

RQG – 199 – Rock and a Thorn Place

Content Warnings

- X
- X

HELEN

Hello Rusty Quill Gang. It's Helen here. The voice of Azu, **Inola and Lavern**. I'd like to tell you about the Deca Tapes, a multi award winning audio drama that's now on the Rusty Quill Podcast network. The Deca Tapes is an eight part mystery story full of bizarre twists and turns. Ten people are locked into a space together. We don't know where they are or if they will be able to get out by the answers must be somewhere on these tapes. Each member of the group has been assigned a specific role and everyone tries to make the most of their situation except for the cook. She wants to know where they are and why they aren't allowed to leave. She demands the truth. You can follow the story by searching for the Deca Tapes wherever you listen to podcasts. That's D-E-C-A tapes going to www.thedecatapes.com or by visiting www.rustyquill.com for more information. Have fun with it.

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to episode 199 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 until such time as I find a way to engineer your demise?

HELEN

Oh god! Could not be ominous. Thank you for that. Lovely.

BEN

Zolf Smith but thanks, I guess.

BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan please and thank you.

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom, you know, whatever really. It's cool. You do what you need buddy.

HELEN

And Azu. Nothing you can do can kill me in any meaningful way

(laughing)

ALEX

Challenge accepted!

HELEN

She will live on!

ALEX

I believe that I had provided you the illusion of a safe entrance into a large underground complex. For a little more context we are currently in Svalbard in, what I have openly stated is my own version of Jurassic Park because I can and you are in the seed vault/processing area. It was lined with lots of sorts of hydroponics and things like that and you have been trying to find your way in past a big, scary, bony construct.

BRYN

There was a mysterious forest, right and the forest had trees from lots of different places and mismatched wildlife and then there's this hydroponic zoo section.

ALEX

Again this all feels very coherent to me. I don't know what you could possibly be referring to. With that in mind I'm going to pick up pretty much exactly where we left off which is that you poked your heads around whatever domes you could get to on this complex. You exposed that some of them seemed to be full of those plant watcher creatures and there was one that you could see that seemed to be empty but you couldn't really get past without smashing up the dome and then there was another one that seemed to empty that you saw had the open hatches of the windows, the same as the original dome you first climbed up which is currently full of bony, bony construct.

BRYN

Yeah there was the obviously signposted, the windows on this one are open and there's nothing at the bottom entrance point.

LYDIA

Sounds fine to me.

BRYN

Yep

LYDIA

No ominous ominousness at all!

ALEX

Hey you legitimately can take any of the other ones you have been able to get access to and I will...I will just make that happen.

BRYN

No I think following the GM's obviously signposted clues is a good survival tactic so I say we do it.

ALEX

As a player I fundamentally disagree with you. As a GM I couldn't be happier. With that in mind then I'm going to hand over control and go where...are people climbing in I'm guessing?

BEN

Yes

HELEN

Yeah

BRYN

We sort of perfected our technique, right. It's like Skraak and Zolf can get on top and provide a rope and the rest of us can climb because we've all got these fancy boots.

ALEX

Well the benefit is because you've already been using this time to navigate around all the domes that you can see inside built into the side of this big, old crater. You're already up there so it's just a question of how you get down.

HELEN

More rope?

ALEX

Can I suggest plummeting? It's a good word.

HELEN

No. I refuse that suggestion. You can put it back in your pocket.

BEN

I will tie a rope very well to an extant bit of, I dunno, wrought iron filigree. This feels like the kind of place that would have wrought iron filigree.

ALEX

The man's not wrong. There is quite a lot of wrought iron filigree.

BEN

So we'll tie something...tie it very securely to that to make sure that it can support everyone including Azu, in full armour.

ALEX

It's worth giving a little bit of additional context here just for the aesthetics of things which is from down below it was a very, very, almost tourist focused. Lots of big helpful lettering and things like that. Up top where the tourists aren't meant to be it still has a high end level of craftsmanship but it's far more utilitarian. It doesn't appear to be appear that the same level of showiness is here. It's not like all the vents are covered in mithril. It's a little bit mucky up here, would benefit from a little bit of a clean and it's quite a lot of bird droppings all over the place but it's just as a reminder that the aesthetic is very public user focused and you're a little bit outside of that temporarily.

BEN

Cool

ALEX

In which case yeah, you don't need to do checks for your rope usage. That's a thing you get for free.

HELEN

Hurray.

BEN

Ok

ALEX

So with that in mind can I just get an order of people dropping down first.
That's all I ask.

BEN

I was thinking I would go first because I can levitate which means I can get down with the least difficulty and land very quietly even with metal legs.

ALEX

Uh huh. I think that scans. If people are ok to wait for Zolf then I can do some cheeky little map reveals because I'm still on roll 20 meaning I can do all kinds of nonsense.

BRYN

Sure

ALEX

In that case then this is either going to break it or work.

