thingy. You find yourself in a similar service tunnel to the one that you last existed. The squizzard closes the manhole cover behind at which point Barret just sort of leans in and whispers right as long as we're quiet please do stay quiet we'll be ok. Through the double doors there is anyone carrying anything magical that is important to them, turns and looks at Zolf.

BEN

Yes.

HELEN

Zolf's invisible right?

ALEX

Yeah well you'd still be invisible but he did remember I should say. Zolf we're going to be passing through an anti-magic field I'm assuming it's going to affect your legs.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

It's not like that the whole way it's sort of a barrier thing.

BEN

Ok.

LYDIA

Do you want a piggyback?

BEN

I can use my arms.

ALEX

Yeah there's an anti-magic barrier around the area for obvious reasons so I don't know if the rest of you have anything like that but I thought I would let you know. Through that door on the opposite side, go through one at a time. The door opens, you step inside, you close the door behind you and then some stuff will happen basically checks things like that and then the door on the other side will open ok?

HELEN

Right.

BEN

Alright.

LYDIA

And you're not, I mean you're not, this isn't just an easy way to kill us and it turns out that you were actually on the side of the blue veins all along and then the final group of people that were trying to fight the blue veins are gone?

ALEX

Look there's enough space for two of us to go in at the same time and I'm happy to go in with one of you if you really want. I can't resent you paranoia God knows it's a useful trait.

BRYN

It does feel like there would have been easier ways to do it I guess.

LYDIA

No we're quite hard to kill.

HELEN

Maybe the two squizzards can go in first?

ALEX

The squizzards aren't allowed to go any further.

HELEN

Oh well then I suppose it's you?

ALEX

Oh I'm fine with that, the people inside have a bit of an issue with them which is fine.

BRYN

Well perhaps we all go in pairs then?

LYDIA

Who is in there? Oh that's another secret isn't it?

HELEN

We'll find out in five minutes I suppose. Alright, ok, Barret you're with me.

BEN

Azu as the only one who can probably hold me up I'd appreciate it.

HELEN

Oh well, hmm, how is Azu going to know where you are?

BRYN

The invisibility only lasts ten minutes, it's probably going to wear off any second, and it will certainly wear off the second we step through the anti-magic barrier.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

Yeah like it's not going to sustain long enough for it to be a thing.

HELEN

Ok just checking because it's easy to forget.

ALEX

What do you think Hamid, you and me, old time's sake?

BRYN

Why not Oscar shall we go first?

ALEX

In which case then Oscar heads forward, opens the door, revealing what is inside is one side appears to be, I mean shocker, a floor to ceiling mirror. It's a room that appears to have some form of electrical light or similar from in the ceiling, a large sheet of what is presumably a two way mirror or something similar on one side and it appears to be to all intents and purposes a steel box in every other regard with sort of metal grating on the opposite side. Wilde steps in looking around going this feels sort of familiar in some ways.

BRYN

Hamid steps in with him.

ALEX

At which point then Wilde sort of closes the door, it has a sort of internal metal latch that he turns. Ok. What happens now then. Hello? Hello mystery people. Shh he reaches out to the original outdoor and starts saying something along the lines of, is there like a signal or something and then tries to unlock the door and can't.

BRYN

I guess we just wait.

ALEX

Fair enough. The light on top which was before dim suddenly starts glowing very, very bright like someone has just turned it right up.

BRYN

See I knew something would happen.

ALEX

Ok cool. Hello. There's a very sort of creaky, crackly squawk and then from behind the metal grill on the opposite wall you just hear a very sort of muffled voice going show us your eyes.

BRYN

Our eyes?

ALEX

Show us your eyes yeah.

BRYN

Ok Hamid sort of steals himself and tries to open his eyes wide at the bright light.

ALEX

At the mirror, obviously at the mirror.

BRYN

Oh that's probably easier right let me just, he blinks away again and then does the same to the mirror.

ALEX

Yeah Wilde sort of does the thing where he sort of you know when you like open your eyes as wide as you can with your fingers, Mr Bean style, if anyone knows the reference. Alright, turn around.

BRYN

Yep.

ALEX

Does so. Who brought you here?

BRYN

Mr Barret unfortunately.

ALEX

What do you think about him?

BRYN

How long have you got? He is literally one of the worst beings to have ever lived on this planet.

ALEX

Yeah, wicked, cool, you can come in, one sec.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

The door on the other side just sort of [sound effect] and then opens, there's no one on the other side of it, it appears to be some kind of like cloakroom or something but still with sort of metal grating and so on. Come on.

