

## **RQG – 204 – Gifts!**

### **Content Warnings**

- X
- X

**[Show Theme - Intro]**

**ALEX**

Hello and welcome to episode 204 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

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**ALEX**

And who are you playing?

**BEN**

Zolf Smith

**BRYN**

Hamid Saleh Haroun al-Tahan

**LYDIA**

Cel Sidebottom

**HELEN**

And Azu

**ALEX**

[Singing] And we're sailing through the ether, don't know if London is still there now I come to think about it, we'll have to find out when we arrive which is what we do now.

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Beautiful, beautiful.

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**ALEX**

Thank you, I've been working on that little song. It's...I particularly like the rhythm on it and the lack thereof.

**HELEN**

Yeah

**BRYN**

I like to Douglas Adams poem about teleportation which is "I teleported home one night with Bob and Sid and Meg. Bob stole Meggy's heart away and I got Sidney's leg"

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

Love it!

**ALEX**

So you have all entered the teleportation cycle, let's call it, away from Svalbard. I believe you managed to get your kill switch unless I'm mistaken and only at the...

**LYDIA**

Oh no, I knew we forgot something!

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**BEN**

We left it in the council chambers. What are we like? Sorry Einstein, can you pop back.

**ALEX**

The zombies immediately go and from a peculiar level of a particular nature, go and put it back exactly where you found it. They don't do anything to it, they just like it being where it was.

**(laughing)**

Yeah so you are in your teleportation back towards Central London in order to see what happens. With that in mind...

**BRYN**

Oh no, we're going to have to pay the congestion charge.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Well you're arriving on foot so you're ok.

**LYDIA**

We're in extremely eco-friendly transport.

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**ALEX**

I mean you assume that. The entropic costs to the universe is just massive.  
Anyhoo can I get a perception check from everyone please.

**HELEN**

Yes

**BEN**

A good start with a mighty 1 for Zolf.

**ALEX**

Good. One are the best number.

**BEN**

11 but, yeah, nat 1.

**HELEN**

I got 15

**BRYN**

Hamid rolled a natural 20 for a total of 37.

**BEN**

Oh also actually that is a good point, you asked us to level up between sessions. Have we levelled up during the teleport or are you waiting for sleep?

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**ALEX**

For the sake of my ease, yes.

**BEN**

Then my result was actually 13 because it put my perception up by 2.

**LYDIA**

It's so high!

**ALEX**

Yeah so Ben's smashing it. Bryn is actually smashing it. How are you doing Lydia?

**LYDIA**

Well Cel rolled a 7 for a fancy total of 21.

**ALEX**

Ok cool. Oh what did Skraak get?

**BRYN**

19

**ALEX**

You are teleported into London near the manhole cover that you first came out of from Other London, not right next to The One That Got Away to be clear. So there is a short walk. To everyone apart from Hamid it appears like it's a reasonable teleport in, there doesn't seem to be anyone around, anything like that. Hamid, you see the tiniest, tiniest little strip of cloth pulled out of way behind a crate observing your position, if you see what I mean. Like it was a one in a million fluke. Someone is hidden behind a bunch of crates. You know this. You don't know who and they just pulled something out of view as you plopped in.

**BRYN**

Who's there?

**BEN**

What?

**LYDIA**

What?

**HELEN**

Huh?

**BRYN**

I walk in that direction cautiously.

**ALEX**

As...since you're so clued in on that thing, you see an eye poke out. It appears to be Barret is looking around a crate and staring at all of you and then peeking back for a sec. A little while hankie kind of languidly bounces around the place.

**BRYN**

Better come out.

**HELEN**

What is this?

**LYDIA**

As you're looking Cel's mutagen fades off which basically means that they kind of stand up awkwardly and the wings fold in. They took some charisma damage last time but they get charisma back from not being a beast anymore. So talking again – I thought he was a professional thief, not a...

**ALEX**

Can everyone give me a sense motive quick.

**HELEN**

Yeah

**BEN**

**HELEN**

Unnatural 20

**LYDIA**

7

**BRYN**

11 and 8

**ALEX**

Ok cool. Yeah, so Barret is behaving ever so slightly oddly however mostly what he looks like is worried. He sort of effectively looks at you, goes gives that but he's not really paying too much attention to any of you and then he just sort of looks at you and gives a little bit of a finger on the lips whisper kind of symbol, if you see what I mean. And then he gestures for you all to come over.

**HELEN**

So Azu's gonna come over because she's fed up at this point. She's like, another...something else...what...I thought...what is it? What is it? That's her internal monologue right now.

**BEN**

Yeah I will walk over and set my glaive on fire.

**ALEX**

He gestures for you to come over and is still going shhh. [Whispers] I was here to make sure that you had a safe place to land. The minions, shall we say, are out clearing a space. They've been moving into this area so they're having to work to keep things away. We need to hurry back now.

**HELEN**

Oh is that it?

**BRYN**

Fine, let's go.

**LYDIA**

What did you think our plan was? That we would just wander about...

**ALEX**

More or less yes. Barret just starts heading back towards The One That Got Away but seems to be spending a lot of time looking elsewhere. He seems a lot more cautious than he was the last time you were here and he's basically just not too interested in what you've been doing and seems a lot more interested in not getting caught out. I don't know how else to put it. He seems under a little bit more strain than normal. That's about it.

**HELEN**

Azu does a massive silent sigh and just plods on and is just like, we would have been there already if you hadn't done the theatrical...I just don't under...

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**ALEX**

Can everyone please give me a perception check

**BEN**

Ha! Another natural 1.

**ALEX**

Good!