(laughing)

Ok you are able to see all the way through to here. So for the audience's benefit there was a large dome you couldn't see in which had a non sort of glass roof. It was a bit more like steel, that kind of thing. There is a big, old set of double doors which lead to, what you think, is that big, old armour dome but having dropped down you can see that there is a clear run right the way

through connecting all of these lineally connected domes. Apart from the one that has the big, scary construct which is off the beaten track and another dome that you saw which was full of plant watchers which is off the beaten track. So you now have a decent run to the left and right of the building.

BRYN

We very much didn't go through the obvious front entrance and the internal layout that we can work out is the obvious front entrance has a long corridor that leads into this first dome full of plant watchers and then there's a line of the same domes in a row to the big dome but with two branched domes; one to the north and one to the south.

ALEX

Both of which are full of death!

LYDIA

There's just domes. Just imagine domes.

ALEX

I love domes. Domes are great. They're really difficult to make.

HELEN

Yeah. Yeah they are.

ALEX

So I'm happy to skip to everyone can drop down when people want. Nothing sinister suddenly assaults you on the descent and I'm not going to require the strength checks because descending a rope on Pathfinder is really quite easy and you're all fairly good and since Helen has the sense to use an agile breastplate for Azu, I don't have to do stupid amounts of extra stuff so you can all just have descended that's fine.

HELEN

Lovely. Thank you.

ALEX

I would require climb checks if you were doing an emergency climb up a rope. Not the same thing. In which case I'm going to assume that you're all laid out. Sort of scattered around that room as you currently are. You do you. Oh, to be clear in case it's not visible there are a pair of doors. There is one leading off to the north of this building, there is one leading off the south of this building that are closed.

BRYN

We probably don't bother opening the doors that are clearly not the way we want to go.

ALEX

You see that they basically all have "no entry" signs on them. They are not for public access. Very clearly so.

BEN

I'm going to gather everyone up. Like miming.

HELEN

Ok we gather. We gather.

ALEX

Find your buddies.

LYDIA

Get within a single bomb drop radius

(laughing)

BEN

I'm going to go and try and make a wall between us and the fossil construct so we can get past and if it...

LYDIA

If we need to get past, that doesn't seem like it's on the way to...

BEN

No I mean walk along the corridor in front of it...

LYDIA

Oh right

BEN

But if it sees us I dunno if it's going to go for us so I want to make a barrier.

LYDIA

Ok I understand now. From the dome it's in it could potentially, if we walk that way, see the dome that we are in. So...just in case anyone, you know were theoretically listening on this and didn't have a visual.

BEN

Just to be absolutely clear, yeah to lay it out very nicely...

LYDIA

I think that totally clarified things.

BEN

Right, right, right.

LYDIA

Even more than clear.

BEN

Yeah so I'm going to take the stone from the walls which are made of stone, I think, right.

ALEX

Yes that is a correct statement. Yes

BEN

Thank you universe. Right yeah...

(laughing)

LYDIA

Can I do an alchemy check on the walls

BEN

They're actually mercury but frozen!

LYDIA

What?

(laughing)

BEN

Right so Alex stone shape

ALEX

Yep

BEN

I've got two uses of it. Which means in two standard actions I can make up to 40 cubic feet of stone or move cubic feet. I don't create it, I pull it out places.

ALEX

You extract it full metal alchemist style.

BEN

Yeah so what I want to do is take it from the corner of the dome that we're in and the corner of the dome that we're going into.

ALEX

Can I give you an additional piece of context which will probably help you out?

BEN

Yes

ALEX

The floor is stonework. It's very posh stonework but it is stonework and tiled stonework.

BEN

Fine. In which case, yes I will pull it out of the floor and basically make a trench...oh no, I will pull out on the other side so I'm going to create a moat and then the wall.

ALEX

Ah so you're going to cause the hydroponics to flood into a trench and raise a wall. That's very clever. I like that.

BRYN

Nice, nice.

ALEX

Ok in that case do you think you're going to use one usage or two usages?

BEN

So how big is the corridor?

ALEX

So the corridor is 15 feet wide.

BRYN

And how tall is it?

ALEX

Quite tall. It's like...50 feet/60 feet tall. It's a tall building.

BEN

Ok in which case, Bryn?

BRYN

Yep

BEN

I would like to...I have 40 cubic foot. I would like to build the tallest possible...

BRYN

This is going to be tricky.

BEN

Well hang on, it's not, it's not. I'm overcomplicating this. It's two foot. I can make two and half foot. I can create like a bloody...ok how thick with two cs is the fossil construct?

(laughing)

ALEX

Ok. The fossil...

LYDIA

He was a chunky lad

ALEX

...construct is a bit like...mechanically, like 15 feet by 15 feet. It is a *huge* creature. And in terms of its build within that, there's not much empty space within that cube.

BEN

Cool. So I'm going to create what is effectively a set of stone bars. So instead of flat thing. So I'm going to go five foot pillar, five foot gap, five foot pillar, five foot gap.

ALEX

Ah. There we go. That would work.