BRYN

What is beyond the door?

ALEX

So beyond the door is basically a set of lockers, some wooden benches and a larger steel room and what appears to be a locked steel door that leads to the other side of that mirrored glass and then some steps that are leading up to another seemingly locked door. Over another speaker in that room you get, just wait there until the rest come in and then we'll take it from there.

BRYN

Very well.

ALEX

There's some books in the lockers. At which point the speaker turns off.

BRYN

Yeah I guess Hamid looks for the books, grabs one.

ALEX

I am going to jump to the rest of the party and sort of do this as accelerated time. Everyone is put through basically a similar situation and every time you are asked, what do you think of Barret. I'm assuming no one's like oh he's the best, oh I love him he's so cool and interesting. Cool in which case is everyone ok for me to just accelerate through and I'm assuming yeah Azu, Zolf, you're basically helping Zolf through that, that door is an anti-magic field to be specific like that room sorry is an anti-magic field. Anything, to be clear for everyone, anything you've got magic will just not be on in that room it's not damaged, it doesn't melt or anything it's just it is not on. The second who are out of that room whoop it all comes back on and everything is fine.

LYDIA

Cel feels notably less intelligent.

ALEX

Oh yeah such an odd little.

BRYN

I mean yeah similarly for Hamid and also just you know everything about him just deflates like [unclear 0:08:58] basically.

ALEX

Oh yeah I didn't dive too deep into that of course your clothing would suddenly go very like, oh hang on if that's all you've been wearing are you wearing basically rags the second the magic isn't in place?

BRYN

No it's a real, it's a real you know set of the similar clothing it's just not quite as fabulous.

ALEX

Ok, ok. Fair enough. In which case then I'll jump ahead to the cloakroom effectively and have the last door closed. Obviously it's a little bit crowded by that point with everyone in there Barret is allowed in there with you, the squizzards are not and then Barret is there just sort of God the theatricality of for goodness sake.

LYDIA

Sorry, sorry you are irritated by the theatricality here?

ALEX

It's just amateurish you know.

HELEN

[Sound effect].

ALEX

There's no style to it.

BEN

Look it's important Barret not to be very, very stupid and bring some sort of dangerous magical device into this room so it's important that you check that you are not very, very stupid

ALEX

The door opens to the mirrored room as you are saying that and it's just you know he's, he is quite right you are an utter dolt and out steps an old face for some, Augusta Leigh, Byron's half-sister.

BEN

Oh.

BRYN

Right.

ALEX

The leader of the serpentines.

BEN

Sure.

BRYN

Yep.

HELEN

Nice.

ALEX

Hello all, how are we doing?

BRYN

Oh hello again it has been a while.

ALEX

Yeah it has, she comes over and immediately reaches out shake hands with Hamid and Zolf.

BRYN

No thank you.

BEN

No.

ALEX

Shame well I can understand why, it's fair enough. Oh sorry Augusta she reaches her hand out to shake like Azu's and Cel's hand and everyone else's.

HELEN

Azu looks at Hamid, Azu does what Cel did when Cel was introduced to Barret like.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

[Sound effect].

BEN

She's a thief we beat up once.

LYDIA

Oh ok.

BRYN

She was behind the bombing that killed several people right at the beginning of all this, including stealing the simulacrum.

LYDIA

Oh.

HELEN

Oh so this is partly your fault?

ALEX

That's an interesting way of putting it, actually if you think about it some ways if no one had interfered.

BEN

Can we just get on with this please?

ALEX

Yeah alright fine. Augusta heads through to the other door and basically gives a complex tap, like a [sound effect], like unnecessarily complex.

LYDIA

See that is a proper secret knock.

ALEX

It takes a good like twenty seconds, someone has overworked this, this isn't a useful tap this is someone who has overthought this situation.

LYDIA

Now Cel, Cel is impressed.

ALEX

Right one other thing though please watch out Tesla's a bit of a clean freak so wash your hands in the sink and make sure that you basically don't come in grubby because that's just going to be a whole thing ok?

LYDIA

Cel looks at Sumutnyerl with the.

BRYN

Oh God.

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Nikola Tesla is here.

ALEX

Your timing of looking is flawless. She goes very pale and her eyes go very wide and her fists start to clench over and over again.

HELEN

Nikola Tesla.

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Right.

BRYN

I was expecting more of a you know secret volcano base rather than under a grubby pub in London but I suppose it makes as much sense as everything else.

