

RQG – [218] – [Erasing The Line]

Content Warnings

- X
- X

[Show Theme - Intro]

ALEX

Hello and welcome to the post-season metacast of Rusty Quill Gaming.

HELEN

Noooo...

BRYN

Hmmmmm...

[0:01:27 talking over one another]

HELEN

You can't do this!

LYDIA

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Hush, hush, don't do this.

HELEN

We don't know what's happened yet. We've not had it confirmed!

ALEX

Welcome to RQG 218 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?

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BRYN

Hamid Saleh Haroun al Tahan.

LYDIA

Cel Sidebottom.

[silence]

(Laughter)

ALEX

Wow! Wow. Okay!

BEN

I was... Okay, Zolf is unconscious, Helen! That's why I didn't say anything!

HELEN

Okay, okay! But, like, he might be... he might be...

BEN

Yeah, he might be...

HELEN

... unalive!

[she laughs]

BEN

... we just don't know!

ALEX

I have to say, new listener, this is actually a genuinely really good jumping on point, you know?

(Helen laughs)

If you're a nice, self-contained...

BEN

New listener? Quite frankly, you **[BEEP]** it because this is big spoilers!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Leave it in, bleep it?!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Anyway, Azu's here, too. We think.

ALEX

Understood.

LYDIA

Wherever 'here' is!

HELEN

Oooohh!

ALEX

Is everyone ready? Alright, in that case, then, I'm going to start with Zolf.

[sound of fire crackling]

So the last thing that Zolf remembers is white... and a noise so loud that it stops being a noise and starts being a physical force on you.

BEN

Yeah. It was fire!

(Laughter)

ALEX

Yeah! So, from that white noise, it slowly starts to settle. At some point, Zolf realises it's settling into the sounds of waves on a beach... and he is foetal, seemingly, upon some sand with his eyes closed.

[sound of the sea gently lapping at the shore]

BEN

I guess I'll open me eyes. Do I still have Babbage?

ALEX

That's a good question. You feel for Babbage on your back. No.

BEN

Oh, god-damnit, am I bloody dead?!

(Group laughter)

LYDIA

I think you're dead!

BRYN

Classic Zolf!

ALEX

So, you open your eyes, yeah?

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

I have a long description for you, so please bear with it. You find yourself upon an island, seemingly – little more than a sand spar – and as you open your eyes, the first thing you see is that you're looking out upon the ocean. However, the ocean's far too reflective. It seems to be either dawn or dusk, something around that time, but you can't tell and normally you're good at telling that. And the starlight in the sky is reflected so clearly in the starlight of the water that you're struggling to see a horizon, but the waves are lapping up on the beach. Looking around, you notice that you're seemingly dressed in the clothes that you were before and, as you look down, sort of, look upon yourself... firstly, I have to ask a question of you. Is Zolf more comfortable with missing limbs returned or with them not returned? Which is more comfy?

BEN

Er, not returned.

ALEX

Cool. Looking down, they're not returned. They're as they were when you, sort of, whited out, but you notice that there are patterns carved into the sand that you're laying upon, even though it seems to be a natural beach. Think Zen Buddhism, that kind of thing, you know, the traced lines, the contours. And as you're looking you see it glints slightly iridescently, and I think I'll limit the description there. You're currently sat on a beach looking out to something that doesn't seem to have an horizon.

BEN

There's nothing to say.

ALEX

As you look around, you notice behind you what appears to be a tree root or something, and as you follow it and your eyes follow it, you see that it is iridescent itself. Specifically though, it seems to have quite a strong blue colouring to it and as you trace the root along the sand, the root looks inappropriate, more like a coniferous tree almost, or something similar, like, the kind of thing you wouldn't expect on this island. As you trace that root...

BEN

Do I have my weapon?

ALEX

No, you do not.

BEN

Hmm.