BEN

It's going to get taller so it'll end up at around about 10 foot tall and then I'll fill it at the top so it's basically a classic barred fence. So it's 10 foot, now obviously the golem could still probably get over that but it would at least cause more of an issue.

ALEX

I think that's quite clever. I'm on board with this usage. That's quite clever.

LYDIA

And of course there's a trench in front of it that is just as deep which means that it is taller.

BEN

That's true, it's got to step in the hole. Yeah ok great.

ALEX

Yeah I'm quite impressed with the execution on this. I can confirm your physics proposal for this fictional universe checks out. Are you going to be able to do that with a single casting?

BEN

It's two standard actions. Yeah two castings, one standard action each. 12 seconds.

ALEX

And can I confirm verbal and sematic or just verbal/just sematic?

BEN

Verbal and sematic and I need stone.

ALEX

In which case then...

BEN

But I will be whispering the semantics. No I will be whispering my hands.

(laughing)

ALEX

Very small hand movements but very loud instructions!

BEN

Yeah absolutely.

ALEX

What I am going to do then is...I'm going to fudge the system a little bit because I feel like it's going to make more sense. Give me a stealth check to give me a border estimation on how well you're doing not just yelling it out as is required for the spell.

BEN

Fair. Ooh that's a good roll. 15.

ALEX

Ok 15, that's useful.

BEN

Bearing in mind I have a -2 so I'm happy with the roll.

ALEX

That's pretty good on a -2. Alright, alright. I'm going to find out if our construct-y friend has managed to discern anything at the time of your first casting. Ok. I'm going to give you a little bit of a description as you start to cast a spell if that's ok. So you begin the act of casting a spell. Feel free to describe how it looks by the way. We've not used this one before so it's a nice, big, fresh comparatively powerful spell.

BEN

Yeah so I get onto the floor and I'm almost building an invisible sandcastle so as I'm...

ALEX

Oh cool

BEN

So I'm down on my knees and I'm kind of building and moulding the stone and mimicking my movements but at like scaled up, the stone on the other side is mimicking what I'm doing effectively.

ALEX

Yeah that scans. That's all grand. So as you sort of step around and start to cast this obviously you're doing this immediately so there's no lag of you just stood there in the corridor being seen or anything. There's simultaneously a loud splash and roar from this fossil construct and the sound of gushing water

at the far end. As you start to see what has happened you see that rather than you having alerted the creature, it appears to have been affected by something completely unrelated to you and so has not noticed your casting.

BEN

That's good.

ALEX

There is one of those shambling corpses, has just been approaching the large construct which has just punched it into the wall. Just exploded it and taken out the majority of the hydroponics around with it with such a loud noise that your first casting is completely masked. It has no idea that you are there and is currently occupied repeatedly [thudding noise] pounding something that is long dead and you can see what's left of it is mostly dust in the air.

BEN

I'm going to get on with it and do the second casting while it's still distracted.

ALEX

I don't require a stealth check.

BEN

Good stuff. Did it roll a natural 1?

ALEX

It did and there was another creature kicking around that also didn't do well so as a result, congratulations, there is a now basically a set of bars between you and a large, currently occupied, fossil golem. Huge, currently occupied, fossil golem. Now stepping around the corridor you can also see is there another one of those shambling corpses that is moving at the opposite end, so the one that you have left unbarred. It has not noticed you, it is facing the wrong way and it is doing that thing they were doing before where it just sort of is. It's just sort of milling. It's not really doing anything. It's just there, looking the wrong way.

BEN

Cool. Having finished the casting, turn around, thumbs up. Beckon, let's go.

HELEN

Alright, Azu gives you a big thumbs up back.

ALEX

Can I get a stealth check for people to navigate across however there are going to be enormous penalties on the perception check for the creature so I think you might be in the clear on this one.

BEN

Would you like another for me for the movement.

ALEX

Yes please. It is a separate check. The fact that you managed to reengineer an entire building on the sly, I feel might've been covered by the first check.

BEN

That's fine. I accept that. It's 11.

HELEN

5 [sighs]

BRYN

27 for Hamid, 33 for Skraak.

LYDIA

Cel got 26

ALEX

Cool. So as a result the following happens...

HELEN

Oh no.

ALEX

As you are sort of stepping across and so on, the large fossil golem finally takes a moment from pounding an ever deeper hole into the floor of what used to

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be a creature and by fluke happens to look up in the right direction just to see both Zolf and Azu highlighted between two pillars mid sneak.

(laughing)

LYDIA

Oh no!

HELEN

Yep. Yeah, fine.

ALEX

Can I please get an initiative roll from everyone.

BEN

Oh no!

HELEN

No this is the opposite of what we wanted to happen!

ALEX

Sorry, my mistake I thought we could have an initiative roll. I of course...

BEN

No! No!

ALEX

...get it wrong.

BEN

I'm getting the squirty water bottle.

ALEX

Ok you should be able to do that thing where you modifier the numbers and then it'll do its thing whilst I remember how to add GM creatures to this tool because it's been a while.

HELEN

Oh yeah. Alright hang on.