ALEX

You should ask him about the volcano base. She heads into the room basically starts cleaning up and then heads through what is on the other side, just a wooden door. No one let her in, the tapping seems to have then, someone heard her then opened the door automatically, it wasn't a person on the other side and she just heads through a mundane wooden door on the other side.

BEN

Follow.

LYDIA

Cel keeps looking at Sumutnyerl with big eyes.

HELEN

Are you alright Sumutnyerl?

ALEX

Yes.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

She doesn't look alright, she doesn't look upset, she looks ready to throw something at someone's head.

LYDIA

Maybe just don't kill him until we have as much information as we like need or want to make a good decision.

HELEN

Yes that.

ALEX

Why would I kill him? He wouldn't know how angry I am if he was dead.

LYDIA

Valid, valid, valid.

HELEN

Ok.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl leads the way followed by Barret and people just start filtering through into the rest of it.

BRYN

Hamid rather enjoys the opportunity to actually clean his hands and his face properly which has been, not been easy to come by recently.

ALEX

It's quite harsh stuff, it's closer to bleach than soap.

LYDIA

Ugh.

BRYN

Oh once he has done that Hamid uses prestidigitation to perfectly reapply his make-up.

ALEX

Nice, nice, nice but yeah heading inside you head into what is effectively a, it's hard to explain, like a porch I don't know how else to put it like if someone was trying to take a cellar and then do it up like the porch of a house, like astroturf, a picket fence, a door at the end of the cellar, some like windows that seem to have curtains closed that are clearly just a wall but it is set up like a little house.

BEN

Another weird scientist with a weird house.

ALEX

Yes. Augusta is already heading through the red door and down some stairs at the other end.

BEN

Yep follow on.

LYDIA

As Cel is going through they kind of go oh, oh, oh I get it you said, the chap said find the one that got away and that's the pub I get it.

BRYN

Yeah I feel like that was not clear at the time that he meant this pub.

LYDIA

That took me a while.

BRYN

It seems that way I'm still I mean maybe he didn't mean the pub but I guess he must have, it's a pretty ambiguous phrase.

LYDIA

It is, almost deliberately so.

HELEN

It's something that people might wonder about for a very long time. It might spark all kinds of debates.

BRYN

I mean I have to confess it hadn't been topmost in my mind given everything else that has happened but always nice to have a question answered I suppose.

ALEX

Wilde pipes up, I mean in some ways it's quite a disappointment. It was such an esoteric phrase now that the potential has been removed it's sort of underwhelming.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

Yeah I wonder if there's another reveal to come?

ALEX

Heading down the stairs you find yourselves down into what can best be described as a well-appointed 18 [sound effect] salon. There is a fireplace that at first appears to be lit and then you realise it is an illusion, like an illusion of flames. There is like a grandfather clock on the wall, big comfy wing tipped chairs which Augusta immediately flops down into and it's quite spacious actually. You'll have headed down for maybe I don't like twenty feet down so

you're not in a like pub cellar, you have used that as a way to get even further down and yeah it seems comparatively spacious but again it's done up like a house would be where it's like you know there's a window with the curtains drawn and Wilde immediately heads over, tries to pull it aside and sees just bricks on the other side of actually glazed windows and just closes it again but yeah it has the feeling of like someone went for homey but like someone designed homey it doesn't look lived in homey, it looks show room homey do you know what I mean like wax fruit in the bowl homey.

LYDIA

Ah so they haven't been here for a while, it doesn't have the layer of you know lived in ness?

ALEX

So this one it doesn't appear dusty as such but this room doesn't necessarily appear to be like well lived in, that's the best way to describe it. This is a room that exists, think of it as the guest room in your nan's house, the one that is used like one week of the year for like two meals kind of thing.

LYDIA

This is actually something that Cel will comment on at some point but I'm going to guess that Sumutnyerl has stuff to say first?

ALEX

Sumutnyerl stands in the corner and says nothing at all.

LYDIA

Ah ok.

BEN

Is the man in question in this room?

ALEX

No there's currently no one in this room Augusta Leigh sort of sits and is just like we should probably catch up and they are not going to be done for a little while anyway.

LYDIA

They, what, who?

ALEX

She just turns to Barret, what on earth have you been doing. I can't tell them things when I'm outside the field can I. Well no but at the same time God's sake. Fine right who's in here so there's me, Ada, Nicholas, Barret helps with odd jobs basically around the place, it has been a while though since occasionally Einstein will come by but it has been a long time now.

HELEN

Oh good Einstein is alright.