**HELEN**

17

**BRYN**

19 and 18

**LYDIA**

21

**ALEX**

Everyone apart from Zolf, shocker, but Barret seems to have been telling the truth whereas before everyone's on the main street and so on. It seems busier around this location specifically and he's moving a lot quicker than he was last time and being a lot more cautious. I'm not going to require stealth checks but

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something has definitely changed while you've been away. There's a lot more activity around here and that seems to be what's putting him on edge. Lot more people, a lot closer but there isn't the sudden tell-tale cry of someone spotting you or anything like that. You are able, unless anyone chooses to take a frankly bananas detour, you will all be able to make it back to The One That Got Away without incident and get to that central steel door thing. Once you make it there Barret though immediately wants to go in first and he's like bang, bang, bang – me first, me first please, me first please. He seems to be looking around a little bit more.

**LYDIA**

Why Mr...what was it? Mr...Mr...Racket?

**HELEN**

I think he's just being a coward.

**BRYN**

Oscar why don't you go in with him. We'll do it in twos like before

**HELEN**

Yes

**ALEX**

And Barret's like yeah I'm going to need to show what's in my bag of holding so just squidge up Wilde. Fine, come on hurry up – Barret just starts pushing his way into the main room and gesturing to Wilde who just looks at you [sighs]

**BEN**

Give him a shrug.

**HELEN**

Yeah we all shrug back.

**ALEX**

Fine. Wilde heads in. The door closes. There's a longer pause than there has been previously but then the door opens, they're both gone and I'm fine to cycle everyone from the rest of the party through the airlock again.

**HELEN**

Sure

**ALEX**

At the other end then, having gone through the airlock, you are in the presence of Augusta again. She's there...she seems to be chewing Barret out a little bit so you turn up midsentence where it's something along the lines of – I don't care if it's a good haul. You don't just disappear like that. You've caused enough trouble. If you just...just stop messing around. You're lucky to be allowed in here at all.

Well, you know, if you're going to treat me like that maybe I won't do errands at all.

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If you don't do errands you have no point at all, in which case we can just kill you now.

**BEN**

She's got a point Barret.

**ALEX**

I'm going to my room. Barret just plops down a bag of holding – nothing's worth this – and just starts stomping down off to his room again.

**(laughing)**

How'd it go?

**BEN**

Yeah we got the thing. Genuine question. Is he necessary anymore?

**ALEX**

I'm not sure. If he is, he's not going to be for much longer.

**BEN**

Right. Noted.

**BRYN**

We need to think about the rest of the cult he's working with as well. I know we don't let the squizards in here but...well it's time to address those issues.

**BEN**

The fewer agents they have as quickly as possible, the better in my opinion.

**ALEX**

Well also if we start to move Babbage they're going to try and take control of him. That seems pretty obvious to me.

**ALEX**

Ok this escalated really, really quickly. Mostly I was just looking at you all and thinking you all look like garbage.

**BRYN**

Yes it's been a long day I guess.

**HELEN**

Yeah thank you.

**ALEX**

I tell you what if you pass me the kill switch, I'll take it down and you can all go and have a rest.

**BEN**

I'll take it down, thank you.

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**ALEX**

Augusta's just both hands in the air, like – fine. Whatever. Augusta starts heading down into the house front porch kind of deal-y bit and is just like – kettle's on. Don't let the door hit you on the way in.

**BRYN**

Thank you.

**ALEX**

You are now all in the locker room. Wilde pipes up once you're all there – looks like Barret's been doing some chores, a few errands.

**BEN**

What was in the bag?

**ALEX**

Really high end gear he definitely shouldn't have so either he inherited a department store or more likely the British Museum or he's been fetching things for Augusta again.

**BEN**

What do you think about Barret? Should we get rid of him now?

**ALEX**

I would wait until we know that this machine is ready because otherwise all we need to do is find out there's something missing and frankly I'd rather send him to find out where it is first rather than us having to risk our neck every time but...

**BEN**

That makes sense. Alright well when we're ready to go, he's gone. Does anybody have an issue with that?

**LYDIA**

Just to clarify because my head's still a bit swimming from the...

**BEN**

Oh I'm going to chop his head off.

**LYDIA**

Oh! Erm...

**ALEX**

Wilde winces a little bit. We can't afford to cut him loose.

**BEN**

There are certain things that need to exist in the future and Barret has proven himself repeatedly to not be one of them.

**ALEX**

The options are imprisonment or...

**BRYN**

If there was still a way to imprison him, try him for his crimes properly, I'd vote for that but we're not in a place where that exists and he deserves to die for the things he's done unfortunately.

**LYDIA**

Er...I...I mean I...that...I don't...I'm not sure if every option has been exhausted. Surely there's a room he could be locked in. Sorry, the...thing it messed with my head.

**ALEX**

We don't need to decide anything now. We all...well I say we all, I mean I'm actually alright but the rest of you look worse for wear. Why don't we sort ourselves out. It's not like we're under a particular time limit as far as I'm aware.

**BRYN**

No we need an update from Nikola and Ada about how the machine is coming along once they've had chance to integrate the switch so I guess some rest is in order, for me at least.

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**BEN**

Right let's go deliver this to Lovelace and Tesla and...

**HELEN**

Right

**BEN**

...I'll head off down to the lab.

**ALEX**

I'm going to follow Zolf if that's ok with everyone and assume that everyone else is...

**BEN**

Oh I was expecting to be followed along. I don't actually know...I can't remember, who has the kill switch?

**LYDIA**

You do.

**BEN**

It was me. Ok.

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**BRYN**

I mean I grabbed it out of the plant because I was swooping and flying but I may well have passed it on or put it in someone else's bag of holding. I don't know if we ever...