ALEX

So I owe it to people to tell the truth which is this isn't as flawless as it might sound in the edit. This has been involved and we're coming at it completely fresh and we're definitely flawless and haven't spent a chunk of time getting everything in order. With that in mind, Hamid you are up. You know that Azu and Zolf have prompted some ire because you can hear down the corridor the [grumbling noise]

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

It's kind of like shifting...that scraping and shifting of bone and stone combined within a gravelly voice but literally gravelly.

BRYN

I feel like just not engaging is probably the best tactic.

BEN

Hamid's learning!

BRYN

Yeah some of us learn from our past actions Ben.

BEN

Oooh!

ALEX

I hate it!

(laughing)

I will represent the James Ross Team. No learning, no hugging, no growth.

HELEN

All learning, all hugging.

BRYN

Hamid's going to cast greater invisibility on Skraak.

ALEX

Good call.

BRYN

Assuming that the heroism he cast in the mists of time is still active because it's a month for us but actually in game time has it been a hundred minutes yet?

ALEX

Nah it's still running. Wait, wait, yeah it's still running. It is still running.

BRYN

I think I cast it before we came down the long spirally sloped corridor so it's probably about 50% of the way through give or take I would guess given the exploration time we've had.

ALEX

That scans. That scans to me.

BRYN

Yeah so I cast greater invisibility on Skraak and I guess I just move backwards a bit as well.

ALEX

In which case then, Zolf you're up.

BEN

Oh crap. Right let's go. And I'll hurry...I'm just gonna...no I'm not gonna run away. I'm gonna move up to Skraak because I'm a front line person so I'm gonna...and then I'm just gonna stop. Like I'm done.

BRYN

I mean Skraak is invisible.

BEN

Ok so I don't know I'm next to Skraak but also my token is next to Skraak.

ALEX

Well if we're going to dive down this rabbit hole, you actually saw Skraak disappear because you have perfect information so actually you *do* stand next to Skraak because you know where Skraak is at this moment.

BEN

Yeah I actually don't know where Skraak is because the initiative order is just a, you know, it's a mechanism right. All turns happen at the same time.

ALEX

But ultimately given that this is happening in an abstract space in a lot of ways aren't we all next to Skraak?

LYDIA

All of this is stuff that Cel is thinking...

(laughing)

...while Cel is actually standing very obviously next to Zolf. They're right there.

ALEX

Ok yeah, that is all fine. In which case then my new best friend starts moving.

HELEN

No.

ALEX

So the fossil construct proceeds to just plough through the stuff that's in it's way. It is just walking through all of this hydroponics and stuff like it's not there. It's not even acknowledging it.

HELEN

Oh no.

BEN

It's a strong lad.

ALEX

So goes right up to the wall, just ploughing through everything. Gets to the wall and then stops and looks really quite confused at this trough that has appeared and these walls. It looks less incensed than just utterly nonplussed. It's hard to tell. Its face is made of other people's skulls but...

(laughing)

...you get the impression that you might have slightly stumped it.

HELEN

Urghhh. I still don't like it.

ALEX

It's looking at a bit that wasn't there before and is certainly taking a long time to process what it is perceiving.

BEN

Yep

ALEX

It does nothing else apart from go up to those bars. Cel you are up.

LYDIA

Cel is going to hold their action because I want them to be able to throw bombs if the thing starts attacking the fence.

ALEX

Yeah I think that's a really sensible decision. That's a good call.

LYDIA

Do I have to let you know when I'm going to insert it or...

ALEX

Yeah it has to be at the end of someone else's turn prior to it coming round again. If you choose not to trigger it, it's fine, it'll just come back around.

LYDIA

I'm going to wait until after Azu.

ALEX

And just for listeners as well and for your benefit, you can't use that to take two turns consecutively. It doesn't work like that. You can't just be like I save up five turns and then...

LYDIA

That would be cool but no.

ALEX

Skraak is up and I am allowing you control because there's no additional information that you need to be made aware of at this time.

BRYN

Skraak is also assuming we're going to just be retreating and so is going to scout ahead in his newly invisible state.

ALEX

Ok cool. There's no additional information to share. Actually, you know what, give me a perception check for Skraak.

BRYN

20. Total.

ALEX

There is a thumping coming from the northern door. So Skraak is in a little bit of an intersection. The last intersection really before the big, armoured dome and facing a huge set of double doors that are really, really, really tall and very elaborately worked and so on and one of the no entry rooms up to the north of Skraak there's a clear marked banging. Although of course Skraak will have to yell you that information because hand signals are difficult when you're invisible.

BRYN

Yep

ALEX

In which case then I am going to jump to you, Azu.

HELEN

I would just like to state that I am so upset that on this map it just looks like me and this horrible bone golem are staring each other down.

ALEX

I like it. I think it's a very, very epic little shot.

HELEN

Errr...I'm scared.

ALEX

Azu versus the world.

HELEN

No, no!

ALEX

I'm not trapped out here from you, you're trapped in there from me.