ALEX

Last time we checked he is currently out on another scout.

HELEN

Ok.

BEN

You're with the cult?

ALEX

Oh God no, right.

BEN

Quick answer, yes or no?

ALEX

We're with a cult the same way that you are.

BEN

Right.

HELEN

Ah last resort.

BEN

Once you give us this plan is Barret necessary?

ALEX

She looks at Barret with a very cold cruelty, for a little while longer but certainly not until the end.

BEN

Let me know when he's done.

ALEX

Barret's like yes, oh yes, very funny, very clever, hmm yes. He sort of just stomps through, if anyone wants me I'll be in my room and then heads through the door at the end.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

Are you affiliated with the Harlequins then?

ALEX

Right it seems like I should probably give you a little bit of a walk through and then go from there right?

BEN

It wouldn't hurt.

HELEN

Yes please.

ALEX

Sure ok cool. You all, I'm assuming Barret has told you all by this point that you know yes you all captured me trying to steal the simulacrum but it was Nikola who was paying the bills right?

BEN

Yes.

ALEX

Ok fabulous so and then you got me locked up for a while which was fun. I'll tell you and then well after that point from what I gather Nikola and the others sort of went off and did a little bit of computing of their own on the side and then when things started going a little bit south.

BEN

What do you mean by computing?

ALEX

Ok yeah, steps back, steps back.

BEN

Last we heard Nikola Tesla was working with Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace and they were all in the Americas but obviously he must have come back in order to fund your little.

ALEX

Escapade.

BEN

Attack.

ALEX

Sure well anyway was it stands the situation is they are here, Babbage I'm afraid didn't make it, we lost him a few months ago now. We have managed to create an engine which we believe if combined with a device which we think was generated in the early design stage of the simulacrum with a little bit of Edison (a piece of advice by the way, don't say his name in here, real quick way to get Nikola just off the wall) but long story short we think that if we combine this engine with that kill switch we might be able to not just kill everyone which is a very Cult of Hades solution but actually revert everyone.

HELEN

Oh that is good.

BEN

That's good news.

ALEX

It has taken a lot of work and it's complicated work and I'd be happy to show it to you if any of you can understand it.

LYDIA

I would actually very much like to see that and go through in detail if possible because you know it seems like a lot of people on your side are in the habit of doing quite harmful things and I would just like you know to check your work.

BRYN

I think there's more than one of here who would appreciate that, I've been studying the simulacrum for quite a long time myself.

ALEX

Well then you might have some insights I suppose.

HELEN

I'm no good at it but Cel and Hamid are both very good at this and smart and yes.

BRYN

Skraak too.

ALEX

Yes Skraak pokes his out, Augusta seems quite interested in Skraak. Hello. Hi. Ok she then just sort of sits back, oh sorry yeah Augusta can just see the faces I eventually found out that Shoin was doing a bunch of stuff and the kobolds were involved, I've never had the pleasure of meeting someone before though.

BEN

To describe it in those terms is something of an understatement, I suggest you are very careful.

ALEX

This actually looks like news to Augusta. Ok.

HELEN

He was a terrible piece of a human being.

ALEX

Oh yes absolutely he had nothing to do with our work.

BRYN

I will let Skraak speak for themself if he wishes to.

ALEX

Skraak just kind of looks Augusta up and down, gives a little bit of a snort. I'm good.

BEN

How long is Tesla going to be?

ALEX

He kind of makes his own schedule.

BEN

Oh good.

ALEX

When him and Ada get wrapped up in it they can go for a while, I'd say.

LYDIA

Does he have more pressing engagements than saving the world because I'm really getting this sense that this is some kind of side hustle for you all, you know this seems like it's very pressing, saving the world.

ALEX

It has been very pressing for a long time.

BEN

Oh I'm glad they are bored of it by now.

BRYN

Do you have any food then? We might as well eat while we've got the chance.

ALEX

Yeah of course I'll tell you what help yourselves to anything you can find around here. I'll head down and then see if they're ready for company ok?

BRYN

Sure.

BEN

Good.

HELEN

Right.

ALEX

And I'll take a break there and I'm going to be back in a couple of minutes.

[Break].

ALEX

And welcome back so Augusta has headed through that door at the far end and has sort of headed down even further stairs, all the stairs seem to go down here so far and you're given a few minutes to yourselves I think at which point Skraak sort of goes over to the fireplace and kicks a log a little bit hard and Sumutnyerl sort of looks around, Sumutnyerl seems not just sort of annoyed by that stuff but seems quite uncomfortable of this as a space I guess like she doesn't want to touch stuff, like it's a little bit icky or something. Wilde of

course is immediately lounged and started picking up whatever books he can find.