**ALEX**

Skraak passes the kill switch to Zolf. Zolf now carries to kill switch. And I suddenly really wanna call it the football.

**BEN**

Yeah. Just for clarity when I said like I'll take it down, it was kind of like the group will. It was more just like...

**LYDIA**

Oh I see! I misunderstood that.

**BRYN**

Yeah I'll happily go with you.

**BEN**

Yeah that wasn't me not trusting the rest of the group. That was me not trusting Augusta because Augusta.

**ALEX**

When are you going to betray the party and turn out to be evil Ben. I've been waiting *ages*.

**BEN**

When you briefed me about have the long game as a doppelgänger so alright.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Fine, alright. In which case then heading down into the lab proper, we'll skip all of the faff. Augusta is chilling, Barret's...I'm going to go ahead and say Barret's listening to loud music behind a closed door, probably some kind of opera.

**BEN**

Gramophone turned all the way up.

**ALEX**

Yeah. With a sign scrolled on his door saying "keep out".

**BRYN**

What's that symphony that includes actual canons.

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**BEN**

Oh the 1812 overture.

**LYDIA**

There's a bit of me...the kind of teenage sulky Barret feels a lot harder to kill...

**HELEN**

Yeah

**LYDIA**

...as a trope. It feels more and more uncomfortable than the manipulating evil dude but that might be what you're going for.

**HELEN**

I'm pretty sure it is.

**BEN**

And also this could all be part of his manipulation.

**LYDIA**

Yeah true.

**ALEX**

Sumutnyerl peels off and immediately stalks away long before getting the labs. Yeah you're heading down into the labs. It's much as you left it. Tesla appears

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to be asleep at his desk again. Ada seems to be picking her way between the racks making minor adjustments here and there. Eventually Ada notices you and is like – oh did you get...how was it?

**BEN**

Very carefully put the kill switch on a table.

**HELEN**

Is that it? Is that...that's the right thing right?

**BEN**

Bloody hope it is.

**ALEX**

Ada puts a pair of...you know those white cotton gloves for like handling delicate electronics or papers or whatever and starts gently, gingerly twisting it this way and that...

**BRYN**

I'm pretty certain it is.

**ALEX**

Ada then without responding, rushes over and jabs Tesla in the elbow because she can't touch him because of the gloves and he's like – what? What is it?

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Yeah, you know what I won't bother with the perception check everyone can hear.

Did they do it? Really? Oh thank god. He picks himself up off his stool and hobbles over to start examining it with Ada and they both immediately start looking back and forth and examining it from all angles and start taking notes.

Ada looks up for a moment going – this is going to take an enormous amount of time. You're welcome to help but I suspect you're going to want the rest but it looks like you've done it. Well done.

**HELEN**

Good!

**ALEX**

Was there any...was there anything odd? Was there anything that we need to be aware of before we do any kind of work on it?

**HELEN**

Big monster

**BEN**

Interplanar void, yeah, that was kind of attracted to it or created by it or something. I dunno.

**HELEN**

It was very bad.

**BRYN**

Yeah. When we found it there was – I give a description of the creature – seemed to be but then – I'm struggling to remember actually what happened. Didn't we fly the kill switch over to the creature and then press it and it sucked the creature in?

**ALEX**

Full Ghostbusters style. Yep.

**BRYN**

I describe that.

**ALEX**

Right. Ada immediately takes it and without waiting for Tesla to catch up goes over to a wall panel, pulls it down, inserts it and closes the wall panel. Then opens it revealing what is effectively like a big, thick, containment chamber. Big, old, like two inch thick glass that kind of thing.

**BRYN**

Whatever the dwarves were doing there was another of those large plants in the central council chamber and they were clearly trying to use it and the plant was dead and so it may have been artifact of how they were using it that summoned the creature rather than just an inherent property.

**ALEX**

So it's ok. So what we'll normally do is...if it's ok with you...we have some documents in the rooms. If you can write a formal debrief document so that you don't forget anything. I'm just asking if there's any crisis thing. That's good. It's in containment. You go do you and just make sure to write everything that you remember down and then I can collate that and it'll lead to a more wholesome view of everything that happened, if that's ok?

**BRYN**

Sure. That sounds brilliant. Thank you and good luck to both of you.

**BEN**

And we all need some rest. And you four come see me in the morning and I'll sort you out.

**BRYN**

Thank you Zolf.

**HELEN**

Ok

**ALEX**

Is there anything that we can be doing to help you at all? None of us are magical healers but, you know...hot towels that kind of thing.

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**BEN**

Well...

**HELEN**

Oh, that would be nice actually.

**BEN**

I'm fine thank you. And I will now head off to...

**ALEX**

In which case then I'm going to accelerate time a little bit because I think that people need a little bit of a rest.

**HELEN**

Important note, does Azu get her hot towel?

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

So in terms of important notes, in order I'll say, I need to know first if you want to have any social chat before sleeping today?

**BEN**

Not I.

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**LYDIA**

No

**BRYN**

No

**HELEN**

I think we're all too tired.

**ALEX**

In which case then each of you gets visited by Augusta and I'd like to RP that comparatively quickly.

**LYDIA**

Sure

**ALEX**

Hamid you get a knock, knock and Augusta's at the door.

**BRYN**

Oh hello

**ALEX**

Towels.

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**BRYN**

Oh thank you. That's genuinely really appreciated.

**ALEX**

Augusta leans nonchalantly in the doorway, kind of just nosing around your room a little bit. What was it like?

**BRYN**

What was what like?

**ALEX**

You know Svalbard. Sounded interesting.

**BRYN**

Overrun.

**ALEX**

With...?