ALEX

As you trace the root with your eyes, you see it leads to, directly behind you, a huge tree. It appears to be an old English oak, or similar. It's massive. There's no possible way it could be on an island naturally like this, and each of the leaves appears to be iridescent, and as you look at the, sort of, specific blue root, it seems to lead in towards the tree proper and then that is lost among

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the other colours. It is full of foliage, although it's quite confusing to the eye – it's difficult to look at. It's quite hard to see where the ends of the branches are; it seems to branch and branch, and then keep branching in such a way that it kind of deteriorates a little bit. You see that there is a small figure sat in a crook beneath the tree. You can't make out more than they are quite small, and they are seemingly wearing white and have white hair.

BEN/ZOLF

Walk towards them and be, like, 'Alright, then. What the hell's going on?'

ALEX (also as the small figure)

As you approach the figure they look up and it is very difficult to make out age. It's very difficult to make out, like, they're quite androgynous-looking. Their features don't quite settle to the eye properly. They speak to you gently, but with many voices, 'Greetings, Zolf. It is Zolf?'

BEN/ZOLF

'Yes, come on! Enough of the, you know, I'm not impressed by this stuff. Just, what's happening?!'

(Bryn laughs)

LYDIA [laughing]

I've already dumped a god!

(Helen laughs)

ALEX (also as Myriad)

The creature smiles. 'We are Myriad. Welcome.'

BEN/ZOLF

'To what? Actually, hang on a minute – are you the pisser who's been mucking up the world? Bloody Myriad!'

(Bryn laughs)

'Bloody [0:07:23] bloody [BEEP].'

(Group laughter)

'Come on, out with it. Are you the bloody plant?!'

ALEX (as Myriad)

'Yes.'

(Helen laughs)

BEN/ZOLF

'Oh, piss off, then!' And I will leave and start to walk into the sea.

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Sure.

BEN/ZOLF

'I'm having none of this. None of your rubbish!'

ALEX

So you start walking into the sea...

BEN

Yeah.

ALEX

... and, you know... have you ever been on one of those beaches – you don't really get them in the UK – where it's a very, very slow... there's no really drop off...

HELEN

Mmm.

BEN

Yep.

ALEX

... so, you know, it's, like, calf-deep for half a mile kind of thing...

HELEN

Yeah.

ALEX

... it's that. You find yourself wading out to sea. Give me a Perception Check, please.

[Sound of dice being rolled]

Also, I could not be happier that you're the person having this conversation, by the way!

(Laughter)

Could not be happier!

HELEN

Ben, the [law? 0:08:12]!

BEN

Yep. 24.

ALEX

So, the first things that you notice – you don't seem to be making as much progress as you feel you should, and the stars that were reflected in the water

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aren't reflected in the water, they're within the water and they're swirling around you. You seem to be slowing despite not moving any slower.

BEN/ZOLF

'Oh, blummin' dream logic. Fine, fine, I'll have your stupid conversation. Yeah, you can try and recruit me to your rubbish!'

(Laughter)

'What do you want? Just 'urry up. If I'm dead I'll... just let me bloody die!'

ALEX

To be clear, you're yelling this from a decent distance out to see.

BEN

Yeah, this is now me – I've turned around, I'm waving me arms around, I'm splashing back towards the island just shouting this, like, just really irritated.

LYDIA

Not drowning, but angry!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Oh, this is amazing!

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ALEX [laughing]

Not waving, bloody furious!

(Group laughter)

BEN/ZOLF

Yeah, yeah, yeah – I'm absolutely livid!

(Helen laughs)

'I've had enough of evil things trying to do bloody, ugh, just...' I wander back to Myriad, I guess.

(Laughter)

ALEX

The figure's still sat beneath the tree. The figure doesn't seem particularly upset by you being annoyed or anything, or amused, it just seems, kind of, quite calm there.

BEN

Ah, yeah, well it's a gestalt entity on a higher plane of existence so it doesn't have need for things like emotions, Zolf thinks.

(Group laughter)

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We must confess, we are surprised...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, alright...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘... which hasn’t been happening much.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Come on, then. What do you want?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Well, what is it that you wish for? You are the one who has come here.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, I was bloody sent here by dragon-fire, okay? So, I don’t know, maybe I’ve been pushed into...’ Hang on, I’m going to roll Knowledge Planes because it’s like I’ve been pushed into the plane which is where this actual thing exists.