BRYN

Hamid is going to have a snack if there's something there but otherwise he'll just reach into his own rations.

ALEX

There is food sort of in cupboards and things like that however it looks like it should be like I said it looks like it should be you know a terrine of punch and things like that and it's like at the surface level that's exactly what it is and then the second that you're in the cupboard it's like a tin of soup. Oh two tins of peaches oh ooh ohh, some dried biscuits woo. It's all like style of comfort but no actual comfort in there.

LYDIA

Cel notices this and says all seems quite like a metaphor for these people.

BRYN

Yeah very artificial living space.

ALEX

Well I suppose part of it is that if you're going to live underground for ages you put whatever creature comforts you can but yeah it's a bit.

LYDIA

They all seem so concerned with seeming more superior than each other. You know?

BRYN

Yeah.

ALEX

Hmm it does seem very petty doesn't it.

LYDIA

I just kind of feel like you know you put these things aside to get saving the world done.

BEN

Yeah give them five minutes and I'm busting in.

ALEX

I'll help. Just make sure you don't bust in in a way that breaks anything but apart from that go nuts.

HELEN

That's what busting in means.

ALEX

Well yeah but we don't want to break the thing that we're here for Azu.

HELEN

Ah ok.

LYDIA

Ah yes.

ALEX

So like a soft busting.

HELEN

Ah yes.

ALEX

Maybe less of a hard bust than like a gentle bosom or something.

(Group laughter)

BEN

I'm just done with these people's crap.

ALEX

Fair.

HELEN

We can agree there.

BRYN

But busting makes me feel good.

(Group laughter)

BRYN

I couldn't not, I couldn't not, I'm sorry.

ALEX

Two minutes, two minutes without drama or action and this is what happens. This is why no one gets to sleep and we always keep moving. We can't be trusted with it. Ok yeah I'd say yeah in fairness about five minutes later Augusta sort of comes in, opens her head, pokes it in and just goes yeah come on down then. Closes the door behind her.

LYDIA

It's the artificial casualness you know like so many people are dead.

HELEN

I suppose if you're thinking on a higher plane as it were that doesn't mean so much.

BEN

No it just means you're an asshole follow on.

ALEX

I agree with Zolf on that one. Sometimes people just need a good, well some people just need a bit of a bucketing don't they sometimes.

BEN

I don't do that anymore and then I'll follow Ada, Augusta sorry.

ALEX

Augusta yeah. Heading down the stairs there are a couple of landings, again it does seem to be set up like a staircase not like a complex or anything so it's like you know there's a landing, there's a corridor to the left, there's a corridor to the right that has a couple of bedrooms styled. Again a window at the end of the corridor that leads to nothing, down a bit more, another set of landings then you get down to the last one and you face your first actual like proper there's a steel door, like an actual steel door, like at the entrance. It has been easy to follow Augusta down as she goes and the door is left ajar for you.

HELEN

Alright in we go.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

Heading inside there's a big sign that just says please wash hands, never leave both doors open, just hung over another metal door same as the other one and again a sink, a similar situation basically.

LYDIA

Washy, washy, hand, hand.

BRYN

Do the same.

BEN

Don't bother.

ALEX

Sure there's no observation window here or anything like that, do you though, in fact no you wouldn't be able, basically the doors will only open one at a time you're not going to be able to get both open it's a sort of airlock system.

HELEN

Sure.

ALEX

And then heading inside I'm just going to skip the faff of that, you find yourself in an actual finally legitimate lab.

LYDIA

Ooh yay.

ALEX

By which I mean it is a bit of a candy store for Cel.

LYDIA

Yeah I was going to say Cel can I don't know perception check a way to work out what kind of science is going on?

ALEX

You don't need to, all of them and they seem to be comparatively distinct in so far as like there appears to be a lot of chemistry work happening over to one side, there appears to be a lot of electrical equipment on a separate counter and a separate section of like there do appear to be like some live animal specimens like rats and so on in comparatively large cages but there are some like animals and so on. It appears to be just a smorgasbord of science however it does actually look to be like real stuff not a mock up the way the rest of the house is.

BRYN

Your mad science is giving our real science a bad name.

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

That's very much how Cel feels yeah.

ALEX

What I would say is give me a knowledge engineering.

LYDIA

Ok. I haven't rolled above 10 for ages, these virtual dice are broken. 20.