HELEN

Well Azu does not have such high opinions of herself as Rorschach does.

Because Rorschach's an arsehole

(laughing)

ALEX

Accurate character summary

HELEN

She's going to cast iron skin which will give her +5 to her AC for ten minutes.

BRYN

Nice, nice.

ALEX

Oohh!

BEN

That's a big AC

HELEN

Because if she's going to fight this thing she knows she will need some extra help.

ALEX

I would like to congratulate you on your newfound ability to just punch all problems away with a +5 to your AC.

HELEN

I mean my track record with these things has not been good. And then she is gonna move.

ALEX

So I have some flavour for you before you move any further. Take that 5 foot step. This is flavour, it's not going to change mechanically what you did but I'm giving it as a useful piece of context.

HELEN

Ok

ALEX

The large construct is sort of stood there looking a little bit nonplussed at what was going on and a bit struggling. The second that you started to cast it sort of agitates. It's like grrr and starts to throw itself a little bit forward into the trench.

LYDIA

Aw poor baby.

ALEX

As you move away, it literally really constructs its facial features into something more aggressive and tries to throw itself against the bars. This is fluff. It hasn't destroyed anything but it was very, for free...very obviously prompted by you moving away.

LYDIA

He's lonely.

ALEX

And smooshed itself up against the bars.

LYDIA

Aw. I wanna rescue that one.

HELEN

Don't!

LYDIA

That one. I know we came here for a cat but it's so cute.

HELEN

Cat?

ALEX

Well on that I might take a break there and when we come back we can see if the fossil construct can rescue Azu from her bones.

LYDIA

Well it just felt very much like you're in a pet rescue thing and the animal that is right for you makes itself known.

ALEX

Pick me! No one will pick me because I am the ugly one.

BEN

Yeah but the cat you sympathise with is probably not going to try and conglomerate you into its own body though so...

LYDIA

Oh I dunno.

ALEX

You clearly have not spent much time around feral cats.

BEN

No I said couldn't, not didn't want to.

(laughing)

ALEX

Fair, fair. Fair. There's a break in there someone.

BEN

You know what we haven't done....we haven't done fade out breaks enough.

LYDIA

Yeah

BEN

Where the editor's like [fades out] shut up.

HELEN

Hey folks. Helen here to talk to you about the Black Tongue Thief by Christopher Buehlman. It's a new fantasy series set in a world of goblin wars, stag sized battle ravens and deadly magical tattoos. Kinch owes the Takers Guild a small fortune for his education as a thief. He's working on it. Meanwhile Galva is a knight and a handmaiden of the Goddess of Death on a search for her queen who's gone missing. Common enemies and uncommon dangers force thief and knight on a journey where goblins hunger for human flesh, krakens hunt dark waters and honour is a luxury few can afford. This book is full of dark humour and recommended by fantasy authors like Robin Hobb, Nicolas Eames and Brent Weeks. You can pick it up now wherever books are sold. Happy reading and take care of yourselves.

ALEX

And welcome back. Having neglected the large, ossified pet that I offer you all, trapping it behind bars, left to with...I was going to say wither, bones don't really so much wither as strengthen but I am going to say one last thing which is, Zolf, you can see the shambling corpse that was not really aware of anything going on, is certainly aware of the smashing up against the walls and begins its movement towards the creature, moving at...so the creature, the corpse effectively does that quick, juddery broken edit stumble towards the large construct seeing it bashing around. As it turns the corner it sees the rest of the party.

(laughing)

Staggers, does a weird like double take.

BEN

Oh wait, this is awkward

(laughing)

Sorry were you two doing something? I don't want to be a third wheel

(laughing)

ALEX

Then proceeds to just...who's nearest? Probably Azu. Proceeds to charge Azu.

BEN

Rude

HELEN

Alright, fine.

ALEX

It seems to navigate the hydroponic bay there with very...

BEN

Alex I'm interrupting you because I'm literally interrupting you with an attack of opportunity because I have a weapon with reach.

ALEX

You are correct to interrupt me Ben. Please take your attack of opportunity as this thing ploughs through your reach.

BEN

Right so does a 29 hit?

(laughing)

ALEX

Yes

BEN

Ok. Now unfortunately I don't have the bonus action so the glaive is not on fire.

LYDIA

Oh

ALEX

Yes!

BEN

Yeah however I still...right 10 damage on the first one. And then the second one, does a 19 hit?

ALEX

Yep

BEN

Ooh and then 17 damage on the second one.

ALEX

Ah good news mate. You shank it as it runs past and it's like argh. Keeps going and then you shank it again and then it goes, wah, pop. Can everyone please, who is within five feet of it...

BEN

It did the thing.

HELEN

I forgot about the pop

BEN

I forgot about the pop as well.

ALEX

Could everyone please give me a fortitude save

BEN

God I hate you. Right.

HELEN

We all forget the pop. Alright.

BRYN

I think I'm just outside of the pop range.

ALEX

Oh you're fine dude. You are a very kind and respectful player, well away from my...so's Skraak. Skraak's especially respectful.