ALEX

Sure.

BEN/ZOLF

Er, rolled a natural one, so that’s good!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

This isn't ringing any bells. Also, you're fairly certain that being fire-breathed, normally the only plane you go to is afterlife.

BEN

Yeah, yeah.

HELEN

Mmm.

(Laughter)

BEN/ZOLF

'I don't know. I didn't come here on purpose! So what are you doing, sitting on your bloody island in your stupid tree?!'

(Group laughter)

HELEN [laughing]

I love Zolf so much!

(Laughter)

ALEX

Myriad seems fascinated, just fascinated with the question, but doesn't seem to be offering much.

BEN/ZOLF

'Look, you've got about, I dunno, 20 seconds before I start to throttle the bloody life out of you or, at least, start trying, because, quite frankly, you said *'oh, yeah, I'm the plant'*. Okay, great! But do you know how many people you've hurt? Billions, millions. I don't know how many people there are on the earth, I've never really counted, but lots!

ALEX (as Myriad)

'Which earth?'

BEN/ZOLF [exasperated]

'Oh, great, of course. Bloody interplanar entities, like, all this rubbish. The one I come from that I care quite a lot about!'

ALEX (as Myriad)

'Would you like to return?'

BEN/ZOLF

'Yes, with the corollary that you also piss off out of it.'

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Myriad seems to be giving that some due consideration. ‘We don’t believe what you request is possible.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah? Well, then we’ll make it possible.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘If we were to ask you to not be, how would you go about doing so?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Are you really... ? Of course, you’re not mortal. You... That’s a stupid bloody question!’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No, as in I can think of loads of ways, but I’m not actually that keen on discussing that.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘You seem distressed.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Right, that’s it – I’m going to beat you to death with a bloody tree branch!’

(Group laughter)

‘This is the clearest problem I’ve had – at least I can see you now instead of you being a bloody, ugh...!’ I’m going to try and beat the absolute crap out of this thing.

[sound of something being thumped with a tree branch]

ALEX

Understood. I’m not going to require Attack Rolls. Would you like the good news or the bad news?

BEN

I mean, I’m going to have to have both eventually!

(Group laughter)

ALEX (also as Myriad)

It gives lots of satisfying feeling of force and connection with no effect to you or them, although they seem increasingly concerned, ‘Erm, let us help.’

BEN/ZOLF

[beating the branch in time] ‘Nope, nope, nope, nope. What do you mean, let us help?’

(Laughter)

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘You seem distressed.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, okay, okay. As a creature who has consistently taken over the minds of others and are now puppeting around – you know, you probably don’t even care, cities, continents, whatever – you have taken people and added it to your bloody fractal tree, but they have no will of their own. You’ve completely, like, consumed them. And I ain’t going down like that.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Why not?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Because you, you’ve... look... Okay, let me guess. You’re one of these people who are, like, *‘oh, oh, I’m gonna take over everybody’s bloody minds because I know better than them and I’ll give them a much better thing. Oh, we’re all gonna work towards some grand central project’* right? Is that your whole deal?’

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Again, Myriad seems confused by the question. ‘Yes?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Oh, brilliant. So I’m just trapped on a psychic island with that **[BEEP]**.’

[everyone bursts out laughing]

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Oh god! ‘You wish us to perform an action that we are unable to perform.’

BEN/ZOLF

Uh huh, yeah, great. ‘Cos you’re a predator, right? You’re a predator and you’ve eaten your prey and then you’re like, *‘oh well, you know, I can’t do anything about that because it’s just my nature’*.

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Oh no. Not that. If we were to cease to be, we would return without intention.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Alright. Well then, whatever.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘There are two eventual states – us...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I’m the whole metaverse or oblivion, right? Bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh, bleh.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You are so tiresome.’

(Alex laughs)

‘Right, so where do we go from here, then? I ain’t taking any of your bloody help. I obviously can’t kill you, so are you going to kill me? Or release me from this stupid place?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘You wish us to release your world, as you put it.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, that’s why I asked it.’

[sniggering]

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yet, when we offered to help, you ask us not to.’