**BRYN**

Plants and zombies.

**ALEX**

Hook me up Hamid, I'm spending almost all day in a bunker. Give me something.

**BRYN**

Well, so there were these things that we started to call the watchers and they were like if you take a dead body and you grow a plant out of it and they had like...and they were reacting to...

**ALEX**

Give me a sense motive

**BRYN**

10 total

**ALEX**

Augusta seems quite interested. I'm going to go on from that conversation if I may. Azu gets a knock, knock with Augusta delivering some hot towels.

**HELEN**

Ah thanks.

**ALEX**

This one Augusta just walks in, sits on your bed, has a look around.

**HELEN**

That's fine. Azu also sits...actually Azu lies down on the bed and just puts the hot towel directly on her face

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

That good was it?

**HELEN**

I'm very tired. It was very scary. I hit a lot of things.

**ALEX**

What kind of scary? I hear you were fighting a lot of zombies and stuff.

**HELEN**

Yeah. Quite sad there were lots of dead bodies but the most frightening thing was...

**ALEX**

Yeah don't really care about the sad bits. How did they fight?

**HELEN**

Not that well but there were a lot of them. Also there was this thing made of bones.

**ALEX**

Hamid didn't say anything about the bone thing. He was just going on about these weird planer things. Give me a sense motive.

**HELEN**

Yep. There we go. It's fine. It's a 5 + 13 so that's an 18.

**ALEX**

An 18. Augusta just wants horrible details. Augusta is treating your adventure like a penny dreadful and just wants to know what are the cool details, this is pure living vicariously.

**HELEN**

Wow. Once Azu clocks this she is going to say – you know what, I'm not the best at story telling so if you want lots of gory details, I mean Cel notices that kind of thing.

**LYDIA**

That's very cruel!

**ALEX**

Augusta just leaves and immediately heads to Cel's room. Knock, knock.

**LYDIA**

Yeah?

**ALEX**

Hey, towel – throws towel at you – so what happened? Details. I want details. Give me details. Come on.

**LYDIA**

A thing made of nothing sucked my brain out and I have a headache but now I'm here.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

Give me a sense motive quickly.

**LYDIA**

Ooh that's actually ok. 18.

**ALEX**

Augusta's thoroughly disappointed in you. You have gone from being a prime cut to scraps in a single sentence. She has just lost all interest in you just in that single sentence.

**LYDIA**

Cel has absolutely no interest in this woman's regard whatsoever.

**ALEX**

Augusta just leaves. Knock, knock on Zolf's door.

**BEN**

What?

**ALEX**

Hey, cool, so when are we gonna kill Barret?

**BEN**

That's for me. With the greatest of respect I have had quite enough with the global upper crust, with all of you lot and everything that you have done to the planet so right now piss off. And if you're lucky you'll get to live in the world that comes next. Barret ain't. And I'll slam the door in her face.

**ALEX**

You hear through the door in a sort of, you don't even need a sense motive, in a faintly amused voice – you're alright Zolf. I like you. And then Augusta leaves.

**BEN**

I will throw the door open, glaive of flame and point it at her throat. I'm in no mood for glib, sarcastic, cleverness. Ok? One more word out of you when you're in my earshot and I will cut your throat then and there. Do we understand? You can nod.

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**ALEX**

And I'm going to take a break there.

**(laughing)**

And welcome back. I am going to go ahead and let people sleep though I would ask everyone for a perception check please.

**HELEN**

While asleep. Oh no.

**ALEX**

Yeah

**BEN**

21

**HELEN**

18

**LYDIA**

29

**BRYN**

23 for Hamid, 25 for Skraak.

**ALEX**

Ok everyone apart from Azu recognises that activity continues whilst you're all resting in your beds. The odd thing here or there. Cel you at some point, whilst semi dozing, get the impression someone's padding around a little bit out in the corridor as opposed to stomping past. Someone's padding around a bit but that's as much as it really is. To be clear no one has been in anyone's rooms or anything like that but you get the impression that things have been happening, it hasn't just been a complete vacuum while you've all been asleep.

In which case then you all awake well.

**LYDIA**

Ooh!

**HELEN**

Ah. Good.

**ALEX**

I'm assuming there's some clerical admin but which I mean...

**BEN**

Ayoo.

**ALEX**

...healing admin not...

**(laughing)**

As a phrase I realise I've misled us. I've taken us into a conversation cul-de-sac.  
Rescue me Ben.

**BEN**

Some clerical clerical. Yeah so basically I have prepared four uses of restoration which will get rid of all the ability damage and fortunately I have four patients.

**ALEX**

Convenient.

**BEN**

Yeah so spend that all and sort it out. I don't know if we want to use that for a chance for a bit of one on one roleplay or we can just be like Zolf sorts it out, yay!

**ALEX**

I will leave it to the group, I don't mind.

**LYDIA**

I think as soon as Cel's fixed they will start babbling at Zolf how happy they are and grateful and it will be if anything slightly more annoying for Zolf but hopefully there's enough charm there.

**BEN**

I...yeah, I think you get a smile out of Zolf but he says...

**LYDIA**

Big praise!

**BEN**

...I do have to see the others so...

**LYDIA**

Oh I just wanted to say that it is really lovely to have my head back in gear. It's so awful when like a void of nothingness makes you feel...they take the nothing...I really should look up...in fact I'm gonna go and see if they've got any books on that. That's going to be interesting. Do you know what maybe I should look up in the index just...you know what...no, you go fix things. Thanks again.

**BEN**

Yeah, ok, bye

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Very good!

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**ALEX**

Any other takers?