LYDIA

12

BEN

22

ALEX

Booooo

BEN

That's a bad roll for me Alex.

ALEX

Boo. This isn't really be targeted at you if I'm honest.

HELEN

Oh that's a 23

ALEX

Boooo!

BEN

Paladins and clerics, we've got good saves.

ALEX

I hate ya. Come on Lydia

LYDIA

I did tell you I got 12.

ALEX

You got 12?

LYDIA

Yeah

ALEX

12, you're sure? You sure it's 12?

LYDIA

Definitely. It's literally in the chat.

ALEX

It's categorically not 11.

LYDIA

It's absolutely not. You can see it...

ALEX

If I had to get you to pick a number between 11 and 12 the number that you would pick would be closer to 12 not 11.

LYDIA

Yeah I mean it's not even as if it's on any kind of analogue line because I'm using formula within the roll 20 system.

ALEX

I really, really, *really* am quite frustrated.

LYDIA

I'm not rounding it down. I don't think that's really an option in this.

ALEX

I really thought I might've had you. I really do. It explodes shattering itself all over you and releasing quite the dusty rancidness. You all feel quite ill from the smell and everything else and there seems to be...

LYDIA

Just for you Alex, Cel does say – oh that reminds me of rag week.

(laughing)

BRYN

Oh no!

ALEX

Hate it!

LYDIA

Which actually means something completely different than when Bertie said it.

ALEX

Yeah it's when Cel has to clean all of their rags that they've been using in all of the alchemical processes.

LYDIA

Yeah exactly.

(laughing)

That's a bad time. They really want to do it more often. It wouldn't take a week.

ALEX

Yeah you're all fine. You all manage to hold your breaths or whatever is required to not have any complications. Alex is quite frustrated but it was a long shot. It was a long shot and that's ok. That's ok. In which case then goodbye friend. Would you like to insert your action Cel?

LYDIA

We're still in initiative? Ok Cel's...

ALEX

Well the thing ran in immediately triggered death on itself so that was a very quick turn.

LYDIA

Cool so in the sort of 15 seconds of initiative, Cel just glances at everyone and says – so keeping on going. Just leaving the – slight look of regret – leaving the big buddy. Ok cool. And then moves her 30 feet I suppose.

ALEX

Yeah ok. So move yourself.

LYDIA

1, 2, 3, 4,...

ALEX

I really thought that was a good opportunity. That was a good three saves triggered by a little mook but no luck.

BEN

I forgot it was a bomb.

ALEX

I was so happy you did but again it's ok. There's more where he came from.

HELEN

Oh!

ALEX

You have only moved 30, you could move further should you wish because you can move...

BRYN

You can double move.

ALEX

You can use your main action to double move.

LYDIA

No, not going to because Skraak is scouting ahead and is invisible. Cel is flimsy enough and is a range attacker so does not want to be the first to encounter new buddies.

ALEX

You're also wise and I hate it.

LYDIA

Cel is not wise.

ALEX

Hamid you are up.

BRYN

Hamid is also going to double move but much like Cel is a bit cautious about being first into a new situation, he's going to go a tiny bit further towards the next area to try and have the, you know. a place where he can see what's there but not actually proceed into it.

ALEX

Understood. In which case then, Zolf you're up.

BEN

Yeah sort of just wiping corpse stuff off of my face...

(laughing)

ALEX

As you do

BEN

Yeah. Move so...

ALEX

It's not too late for it canonically to be really good for the skin. I mean it's not but...

BEN

Yeah and I've moved to there. So I've double moved. I'm just on the eastern edge of the dome. I'm not entering the corridor for the same reasons that Cel and Hamid have hung back as well.

ALEX

Understood. So everyone is moving away from my fossil-y friend towards the armour dome.

LYDIA

Yeah big friendly buddy.

HELEN

I am not gonna take this thing on by myself. I'm not Hamid. I'm not gonna do...

(laughing)

ALEX

So speaking of, it is my fossil-y friend's turn who has been watching all of this play out, quite interested. My fossil-y friend proceeds to try and smash down, yeah, it's not a particularly elaborately clever creature. It is just gonna try and smash it and so as a result it takes its first attack against one of the pillars dealing...you know what, before I roll, what was the break DC for pure strength check?

BEN

35

ALEX

35 alright. You know what, it's going to do a check just to do a flat out break. Just brace itself in the trough and just try and sheer brunt, force it.

BEN

Yep

LYDIA

Goodness me.

ALEX

It braces itself and just [grumbling noise] grinding up against the pillars, cracks are moving through it. It's certainly compromised but it fails to break through just by sheer force. So as a result...

HELEN

Thank god for that.

ALEX

...unless I'm mistaken, a check of that kind would use up its main action. It can't move through the wall so as a result you have bought yourself at least a turn because it has failed to break through one of the pillars.

BEN

Cool.

ALEX

Fair play. Fair play. Slightly poor roll but certainly your tactics have worked quite well. However could everyone please give me a perception check.