BEN/ZOLF

'No, no, no, no, no, no... When you offer to help, what you mean is '*I can add you to the collective*' isn't it?'

ALEX (as Myriad)

'No, not at all.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Uh huh? Right, what is it then? Be specific.'

ALEX (as Myriad)

'We would bring you counsel to ease your concerns.'

BEN/ZOLF

'What?! Oh, right, so you're just going to parade a bunch of puppeted idiots to try and convince me that you're doing the right thing?'

ALEX

Myriad casts a hand across the beach and Azu, Cel and Hamid specifically awaken on the beach in a similar situation to Zolf when he awoke.

HELEN

Hmmm...

ALEX

However, to be clear, I will give you all a collective memory to work from as a final instinct, if you will.

HELEN

Sure.

ALEX

Think of it more as a tableau as opposed to you did this thing. You all distinctly remember seeing the dragon-breath consume Babbage, etc. You have a very clear memory of the edges of the tower being, even with all of your efforts, beginning to be completely overwhelmed and the tower itself started to collapse, and then you were here.

HELEN

Hmm. God, this is hard because I am very much on the side of Zolf-catch-these-hands-Smith, but Azu is not.

[she sighs]

BEN/ZOLF

‘Oh, bloody hell, you’re all here as well. Ugh. Are you real or are you some bloody construction?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Er...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Err...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Actually, that’s an extremely interesting question which I have reflected on at length...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I think we’re real.’

HELEN

Azu pats herself down.

ALEX

You feel real!

(Laughter)

LYDIA/CEL

‘I’ve concluded that, really, in actuality we are all ongoing constructions and the reality of any particular appearance or being that we have at any moment isn’t really consistent, and should not be considered...’

HELEN/AZU [interrupting]

‘Where’s everyone else?’

BEN

Zolf is pinching the bridge of his nose.

HELEN/AZU

‘Where’s Kiko and Emeka and Einstein, and...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Where are we?’

BEN/ZOLF [sardonically]

‘Oh, oh yeah. Let me introduce you to the problem’ I’ll say, pointing at... ‘This is Myriad. Myriad’s a great big fractal tree that spreads throughout universes or worlds, or whatever, and doesn’t have a conception of individual ones. We’ve been having a lovely conversation about how they suck.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Ah.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Hello.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Right.’

BEN/ZOLF

'Yeah.'

HELEN

Azu's going to get off and approach...

BEN/ZOLF

'Oh, by the way, you can't punch 'em.'

HELEN

Am I still 12 foot 12?

ALEX

No.

HELEN

Am I still wearing the armour? Do I have any weapons?

ALEX

So, here's an interesting one. I would say for Azu you're probably still wearing your armour, but you won't have your axe with you.

HELEN

Hmmm. Damn, because that's very useful against a tree!

(Laughter)

BRYN

Is Cel still beastified?

ALEX

No.

LYDIA

Ah.

BRYN

So... and presumably Hamid's wings have retracted again?

ALEX

Yes.

LYDIA

So that's 25 on Knowledge Arcana.

ALEX

You get the impression that you've gone somewhere other people ain't gone!

BRYN

I think Knowledge Planes might get you something, I don't think Knowledge Arcana will get you anything.

LYDIA

Okay. Rolling... oooh! That's, er, 35.

HELEN

Oooohhh!

ALEX

So, if you think of the planes as plates on a table...

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

... you get the distinct impression that you're stood on the table.

LYDIA

Mmm.

HELEN

Ohhhhhh...

LYDIA

Cel has in fact used exactly that as a demonstration while having a conversation with Jasper about how planes work.

ALEX

In fact, it's probably quite important if you survive the entire experience it will be useful because there's been lots of people saying there is only the planes all the way down, so it would be *really* helpful to be able to disprove some stuff, but, you know!

LYDIA/CEL

'Yeah, yeah. It's actually extremely interesting for some theoretical work I was doing on the interaction of planes and what exactly they are...'

BEN/ZOLF

'Is... is this relevant now? Because what this means, what this means, right, ultimately, is that we've just lost, right? 'Cos we're all here. Babbage ain't here. And we're with that.'