**BRYN**

Possible out of character question, I believe restoration requires diamond dust as a spell component which cannot be handled with materials, are we ignoring that rule?

**ALEX**

Do you want the bad news or the good news?

**LYDIA**

There's loads of diamond dust there?

**ALEX**

The bad news is Bryn is correct, there is a material component. The good news is you're in a bunker that has stockpiles.

**BEN**

Fine, yeah I'll find some diamond dust.

**BRYN**

Hamid will come to Zolf's door – hi, are you ready? Is that ok?

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**BEN**

Yeah, yeah

**BRYN**

Oh thank you.

**BEN**

Sit down and I'll sort it out. And this process takes nine seconds.

**BRYN**

Thank you Zolf I really appreciate it.

**BEN**

Good

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

Hamid pauses and then leaves.

**(groaning)**

**BEN**

Hamid, look, do you...you were signally you wanted to talk pretty thoroughly so what...

**BRYN**

I'm sorry, I just wanted to...I guess I wanted to clear the air and just apologise. High stress situations and I'm just trying to get better at dealing with everything and I'm sorry but I'm ok if you're ok.

**BEN**

Likewise. Look, we can work together and that's fine. I respect you as somebody who will help sort out this stuff.

**BRYN**

Same

**BEN**

I'm not saying I'm going to go to many parties with your afterwards but you know, that is...yeah...it's water under the bridge alright.

**BRYN**

Yeah I feel the same. Thank you. Thank you for just clearing the air. That's...thank you.

**BEN**

Yeah fine. You too. Alright. I've got to see to Azu.

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**BRYN**

Of course, of course.

**HELEN**

I'm really proud of both of them!

**(laughing)**

Yeah, I'm glad.

**ALEX**

See if I give you all enough pain, niceness comes out the other end. It's all good.

**BRYN**

Also we just went through a big dangerous dungeon being incredibly competent and being on the same page about things the whole time so that helps too.

**ALEX**

That's what I said, the more pain and dungeons I bring your way, the better people you become. You're all going to be loveable heroes forged in the crucible of my hatred.

**(laughing)**

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**HELEN**

For about five minutes until you kill us I think.

**BEN**

Yeah

**ALEX**

Well you know, forging's difficult

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Ok Azu comes to your door. Hello.

**BEN**

Alright.

**HELEN**

Well not alright. That's why I'm here.

**BEN**

Yeah cool. Sit down, sit down. And again nine seconds sort you out, you're better.

**HELEN**

Ok. Are you really going to kill Barret?

**BEN**

I mean, yes.

**HELEN**

He seems a bit...he's very pathetic see and I sort of...I hate him very much...I'm figuring out how much I care but...

**BEN**

Look the man is extraordinarily manipulative. He is a snake and a poison. If we let him live, he's just going to do the same thing he does all the time. You heard him. He's an opportunist and he's a survivor. That's how he wins and if what I'm doing is wrong then I will be sorted out metaphysically speaking and if it alienates you lot then that's fair. I'm not asking people to agree with me but he will destroy whatever comes next if we give him the opportunity and all the people like him will do the same thing. People like him are the reason this has happened. They have destroyed the world. They have doomed millions of people because of their egos. Because they're hungry for power. Because they don't care about anything other than themselves and I have spent my life working under those people. The meritocrats, the harlequins, they're all the bloody same. They just power and they spout whatever words will help them do that and I am done with people like Barret. I am not giving him the chance.

**HELEN**

Can we not just....what if we lock him up again somewhere?

**BEN**

He'll get out. He was locked up before weren't he? Right? He said, in Damascus he was locked up. He got out.

**HELEN**

Yes and I suppose it's not as...things aren't going to go back to normal just because...

**BEN**

He's been given all the chances he needs and he has destroyed so many lives. My only solace is Sasha got out from under him.

**HELEN**

Well this is...you....you...she didn't want to kill him.

**BEN**

Then that's Sasha's choice and this is mine.

**HELEN**

Ok

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**BEN**

Anyway she's thousands of years dead so, you know.

**HELEN**

Well she had a nice life without him I think.

**BEN**

Yes and now we can all have a nice life without him too.

**BRYN**

Oh! I love it. I love it so much. This has been the best conversation.

**LYDIA**

There's so many answers to this but which character is right to say them! It feels like I'm in a Marvel thing where they're just ah but he's...they chose violence and he's like...there's a logic but none of the characters can actually see the holes in the logic and it's just like how do you do this? How do you do this?

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Well...I'm just...I'm just very tired.

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**BEN**

Yeah me too.

**HELEN**

Very tired.

**BEN**

Look if you all stop me I ain't going through you to get to him. That's not worth it but he needs sorting out. He needs getting rid of or we're jeopardising everything that we're working for.

**HELEN**

Right.

**BEN**

That's a conversation for later, right.

**HELEN**

It is. We still need to talk to Babbage? I think. They said there was something...

**BEN**

You can talk to Babbage?

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**HELEN**

We talked to Shoin.

**BRYN**

I don't think we know if we can talk to Babbage yet.

**HELEN**

Anyway...

**BEN**

Yeah we've got some conversations. As Wilde said we need to make sure everything's working before we can actually be done with Barret because he's got some skills so, you know.

**HELEN**

Yeah I'll think on it. I'll think on it.

**BEN**

Sure, alright. Anyway I'll see you later.

**HELEN**

Azu does a shoulder...not a pat, like a sturdy...

**BEN**

Yeah

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**ALEX**

Attack?

**BEN**

And Zolf will do the same for Azu's elbow I guess?

**(laughing)**

That's about as high...

**HELEN**

Yeah. And clanks out of the room.