ALEX

You're in the scientist's equivalent of like a wood shop. This does not make a big shiny thing, this is where you go for like oh this part broke, alright I'll make a new one, oh you know this fluid is spoiled I'll make some more. This isn't the beating heart of it, this is just sort of an entrance like side shed almost.

LYDIA

So is there a sense from this that there is more science going on elsewhere nearby or is this scabbled together stuff from the wasteland of an apocalypse upstairs?

ALEX

The former.

LYDIA

Ok.

ALEX

This is someone who is well stocked and has a lot of stuff and just needed a space for like you know if your hammer breaks and you need to make a new hammer you don't make a new hammer in the hadron collider.

LYDIA

Yeah where's the real lab?

ALEX

Oh it's just on the other side but you know give me a second, come on. A door at the far end of the lab which is mostly obscured by all of this apparatus opens and a very tired and wizard looking and you'll just know because they were a figure of celebrity Nikola Tesla steps out and sort of closes the door behind him and steps over. This guy has aged so much from where he should be given his age I'd say he's around the sort of like pushing fifties mark, he looks like an unhealthy like 70. It's the kind of thing you know when you see like a political leader going through a horrendous time and they just age at double time, this is someone who just looks so tired, just enormous bags under the eyes, clumps of hair missing and what's left is pure white and they are just sort of hobbling closer, hello all, it's lovely to finally see some fresh faces. Hello.

LYDIA

Cel looks at Sumutnyerl.

ALEX

Sumutnyerl is stood at the back deliberately obscured by the rest of the group. Nikola doesn't seem to have noticed that she's there.

LYDIA

Is there, you know you're looking at the eyes and like the pupils just go round and then like realising that someone is trying to stay hidden I carefully shoot back like oh yeah, no I wasn't looking around at anything.

ALEX

He legitimately doesn't appear to have noticed. If anything he appears almost myopic, he has got a big pair of thick glasses that he has had to push up his nose. He is walking with a cane and he is just like yeah it's, it has been heavy going, it's always nice to see some fresh faces I understand you're here to help us with the work?

BEN

Yeah what do you want us to do?

ALEX

Well in a nutshell we have a piece that we can't fabricate here that will need fetching and then we're going to need someone to set up the apparatus in the beating heart.

HELEN

Right more details than that please.

ALEX

I think it's going to be easier if I show you the device and then we go from there if that's ok?

HELEN

Yes.

BRYN

Seems like a good place to start.

ALEX

Thank you, is this all of your party? Now you're starting to see the eyes looking for someone that isn't there, he notices Sumutnyerl. Ah hello. Can everyone give me a sense motive?

LYDIA

Alex role played the like heartbroken like whatever this conversation is all to himself.

HELEN

All by himself.

LYDIA

You know.

BEN

24.

HELEN

Wow this is one of the highest scores that I have but I rolled a 2 so that's 15 from me.

ALEX

Ok.

LYDIA

10.

BRYN

Both Hamid and Skraak rolled under 10.

ALEX

Everyone knows that Sumutnyerl is bloody furious. Zolf you legitimately think there is a chance she might go full bear in this small room.

BEN

(Laughter) Ok.

ALEX

You've been around Sumutnyerl enough to know that they might legitimately lose control, they haven't yet but like facial twitches of anger.

BEN

Mentally prepare myself to get in the way.

ALEX

I know that nothing that I can say will make this better so I won't. He stops, turns around and then starts walking, well hobbling through the mine lab towards the door at the end. Opens the door, please don't touch anything, this isn't arrogance, most of this equipment is incredibly delicate if you were to get even a speck of dirt in here you're creating work that will need to be redone. Please, please, he looks like he's going to cry, please just observe don't touch, I can't rebuild this again, please.

HELEN

Alright.

ALEX

And then he starts heading through the door and out. Sumutnyerl is [sound effect], Sumutnyerl then heads back out the lab the way she came.

HELEN

I guess they thought they might smash things.

BEN

They were going to, then I'll follow Tesla.

ALEX

You've got to respect the self-control though.

BRYN

Hamid follows Tesla in to the lab.