HELEN

He's going to bring the whole thing down on us isn't it...oh wait, no I'm using this one aren't I.

BEN

27

LYDIA

Ooh mine's also 27

BEN

Nice!

BRYN

Also 27 for Skraak. Only 20 for Hamid

LYDIA

Jinx!

HELEN

Wow. 13.

ALEX

Ok everyone I'm afraid apart from Azu...

HELEN

Of course! Here we go. There we go.

BEN

Azu is not having a good day.

HELEN

Back to normality.

LYDIA

You've got something really absorbing your focus right now.

ALEX

You hear the sound of activating activity throughout this place. I don't mean mechanical. You know how I said there was a banging coming from the door directly north of Skraak

BEN

Uh huh

ALEX

You start hearing banging coming from, it's too hard to tell in the middle of combat, a lot of the doors now seem to be having things pressing up against them behind and bashing against them.

BEN

Cool

ALEX

Do with that as you will.

BRYN

We're in another zombie movie.

BEN

Hopefully...hopefully they'll just go towards the construct so if we can avoid them they'll be like ah noises.

ALEX

Skraak is up.

BRYN

Skraak's going to keep scouting so I think it might be time to show a bit more of the map Alex.

ALEX

So that huge...Skraak is now at the big, huge double door. Is Skraak going to attempt to open it.

BRYN

Yeah

ALEX

Ok. I'm not going to require a check of any kind. The door looks enormous and heavy but apparently is perfectly counterweighted and Skraak is able to push it slightly ajar despite the fact that it's like 60 foot tall or something.

BRYN

Yeah he'll push it just ajar enough just to stick his snout through and scout.

ALEX

Tell you what, Zolf you probably have enough runic knowledge. Does anyone else have relevant languages for this area?

BRYN

No

ALEX

There's like a bit arched sign hanging over the door which broadly speaking translates as something like "the industry of Genesis" or something similar. It's very high flow.

BRYN

It's not speak friend and enter.

ALEX

It is not.

HELEN

Oh god. This could be anything.

LYDIA

Oh come on, it's not gonna be nice. We can write off anything that's nice.

ALEX

At which point Skraak is able to see the following...

BEN

What is that? What is *that*? What are those?

HELEN

No!

BEN

What's happening?

ALEX

So what this is, is a large hoard.

BRYN

It's like a dozen zombies squeezed into a five foot square.

ALEX

And then it is 5, 10, 15, 20, 25...it is 30 foot by 30 foot so it's a colossal hoard of mostly zombies who are currently stood in an island in the middle of this large aquaponic area. So this area that you're looking into now it is a very, very large dome. It's roughly an area maybe twice the area of the other domes and in terms of what is inside, firstly all of the hydroponics seem wildly overgrown. Like wildly, wildly overgrown to the point where you're guessing that the

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surrounding area, mechanically, will count as difficult terrain. There is an island in the middle of it which seems to have large amount of machinery within it and it seems to have, what looks to be, probably lava or something similar moving through tubes and it seems to have a little bit of a hole or pit in the middle...

LYDIA

Sorry Alex, lava as in baby insects or lava as in hot rock?

ALEX

Oh good point. Lava as in hot rock

LYDIA

Cool

ALEX

And it is completely swathed in seemingly dormant zombies, slightly different to the shambling corpses that you've seen. These ones...the shambling corpses have been quite sturdy affairs but had that weird jittering thing. This feels a lot more like your classic zombie, let's say.

LYDIA

Communal garden

ALEX

Yeah communal garden. They don't appear to necessarily have, like mutated as such. It would seem that you've found probably the majority of the people from the complex, all collected upon this one island.

HELEN

Oh no.

ALEX

They are currently dormant but seem to be beginning to stir but they are not...they are not exhibiting, you know the other ones seemed to have that phasic property where they're not quite moving correct. These don't seem to be in that manner and they seem to just be starting to stir as the noise carries on but they have certainly not noticed Skraak.

LYDIA

Do they look decomposed to the point of being unsavable or do they look still vaguely person shaped?

ALEX

Oh well, well past the point of saving.

LYDIA

Ok so these are half grown into plant things.

ALEX

To be honest, I'm not gonna get a check. If Zolf or Hamid were to be looking through they would be both...in fact Azu would as well given, even Azu's experience of seminary would cover this.

(laughing)

They look a lot closer to supernatural zombies. Your classic brains zombie.

LYDIA

Right

BEN

A necromancer did a necromancy.

BRYN

So Hamid is the only surviving member of the party who fought zombies in Prague. Do they look pretty similar to those zombies?

ALEX

The only difference between them seems that you have seem to have started from, broadly speaking, a different palette of humanoid.

BRYN

Do they have blue veins?

ALEX

No.

HELEN

The one positive is that if we can sneak past we can get big golem versus massive amount of zombies fight.

ALEX

What is Skraak doing? I have given you a bunch of description, technically Skraak has gone up and opened a door. No one has noticed Skraak yet to be clear. They're not so good on the noticing.