**ALEX**

Ok did everyone fill in their required paperwork? Did everyone do their homework? Has everyone told their debrief papers, said what they did. Has everyone done what they were asked to?

**LYDIA**

Cel needed extra pages

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

There's always one.

**BEN**

Yes

**HELEN**

Yeah

**BRYN**

Yeah Hamid very much did and there was probably more detail than necessary but he also probably didn't need extra pages.

**ALEX**

In which case then Ada will have done the rounds collecting paperwork and taking it down for analysis and so on. I'd say as you're all heading down to breakfast you see the table is laid for everyone and there appears to be decent-ish fare and there appears to be lots of bulky parcels laid out around the table with a card in front of it, like a little place setting card. Wilde's already sat behind his bulbous looking parcel wrapped package going – I think it's our lucky day.

**BRYN**

Oh.

**HELEN**

Huh

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**LYDIA**

Ooh.

**HELEN**

Ooh

**BRYN**

Well that's exciting.

**LYDIA**

Is that like a thing that like we...so we...like are all of the presents for us? Do we...

**ALEX**

Turns out that Augusta does actually have a role here beyond just annoyance which is quartermaster so Barret may have been sent out to fetch some things for us.

**BEN**

Oh right.

**BRYN**

Ok so not 100% useless. That's nice. Can we open them now?

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**ALEX**

Shrugs, why not. Go for it, yeah.

**HELEN**

Let's all open them together.

**BRYN**

How exciting!

**LYDIA**

A present!

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

I'm going to say that Wilde already kind of opened it and then closed it like he hasn't and then opens it up again and then pulls out the most ludicrously resplendent clothing you have ever seen. It has a very large ruff and is....it's like fully rainbow shimmering and when he flaps it out, glitter flies off from it.

**BRYN**

Hamid is rolling knowledge arcana.

**ALEX**

Can I get knowledge nobility from Azu.

**BEN**

Oh my goodness.

**HELEN**

You can indeed.

**BRYN**

30 total on knowledge arcana. Can I recognise these as robes of the thespian?

**ALEX**

Oh you're ahead of me!

**(laughing)**

You're ahead of me Bryn!

**BEN**

There was no way that Wilde was getting any other item.

**ALEX**

You may in fact have spotted that Wilde may have been given robes of the resplendent thespian. They are not an item that is mass produced. What you are able to do is discern the kind of things that it does based on legend but not necessarily like...it's not like you can go and buy this off the rack you know. This is...this is a custom job.

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**BRYN**

Oh Oscar those are magnificent.

**ALEX**

For the people who want to know, as an example, they allow you to disguise the presence of armour as normal clothing, they grant spell resistance, bonuses to saves and enhancements on caster level checks and stuff. This is high end stuff. Can I get that knowledge nobility Azu.

**HELEN**

Yes. I just realised that I never put any ranks in it. Ever. So it's all just roll D20s

**ALEX**

Oh knowledge history if anyone has that.

**BEN**

Sure. 17 on history for me.

**HELEN**

10 on nobility. I'm afraid.

**ALEX**

Both of you have a vague memory that there was a British playwright who was...

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**BEN**

Oh for goodness sake Alex!

**ALEX**

...renowned for having a spectacular set of clothing...

**HELEN**

Alex!

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

...very, very skilled. You cannot really place it.

**BEN**

What is this Assassin's Creed where we just meet a gallery of famous historical figures.

**HELEN**

What was his name?

**BRYN**

Literally the whole campaign has been us meeting famous historical figures...

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**BEN**

Oh yeah we were just in a room with Wilde and Einstein and Nikola Tesla...yeah, no I get your point. I get your point.

**LYDIA**

And Lovelace...

**BEN**

Yeah, yeah, yeah

**ALEX**

Yeah there was a very well renowned playwright but none of you are particularly into that scene but he was meant to wear one of those neck thingies so...

**BRYN**

I believe *the* bard yeah. The bard item that Wilde has now

**BEN**

You are going to look ridiculous Wilde.

**ALEX**

Oh Wilde dead eye stares Zolf and goes – I am going to look magnificent.

Anyone else want to open theirs?

**HELEN**

Oh yeah, like Azu's absolutely serious when she said let's all open them at the same time.

**ALEX**

There's no mysterious ticking coming from any of these packages by the way so...

**BRYN**

I mean yeah...

**HELEN**

I do still have that clock somewhere

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

Hamid rips into his like an excited child on his birthday.

**ALEX**

To everyone else it appears that he's been given a mundane bar of metal. Doesn't really seem to do anything. Does he pick it up?

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**BRYN**

Yep

**ALEX**

Immediately inlaid golden lines start tracing themselves and etching themselves through the rod. Congratulations Bryn, you're the proud owner of a metamagic rod of maximise.

**BRYN**

Oh my.

**LYDIA**

Say that 12 times fast

**(laughing)**

**BRYN**

Metamagic rod of maximise, metamagic rod...yeah, you can see that's gonna...

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

For listeners it's a good...it's a good thing. It does good things.

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**BRYN**

Did you say just a rod not a lesser rod?

**ALEX**

Not a lesser. Come on.

**BRYN**

Oh my!

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

I give good presents. I'm very thoughtful!

**HELEN**

Wow!

**ALEX**

So I'll leave you to have a quick check if you want Bryn but makes good numbers go up basically, right

**BRYN**

Three times a day when I cast a spell instead of rolling the dice all the numbers just come out as maximum.

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**LYDIA**

Good lord.

**HELEN**

Wow!

**ALEX**

Yeah.

**LYDIA**

Goodness me. Good golly.

**ALEX**

Don't examine why I'm giving nice things, just keep opening presents. Who's next?