HELEN/AZU

'Right.'

BRYN/HAMID

'So it's over.'

BEN/ZOLF

'Pretty much, I guess.'

HELEN

I'm going to roll Knowledge Religion and this is going to be to represent Azu's instinctive looking around for whether Aphrodite is here.

ALEX

Sure, sure.

HELEN

[Rolls dice]

That is a 16. Can I feel Aphrodite in any way?

ALEX

Yes, but it feels very wrong. It doesn't feel corrupted, the shape of the feeling is very, very different and it feels very, very weak. Very distant.

HELEN/AZU [groans]

'Right. So are we, are we dead, do we think?'

BEN/ZOLF

'I dunno. I dunno if that fire should have killed me, but, whatever, I don't feel dead, and if I'm here with you, then... or maybe it's the memory of me or some sort of bloody psychic moment in time, life flashing before... you know what I mean.'

BRYN/HAMID

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‘Seems likely. The last thing I remember is the dragon-breath and the tower starting to crumble, and then everything was white.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, but if we’re dead we probably shouldn't be together.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, I shouldn't...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘True.’

HELEN/AZU

‘... be here.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, we’d all go to a different bloody plane, wouldn't we? Or something.’

BRYN/HAMID

I turn and address the figure, ‘Did you bring us here?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We brought you Hamid, you Azu, and you Cel to this place, yes. We did not bring Zolf to this place.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Well, I’m glad you did.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Pah. No idea.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘So... so, Myriad, buddy, are you able to a) stop mind controlling all of the people in our world and, potentially, others, and possibly as a corollary of that send us back there happy and healthy...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Lemme get this one. Let me get this one *‘oh, could you ask me not to be’* is the answer you’re going to bloody get.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Well, alright. Myriad, what are you doing?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Seems like a good starting point.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Sitting.’

HELEN/AZU

‘That is not what I mean and I think you know that.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Can you tell why I am so furious right now?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh, I...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘It’s this. It’s all this.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘What were you doing on the plane that we were on before we were here?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We do wish you all well. We just struggle...’

HELEN/AZU

‘We don’t care!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Your intentions are meaningless if your actions result in harm.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘You should put that on a poster!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well, I mean, I guess it’s more complicated than that. That is a simplification and... but...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Why does your stomach grumble?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Oh... ‘cos...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Why do you not stop it?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... we’re hungry, and you can stop it by deciding to eat.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Hmm.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘But it’s also a base instinct that can be controlled with a sentient thought. You can’t stop your stomach from grumbling, but you can eat or you can choose not to eat because you don’t have to be... you don’t have to follow your instincts if it’s going to cause harm to other beings.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Hm.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘You’ve been extending your consciousness into our world, collecting the consciousness of other people and that has done irreparable harm to them and to those you haven’t. I believe you can choose to stop. You clearly exist here outside our world. You clearly... you have the ability to withdraw your consciousness from our world. That’s what I would ask you to do.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We understand.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Hmm...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We *could* remove ourselves from your world and in so doing, leave it shattered...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘In what way?’

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Myriad, again, seems to be struggling to articulate. ‘Um... ah... London Bridge would fall down leaving you fragments to shore against your ruin.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Look, I’m not good at philosophy. I’m not good at this fancy verbiage. Are you saying that if you leave our world, everybody you have infected will die? Is that... do you mean that?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We don’t know.’

HELEN/AZU [exasperated]

‘Well, what good are you?!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Good question!’ I am not expecting this to work, but I am going to attempt to cast Searing Lights.

ALEX

I’m afraid not.

BEN

Yeah, so I throw my hand out in front of myself and nothing happens.

LYDIA

Can Cel make bombs in this environment?

ALEX

Cel can try!

BRYN/HAMID

‘What do you want? You must have some desires – you are clearly a sentient being.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘To be, to grow, to learn.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Is that what you’re using us for? Is that why you want to accumulate minds, to learn?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We do not want to accumulate minds. We accumulate minds.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘But you’re a thinking-enough being that you could stop that process if you chose to. By not choosing to stop, you are actively choosing to continue.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Hmm.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, I think the trick is, it doesn’t bloody care.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Mmm.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘If we were to cease to be, all the worlds that we have touched would collapse.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Would they?’