ALEX

In we go. So you come to a legit spiral staircase, worked metal spiral staircase leading down. It is closer to other London in some ways in that it appears to be some maybe some retrofitted service tunnels that were like connected into or something like that and yeah Tesla is slowly making his way down. As you do you start to hear a, let me finish this sentence, you start to hear a distinctive clicking not rah monsters, not that but more like the gentle ticking of a mechanism you know a [sound effect] something turning over, that kind of thing and Hamid and Zolf this has the feeling oof the ordinateurs in France, the bit above ground, not the Mr Ceiling gubbins underneath but the like, the actual engines up top that they claimed were all of the stuff. It has a very, very similar vibe to that and heading down it appears that you're heading down through what is comparatively a narrow, vertical space into a large broad, brightly lit space and heading down the second that you get to eye level you see that you're looking at effectively banks of machinery, banks and banks of it not as large as the Mr Ceiling set up by no means but what it does appear to be is an interaction of not just like mechanisms turning, the ordinateurs were very

like you know spinning wheels, spinning wheels etc this one's like a significant amount of like spinning wheels there's a lot of fluids in there, there appears to be like some like solution based stuff going in there. There appears to be like organic components of like you know parts of trees and root systems and so on seem to be worked into the machinery and then you see towards the centre, you do see what appears to be something akin to the sort of Mr Ceiling brain vat let's say but one, there appears to be a single vat in the middle and appears as well Hamid give me a knowledge arcana.

BRYN

Well I only rolled a 3 so.

BEN

I also have knowledge arcana.

LYDIA

Oh I mean so does.

ALEX

Apologies.

LYDIA

So does Cel.

ALEX

Sorry that was a force of habit, give me a second because it is referencing earlier stuff I'm trying to remember who has seen what basically. Did Zolf see the elemental part of the Mr Ceiling set up, the deepest level that was elementals, I don't remember if he did or not?

BEN

Well I probably didn't because I don't think he had legs at the time.

ALEX

I don't think you did so yeah sticking just with and Cel doesn't get this because I'm kind of referencing stuff, what did Hamid roll?

BRYN

20 total.

ALEX

Unless you're mistaken the far wall has miniaturised, has the miniaturised version that they were attempting to generate with all of the Newton work and all of the stuff that was happening in Prague appears to be worked into this and appears to be powering it. In terms of.

BEN

Is there a brain in this single central vat?

ALEX

There appears to be one yes.

BEN

Right.

ALEX

In terms of the actual layout of this though, it is less organised in some way but it appears far more complex. At first it almost appears like a little bit of chaos because there's you know bioorganic components, there's solutions and so on, however even at a glance Cel you can tell that there's a very distinct order to the chaos and for you for free you can see this isn't born of a messy mind, it's with this many disparate fields this is as clean as it is really going to get, this is as organised as you can really get, you can't make trees grow at right angles you know stuff like that.

BEN

Whose, whose brain is that?

ALEX

Well if you'll follow me that is what's left of Babbage.

BEN

Did he consent to this?

ALEX

He did more than consent, he volunteered.

BEN

Very well.

ALEX

He heads in and then you see a comparatively short, petite woman is moving between the banks and sort of adjusting things, she seems a lot younger, a lot younger and the way she picks herself through this is someone who is intimately familiar with the set up. She's you know ducking without looking at things but she is having to sort of crawl in between stuff to make micro adjustments, wearing white gloves and so on and she sees you all and then starts crawling her way out and sort of stands there, gives a little bit of a wave. Hello all. Ada hello.

HELEN

Hello.

BRYN

Hi.

LYDIA

Hi.

ALEX

Ada kind of is looking between Nikola and yourselves and is clearly, clearly rolling sense motives as this is unfolding. Welcome to well we just call it the device.

BRYN

So what is all this designed to do and how does it do it?

ALEX

Well we know that, this is Nikola sort of tired, sort of heads over a bench, this appears by the way Cel to your eye, this has a lot more of what you'd expect of high end gear where it's like you know a modular component, within a modular component, within a module like this is where the real work is happening. He sorts of sits at a very thread worn stool. Shoin's kill switch was, it was a good idea if used properly it would kill the creature and it would destroy everything that it is interacting with. That's not a solution, that's just a quicker ending but you can't, you can't control it ok as much as the Court of Hades want to you can't, it doesn't work like that it, this thing is it's a, it's a gestalt entity if you know what I mean by that. It connects all the things that are a part of it to make something bigger than the whole, bigger than some of the parts.

BEN

Like the being that lived under the Arc Le Ordinateur?

ALEX

Yes. That was a perversion of the base principles that we're working from, someone took, as seems to be the story over and over again people take a part of the whole and then they try and make an entire thing out of it and it doesn't work because it's not the whole thing. You can't take a wheel from a car and then expect it become another car, it doesn't work like that you just get, look the point is this isn't something that you can kill without herding everyone else, you can't drag it kicking and screaming from them what you can do is you can replace the mind that emerges from all of the others with something that is more benign and willing to then surrender control.