**BRYN**

Is there one for Skraak too?

**ALEX**

There's one for Skraak. Of course there is.

**BRYN**

Skraak...I wonder if Skraak has had presents before.

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**HELEN**

Ohhhh no!

**BRYN**

Isn't that a terribly sad thought. I'm sorry I shouldn't have said it.

**HELEN**

Oh that's so sad.

**ALEX**

I mean it's very difficult to have that thought because Skraak has already torn open and is wearing his belt of physical might.

**BRYN**

Ooh.

**LYDIA**

He hefty! Hefty lad.

**BRYN**

Ooh what bonuses does that give Alex?

**ALEX**

Dex and con is what I'm focusing in on.

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**BRYN**

Awesome. So...did you say...is it +2 or +4?

**ALEX**

+4

**BRYN**

Ooh! Actual hit points for Skraak. I'm so happy.

**ALEX**

Yeah you can survive a hit now. It's fine. Anyone else want a go?

**HELEN**

Oh yeah. Azu opens it with the same enthusiasm with Hamid but not ripping it. She finds the folds and carefully...

**ALEX**

It is difficult because your package is enormous. It is occupying the entire end of the table and is making it difficult to see other people at the table. Wilde definitely seems interested in yours because yours is the most large gift and so is immediately like – oh what's going on there?

**HELEN**

Is it standing on end then?

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**ALEX**

Yeah, yeah. It's on end at the end of the table.

**HELEN**

You can just see Azu's grin over the top.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

You open it to see the single most bad ass agile breastplate you have ever seen. Mechanically for people to look it up it is a +3 righteous armour. There is a note affixed to it.

**HELEN**

What does the note say?

**ALEX**

The note on this one very simply just says "whatever you do, don't use this inside."

**HELEN**

Oh

**ALEX**

It is glorious armour though.

**HELEN**

Can I...ok...ok

**BRYN**

Does Azu get another knowledge nobility to recognise the providence of this one?

**HELEN**

Yeah can I roll again?

**ALEX**

First things first, do you touch the armour?

**HELEN**

Yes I'm going to immediately touch it. For sure.

**ALEX**

So the armour is currently inlaid with golden filigree. Not in a way that is frippish but built into it. As Azu touches it the gold is replaced with a deep and vibrant pink that flows throughout the golden inlay until the armour itself has adopted the pinkness that has characterised your previous armour.

**HELEN**

Yeah Azu has my current face of delight!

**ALEX**

It hums gently with a pleasant tone that no one can quite place for a moment and then it settles down again.

**HELEN**

Oh! Do you think...do you think don't use it means don't wear it or do you think I can put it on but I can't get hit.

**ALEX**

If anyone has knowledge nobility or knowledge history. Knowledge arcana I'd allow for an insight as to like whether it's about to explode or be cursed.

**LYDIA**

Cel got a natural 1 on knowledge arcana which does of course work out to 21 because of her knowledge arcana but that is still a natural 1. Do you want them to say with absolutely certainty that it would turn Azu into a shrimp.

**HELEN**

I rolled an 8 so I'm just going to say that Azu is so pleased that she's not really...

**ALEX**

That scans.

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**BEN**

Natural 20 on knowledge history leading to a 25

**BRYN**

Total of 35 on knowledge arcana.

**ALEX**

You recognise that this armour has holy magical properties that will turn someone into some kind of combat beast. The idea of not turning it on inside is maybe it will affect everyone within the room, maybe it will ruin the room itself. It's gonna have a spectacular affect whatever it is. Cel...does Hamid speak up on that sorry?

**BRYN**

Yeah Hamid will say something like – oh it probably has some sort of activation similar to casting a spell inlaid into it but wearing it won't be a problem.

**ALEX**

Cel, rather embarrassingly, Hamid's quite wrong here.

**LYDIA**

Uh huh, uh huh.

**ALEX**

And he seems to have gone out on quite a limb here so I'll leave you to interpret it how you want but it's...he's quite wrong. It's not dangerous but it's very embarrassing for him.

**LYDIA**

I'm a little concerned...it reminds me a little of some of the symbols one learns when learning how to transmographise one's shape so I would just...I just think maybe – looking at it, cocks their head – maybe a triangle or a square, maybe a platypus. I'm not exactly sure.

**ALEX**

What was Zolf's check again?

**BEN**

25 with a natural 20 on knowledge history.

**ALEX**

There is an old English legend of a king who united various separate kingdoms into a single nation. It's widely considered apocryphal...

**BEN**

Are we going Arthur or Alfred here?

**ALEX**

That's a good question. It's widely considered apocryphal however it is widely agreed that there was a very powerful king-esque figure a long time ago renowned for having wildly powerful armour that drew the attention of everyone and sort of scared people into lying a little bit.

**HELEN**

Very exciting.

**BEN**

So is it Arthur or Alfred because one is definitely fake and one is definitely real?

**ALEX**

Within this world it's a disputed fact as to whether they were known as Arthur or Alfred

**BEN**

Fair enough.

**ALEX**

The history has not been kept particularly well from that period. The meritocrats are very good about keeping current records.

**HELEN**

Hmm

**BEN**

I don't mention it because it's not relevant.

**(laughing)**

**ALEX**

That's fine. Anyone else got any packages they wanna open?

**LYDIA**

Cel will open theirs

**ALEX**

It appears to have a pair of lenses. At first they appear to be cut crystal or similar although on closer examination, no, that's probably some type of diamond. They appear to have been extracted from something else.

**LYDIA**

Cel, before getting...I say this now because it's before having finished the thought. Cel immediately slots them into their goggles which are the reskinned headband of vast intelligence. I assume if they are lenses they will fit in that.