HELEN/AZU

‘What do you mean by collapse?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Explain in more detail. Do you mean that the bonds holding physical objects together would cease to work? Do you mean that there would be massive earthquakes? Be more specific.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘When the tree grows, it moves the earths that it moves through.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Auuuggghhh!’

BEN/ZOLF

‘This is the thing. This is the whole bloody thing. This is a too big to fail situation, right? ‘Cos nobody with the power thinks that anything could exist after they go. Meritocrats thought the same thing. Rome thought the same thing. Everybody thinks the same bloody thing, and mistake you can make is listening to those institutions. And that, right there, is one of the biggest bloody institutions I’ve ever seen!’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Would you prefer to take our place?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh no...’

[Lydia squeaks]

BEN/ZOLF

‘Piss off.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Wait. We can take your place?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘If you would.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Absolutely not, Hamid. Absolutely bloody not.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Did you take something else’s place?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes, we did.’

HELEN/AZU

‘There was someone else here before you?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Who? What was here before.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Myriad.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Ah.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Ohhh.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Right. Yeah, sure.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘I mean, is Babbage... would Babbage still be up for it? If we could...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Wait, are you Babbage?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No, but we shouldn't... bloody... nobody should take it's bloody place, because it's just the same problem.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Ah. You don't think it would make a different decision?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Do you think we wouldn't keep any willpower?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, pretty sure. Either this bloody thing might have decided, or this bloody thing came here expecting to do so and failed.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Hmm.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Where... did you have a name except Myriad before you took the place of the Myriad that was here previously?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘What was it?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Lythaniel.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Lythaniel. Well...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Okay, so it’s not Babbage.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... where were you from? Where did you live?’

ALEX

Myriad thinks for a while and then looks up at the tree and points to a bit of the tree up near the top.

BRYN/HAMID

‘Do the branches represent different planes? Do the leaves represent different planes? I understand that probably this entire place is a construct designed to represent concepts which my mind could not actually conceive of in a way that is understandable, but I still feel like it should be possible to explain at least some of the metaphorical baggage underpinning the perceptions we’re having.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Was it a nice world?’

ALEX

And I’ll take a break there.

(Laughter)

ALEX (also as Myriad)

And welcome back. So, you asked a couple of questions. I’ll try and get through those. So, Myriad takes a moment considering both. ‘We are the tree. The leaves are in some ways the planes that you think of, though there are other places than this. And, no, it was not at the end. It is now.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Ah. So you think it was improved by Myriad before coming in and taking control of all of the living beings’ wills and, and... so on and controlling them, and...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘You all keep speaking of control.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah, we do because you control things. Yeah.’

HELEN/AZU

‘That’s what you’re doing. You’re function, it seems, is to control other beings. That seems to be what it is.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We are the sum of other beings.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Can we have a quick... can we just have a quick huddle? Maybe just away from *that*?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Sure.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, yes.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘I’m pretty sure it can hear everything in this...’

Rusty Quill Gaming – [218] – [Erasing The Line]

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘We might as well try.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes, yes.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Sure, sure.’

ALEX [laughing]

I love that Cel seems to be the one like, sometimes people need a huddle even if it’s... the huddle’s about the huddle, it’s not about the hearing!

LYDIA

It serves a psychological purpose!

(Alex laughs)

BEN/ZOLF

So I, kind of, lead people over to the furthest place on the island, like, possible.