BRYN

Skraak closes the door again, turns around and says, just loud enough to carry to the other parties so somewhere between normal speaking and a whisper, a brief description of the room.

ALEX

I'm going to say that that description is almost perfectly fair. I'm not going to RP it for the sake of speed but it's more than enough to go on.

BRYN

I think they'd also recommend stealth and they'd probably say we can probably sneak around it maybe.

ALEX

You're at six second limit. Is Skraak doing anything else because I am not dropping out of initiative?

BRYN

Nope.

ALEX

Azu, you're up.

HELEN

Azu is going to double move. She's not fighting that thing and she's not getting left behind so she's going to go 1, 2, 4...

ALEX

Oh you move out of its line of sight. Now it's very angry.

LYDIA

It just wants a friend.

HELEN

I am also happy to canonically just run straight through the fountains not even bothering to go around.

ALEX

It's fine. It's not counting as difficult terrain.

HELEN

Yeah. Just directly. Away!

ALEX

So you've double moved yeah?

HELEN

Yeah. That's it.

ALEX

There is the ongoing sounds of bashing and movement from elsewhere in the complex as Alex remembers how to use this system. There we go.

HELEN

What's that? What changed?

ALEX

Oh nothing you can see. Nothing you can see my darling.

LYDIA

Cool, cool. Cool, cool, cool, cool, cool.

ALEX

In which case then all the invisible stuff happens. Cel, you're up. Everything's technically, right now, fine.

LYDIA

Cel moves to where Skraak is and whispers – is there an obvious door that we can sneak past them to?

ALEX

There's two. A small one like the other small doors to the south and then a proper big one to the north.

LYDIA

Now bearing in mind that it has been a month since our last play session, I just want to remind myself what her actual objective is here. Like we're trying to find an off switch and we've all kind of assumed that it will be in the middle.

ALEX

That is an accurate read of the situation, yes.

LYDIA

Cool, ok. I guess we sneak past then. I mean having moved there's not much else to...well, I mean, maybe Cel – I'll go – and starts sneaking through I guess.

ALEX

Sure. Sure, sure.

LYDIA

Cool. Cel will go through and be sneaking towards the top north door.

ALEX

Understood. As a reminder when moving through the large domed area, that surrounding area with the deep moat in the middle, the surrounding area counts as difficult terrain because it is overgrown with plants.

LYDIA

Cool. So what does that mean in terms of move speed?

ALEX

Half once you're in that room.

BRYN

Well there's also if we're moving stealthily that also cuts our speed by half

LYDIA

Ok so Cel only moves five foot I guess.

BRYN

Yeah I think we can all just start squeaking around the edge of that room five foot at a time.

ALEX

Squeaky bum time.

LYDIA

So Cel will have moved 10 foot that is normal moving speed and then five foot within the room or just...

ALEX

Yeah you can move one more square because you got your stuff slightly wrong but you've only moved five foot within the room and you're there.

LYDIA

Do I need to make a stealth check already?

ALEX

No.

LYDIA

Ah!

ALEX

I'm going to be generous and say that you're allowed in the room before I trigger a...I mean before nice things happen. Hamid you're up

BRYN

Hamid takes a standard move to get to the door and then slides through the door to the north and is going...yeah moving five foot a move action from now on. Basically hugging the wall as much as possible.

ALEX

I am loving this. Excellent. Zolf you're up. Zolf, zombie slayer, fort save, McGee. What's up next?

BEN

Ah the same and to be honest I'm not concerned because I'm a cleric and clerics are built to kill a lot of undead all at the same time so it's fine.

(laughing)

ALEX

True facts.

LYDIA

It's like the opposite of I've got a lot of hit points, I've got a lot of channel positive energy. Meh.

BEN

Exactly I just get...well I've got two but that's still 10 D6 in a 30 foot radius so I'll just get them to surround me and then kill me all.

BRYN

I mean I feel like this is also quite a good situation for a fireball but I'm resisting the urge.

LYDIA

I mean I've got bombs.

ALEX

None of you are wrong. You do you. You do you.

HELEN

I don't trust Alex saying that none of us are wrong.

ALEX

Ok so your new ossified friend is quite upset at being left behind.

LYDIA

Aw

ALEX

They were fairly certain that you were going to be the family to adopt them

LYDIA

Forever home

ALEX

So with that in mind they just start smashing against the nearest pillar. The blows are brutal and you can hear them echoing through the building.

LYDIA

Puppy

ALEX

[thudding noise]. Two huge, enormous blows. I would say that you don't see a pillar fall into your line of sight but certainly about half, maybe more than half of a pillar does. This thing is coming through. Maybe not now this second. This thing is coming through in seconds.

LYDIA

Oh!

ALEX

And with that...with you trapped between a literal semi sentient rock and a particularly difficult location on the other side, I think I can end the episode there and have an idea for a title.

BEN

A bone and a thorn place

(laughing)

ALEX

You know what, there you go. I'm just gonna call it there. I'll see you all next week and we'll see if anyone survives.

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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