LYDIA

So Babbage is going to replace the blue vein creature and then going to stop or am I misunderstanding?

ALEX

It's an over simplification but yes look what the kill switch has that we lack is it has the ability to affect all of the upper, all the parts simultaneously for all of his flaws and his abhorrent morals Shoin did crack that part of the problem and I haven't been able to recombine that with the work that we've got here and what we have is we have at least the ability to interfere with the emergent mind.

BEN

So you place the central consciousness, the central desire at the centre of this gestalt creature and then that new consciousness chooses to withdraw its influence from everyone, that's the plan?

ALEX

In essence yes.

BRYN

I suppose it's better than killing them it feels risky.

LYDIA

Cel's going to cast a focused scrutiny on Nikola.

ALEX

Oh ok. Ooh interesting.

LYDIA

Is going to sit down like right in front of them, him and so I don't think he gets a will save, it enhances me rather than do anything to him so he doesn't it's not like a save thing so yeah I was just going to crouch down in front of him and say you are the first person in this mess who has shown any humility and so is the only person that I felt that I could trust but I know that you have betrayed the trust of somebody that I respect so I know that I cannot trust my own perception of your trustworthiness. Do you genuinely believe that you can save everyone, that we can unpick this mess that you caused?

ALEX

He starts to cry quite heavily but maintains the eye contact. Absolutely and I can guarantee you now that no one else will come a tenth as close as we have.

LYDIA

Ok so Cel's rolling a sense motive on that.

ALEX

Oh yeah please do.

LYDIA

Which, oh natural 20!

BEN

Nice.

HELEN

Nice.

LYDIA

That's genuine and having not rolled above ten light with the focus scrutiny I was very glad so that was a, that's the, ok so I get a plus 10 bonus on perception and sense motive.

ALEX

What's the score?

LYDIA

So that would be 30 plus, Cel's natural sense motive is 0 so 30.

ALEX

You believe that this guy would tear his own beating heart out of his chest if he thought it would help. In terms of his intelligence I mean the work speaks for itself Ada could be pulling more weight than maybe Nikola you'd have to dig a bit deeper but in terms of his conviction you're reaching a level of insight where the only reason it is someone else's brain in there and not his is because it was probably the better call. This is a guy who would be willing to just walk straight into a fire to do it and does believe that this will work. However you also know that this is a broken man who probably only has the work and nothing else so the risk here is less to do with he is lying and more to do with he is going to conk out before it finishes.

LYDIA

Cel just nods and stands up and says I trust him and I'm going to do whatever it takes to get this done.

BRYN

That's good enough for me.

BEN

So what do you need us to do?

ALEX

Well we need to fetch the kill switch, we think we know where it is and then we need you to take a modified version of that to the top of the clock tower and if that sets off in the heart of the plant at the same time that we do our work here, it either works or it doesn't. We need someone to fetch the device and then plant it at the top.

BRYN

Ok well Cel trusts you and that's good enough for me so I think we're going to do it but it's too close to having a single point of failure and we need to understand it. Cel and Skraak and I are going to look over all your work, you're going to show your working to us.

ALEX

Of course, of course.

BRYN

Once we understand it we'll get started.

ALEX

Of course. Ada if, Ada will be able to, to he just sags and basically he looks like he is already exhausted from the conversation. Ada steps forward going the

conversations tire him out, I can show you basically anything you want to know it's just good to have the help finally.

BEN

Yeah that's certainly good enough for me but let's get started, a lot of work to do.

ALEX

She takes a moment and then before doing so just looks up and just looks you all dead in the eye and just says thank you, just thank you and I'm going to end the episode there. Bit of a down note.

LYDIA

No that's an up note.

HELEN

This is the best news we've had.

LYDIA

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HELEN

[Unclear 0:44:58].

LYDIA

I don't trust anyone that walks through this kind of scenario in a super cheery blasé, what can I get out of it kind of attitude.

ALEX

I hate having a smart character who isn't either sarcastic or [sound effect] I've made it out of cheese and glue, ha ha.

BEN

I mean when you started describing the mechanisms in this room I was thinking plus, plus, plus out of cheese error.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Either way yeah welcome, welcome to the end game people.

HELEN

Oooh!

ALEX

I'm running out of secrets to hide from you so until then I guess it's bye for now and we'll see how it all unfolds next week.

BEN

Ok.

HELEN

Boy oh boy.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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