‘Look, the problem we’ve got is that anything it says, right, like, we’re here to murder it...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Um...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘We are! All Babbage was going to, like, oh, cut its arm off or something like that. So, like, it’s not going to give us any helpful information. We can’t solve the problem by asking it nicely and, and, like, getting it to give us information because it’s gonna lie, right?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well, no I don’t think it is... I don’t necessarily trust its answers because it seems to have a really warped perspective on everything, but also we’re completely in its power. I mean, I don’t think it has any reason to lie to us because we can’t affect it. We can’t do anything.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Mmm.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘There’s no... it doesn’t seem to have motivation to lie. I just don’t think it understands reality the same way we do.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘That’s what I mean. Unless there’s a way that we can affect it, and we haven’t worked it out yet, and it doesn’t want us to work it out.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, there’s some holes in its logic, I have to say. Like, the fact that it seems to be equating being with controlling all of these worlds when actually that’s, I mean, there’s a lot of things that we think we can’t live without that we can actually live without, and often power is one of those things. I just wonder if... I don’t know if there’s anything to lose by my trying to talk it through, the idea that there are many ways to be and a lot of them might be difficult to recognise, but very happy and fulfilling if you are a multi-planar...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, great. Look, if you can persuade it to give up control of all of these worlds, then be my guest, but it ain’t gonna work... but, you know, fine. Give it a try.’

HELEN/AZU

‘We should try.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Sure.’

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [218] – [Erasing The Line]

‘I mean, are we ignoring the fact that... I mean, my understanding of Babbage’s plan was that he would attempt to place his consciousness at the centre, and this being, Lythaniel, is at the centre and...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘No, no! No, no, no, not at all! No, because, look, Babbage was gonna do it on our plane, not replacing the whole bloody tree. He was going to cut off a branch. He was cutting off the...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t think that’s...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘If he was aware, I’m pretty sure he would step up to...’

HELEN/AZU

‘And I think he would have told us.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, and I bet bloody Lythaniel thought he was doing the exact same thing when they took over, right?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Well maybe.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You’re just... any of us who take over is just going to become that thing again.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Mmm. I think that’s right.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Maybe, but the question is how, how long. How long that process takes. Babbage thought he would have enough seconds to make the decision and to take the action, and...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘And what if you can’t?’

HELEN/AZU

‘But did he know about this? I don’t think so.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Almost certainly not.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘No. Do any of us? But, if we’ve got no other way to effect it, shouldn't we try? I mean, if one of us becomes that thing, then there’s a chance, however small, that we take the correct decision. But then there’s also the only other outcome is that we’re in the exact same situation.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘And then we have a more familiar face to murder.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah, I don’t think... I don’t think it will help.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Absolutely not. Like, everybody wants to, like, bloody take power. Thinks, oh, I’ll do a better job with this huge amount of power. They never bloody do. They never do.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘It’s not about taking the power...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You are taking the power!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... it’s about releasing it.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Cos you then have the power to do that, right? But in those, like, microseconds...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I see what you mean...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘... maybe you decide against it. Maybe, again, Lythaniel thought, oh, I’ll release everybody. Well actually this is good! Or maybe your mind is overwritten and, given, this is a mind-overwriting entity!’

HELEN/AZU

‘That’s what I’m thinking! What if you sit in it and you have all the best intentions, but there’s some deeper impulse that then takes you over?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You’re a vessel. You’re a channel to a bloody collective consciousness that apparently wants to keep itself going.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes. I don’t think it will work that way. Yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Charles and Ada and Nicola thought there was a chance they would retain enough of themselves long enough...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘And Sumutnyerl agreed with that plan, and their community seemed to understand the plants and the planes better than we do. Maybe they had some awareness of the way that these things...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Nobody has any *awareness* of this. Did you have any awareness of this thing?’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, I... I mean...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘You’re easily the smartest person I know and you had no...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘We knew it was a multi-planar entity. We knew that there was some sort of consciousness behind it.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘But Babbage was talking about releasing everybody on *our* world.’

HELEN/AZU

‘He didn’t know about all these other things.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘We didn’t know about the people on the other worlds.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Well, then they didn’t know how it bloody worked, did they?’

LYDIA/CEL

Rusty Quill Gaming – [218] – [Erasing The Line]

‘Zolf, I don’t know what you’re trying to argue for...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘*Not* becoming the thing that has *ruined* our world and countless others, is what I’m arguing against.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘I know what you’re arguing against, but what are you arguing for?’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I just think we grab it out of its bloody tree, drag it over to the lake and drown it.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Hmm...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Do you even think that’s possible?’