**ALEX**

Oh yeah of course. In fact interestingly, they look slightly too large but resize as you try to insert them

**LYDIA**

Ah

**ALEX**

It's rather odd. Can't decide whether it's just because they look so snazzy or whether it's just the quality of the light or something but you may mechanically have a headband of mental superiority that just makes you kind of just mentally better across the board.

**LYDIA**

Even better! Even better.

**ALEX**

So I think that's a +4 to all your mental stats

**LYDIA**

Cool. Ok so Cel's int modifier is now +8

**BEN**

That's terrifying!

**LYDIA**

That is so much admin Alex, I'm not even sure if I'm happy about that because Cel is an entirely int based character.

**ALEX**

Wait, wait, wait, can you all hear that? Can you all hear that? That sounds like...is that a Lydia problem? It is! Yeah that's a Lydia problem

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

I think that that changes the amount of bombs, the damage the bombs do, the amount of spells. Obviously I will have to calculate skill points.

**BRYN**

Yep, yep.

**LYDIA**

Ok

**ALEX**

Just put them all in handle animal, it'll be fine.

**LYDIA**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Genuinely what can I...you know what, I am going to bring knowledge planes up to...

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**ALEX**

Ooh poor choice. I really don't think that's going to come up.

**(laughing)**

**LYDIA**

Yeah planer issues, yeah I doubt it.

**ALEX**

You're going out on a limb there. I'll try and see what I can rustle up but yeah.

**LYDIA**

The final thing is that this is the first time in the actual campaign that I am playing a character whose charisma is 0 or above

**(laughing)**

So unfortunately this is the complicating thing...it's not like I went for these charisma -1 characters because / struggle with social situations and so that's an entertaining thing to play so it's going to be fine. It's going to be fine. I'm cool now. Just so you know that is...I've got a modifier and now I am cool.

**ALEX**

Understood.

**LYDIA**

Unrelatedly Cel is cool as well.

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Very good.

**ALEX**

And last but not least, I have a...I believe I have Zolf kicking around who has a package?

**BEN**

Yeah, yeah, I've been opening it at the same rate. Like I've been quite careful, properly doing the thing where you try and preserve the paper. You kind of do it along the lines, trying not to cut things. Just being very methodical about it.

**ALEX**

So as you open it, what you seem to find within is a very well made but comparatively plain looking light grey cloak. You can't, for the life of you though, place the material that it's made from. It doesn't seem to be a hide, it doesn't seem to be feather, it doesn't seem to be wool, it seems to have a smooth quality to it. It's warm to the touch. It catches the light with a faint what you iridescent but nothing particularly spectacular however, it is very hard to explain, just touching it, it feels wonderful to hold. It just immediately

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feels like it's lifting your spirits just by handling it. It just...it feels right in a way that very few things have recently.

**HELEN**

Aw, it's a cloak of make happy.

**ALEX**

What you are holding in your hands is a mantle of faith. People can give a check if they want but let's be honest, it's pretty much going to come down to you may have spotted historical figure had a mantle of faith so it's up to you really.

**BRYN**

I mean this time I got the 1 so that's a natural 1 on knowledge arcana.

**ALEX**

In that case Hamid, can you believe this is...Augusta and Zolf have clearly fallen out and she's deliberately given Zolf a dud. How petty can you get. Honestly, it's ridiculous.

**(laughing)**

**BEN**

Ooh and fortunately this is a chest slot not a shoulder slot so I can wear my cloak at the same time.

**BRYN**

Nice. Nice.

**ALEX**

So yeah for anyone who wants to know mantle of faith basically makes you real good against evil. I'll just look it up really quick. Mantle of faith – when worn over normal clothing it grants damage reduction of 5 evil to the character wearing it. So basically you just take 5 less damage pretty much full stop because there's nothing I enjoy more than throwing evil at you.

**BEN**

Ooh, something interesting it says when worn over normal clothing. Does that mean I can't wear armour?

**ALEX**

I am choosing to say you're fine.

**BEN**

Ok, cool, sure.

**ALEX**

And Wilde immediately kicks back wearing enormous, frankly, rainbow coloured, spangly attire he could not be happier with flicking his ruff gently as he leans back going – it's nice to be appreciated again for a change. I don't know about all of you.

**BRYN**

So this has more or less been happening simultaneously so Hamid has seen the pink glow spread over Azu's armour, he's seen Wilde put on this absolutely magnificent robe and he's picked up his own new rod and seen the glittering, gold symbols appear and he's been grinning ever since he saw the presents open but now...but as these things happen simultaneously the grin has spread wider and wider and suddenly the back of his suit jacket rips out and brassy dragon wings burst out. Oh!

**ALEX**

And I'll end the episode there.

**HELEN**

Hurray!

**BRYN**

That's new?

**ALEX**

Ok I'll end the episode there!

**(laughing)**

**HELEN**

Well done! Well done!

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**ALEX**

You're a real boy! Congrats!

**BRYN**

Yeah we didn't talk about all the new things we got from our level up but everyone knew wings was happening so...it happened! The wings have arrived.

**ALEX**

You ever heard the phrase taking the garbage out where you just get all of the bad news and you do it in one go. It's like that but with good news. You've now all got big, magic items, you've levelled up and everyone's rested. I could skip past all of the nice...that's done now but yeah that's everything for now so no one question why I'm making sure that you're levelled...

**LYDIA**

I'm sure it's fine.

**ALEX**

...well equipped, well rested. Just accept it for what it is right now. The future is a fiction and the past has already happened. What is the current but a present to be unwrapped.

**EVERYONE**

Bye!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**ALEX**

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