BEN/ZOLF [exasperated]

‘I don’t know!’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t think that’s going to work. I don’t know if we have the ability to affect it in that way.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘I know, I know, but it’s better than becoming it.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Why don’t we get some more information...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Yeah.’

HELEN/AZU

‘... because we’re working on very little...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Fine!’

HELEN/AZU

‘... and I know it’s unreliable, but...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah. Go... go talk to it. Fine.’

[he sighs heavily]

BRYN/HAMID

‘It seemed to be listening to a degree...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Who knows?’

HELEN/AZU

‘It’s sentient, and it can think, so there’s always hope.’

LYDIA/CEL

While the awkward conversation, kind of, continues, Cel is just going to back away with two thumbs up, grinning, and looking over their shoulder at Myriad so they don’t step... and then, like, turn around, ‘Hey, buddy. So, I just wondered if I could unpick a bit of your logic? Um, I’m sure that you speak many languages and have many different, kind of, brain structures, so, uh, we may have misunderstood... but you seem to equate having control of all of these different worlds with the fact that you are continuing to exist when, clearly, since at one point you didn’t control all of them and the amount of them that you control is changing over time, you are, and were, and will be able to survive very happily without eating minds. And... I just wondered if you had, like, what it feels like to you to have more minds. Is it that it feels good to eat brains? Is it something that you want at a deep level, or is it something that is an option, you know?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Why are you doing it, yes?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We grow because there is room to grow. It’s not a desire, it’s a result. If we were to... without us all these worlds would die eventually.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Well, yes, but there are cycles in nature, right? And you can stop things at any one point, like, a caterpillar eats lots of grass – or cabbages, they always ate my cabbages – and then it becomes a chrysalis, and then it becomes a butterfly, and then it, you know, finds other butterflies, has it’s way, lays some eggs, and then it dies. And you can, at any point in that process, stick a pin in that butterfly and, like, keep it in that beautiful, perfect state for a long time. You can encase it in resin, you can glue it to something so it stays there. But it’s dead, right? It’s not gonna... the cycle has stopped. And it might look nice, you know, and it’s much more convenient than having your cabbages continually eaten every year, but it’s definitely dead. It’s not the same. It’s not as good. You see what I mean? That these worlds may die eventually, but while they’re in the process of doing that, they will live, right?’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Your existence is clearly vast. Your conception of eventually may be very different to ours. If you’re talking about the fact that worlds eventually end, if there is space for millions or billions of lives to be lived before then, that’s enough.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah. Do you think you’re better than me?’

(Laughter)

‘No, but look at one of the people that you will make better, like me, right? Using as specific example. Do you think you’re better than me? Do you think that I deserve to be taken over by you?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Deserve? No.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Do you think that my personhood is less valid than your personhood, given that we are here and we are talking? We can have a conversation.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘It would seem not.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘So if you consumed my personhood, and I ceased to be, I’ve died. It doesn’t matter that you’re in my head, moving me about to some grander purpose. I am dead. You have killed me.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘You will not be dead. You would be us, and we would be you.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Can I... No, can I have any new experiences? Me? Zolf? Zolf Smith?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘No.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘So I have ceased to, you know, have new experiences, right? I have stopped living.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘It is the butterfly pinned to the table, right? Like, it looks good and you’ve got a nice collection, it’s a very pretty collection, but the butterflies are definitely dead. Even if they still exist in your pretty arrangement...’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... they’re dead, and they will... you know, they may survive a lot longer in their frozen state.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘The end of someone’s personhood is a death of a kind as well.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Can you see my memories?’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘No. We can see the memories of all those who you’ve known.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Oh...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh... err...’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Zolf and I faced a similar situation before. We met a man named François Henri.’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes. He was eaten by the machine.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘His personhood was removed because he no longer had the ability to live.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘He just walked around like a robot.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘His individuality had been consumed by a greater entity in much the same way you’re consuming the personhoods of the people. If... You are causing harm to every single one of these sentient beings, and you said that withdrawing your consciousness, withdrawing your control would cause harm, but you haven’t been able to quantify that. You haven’t been able to explain that, and it feels very much like you’re saying that you’re absence would be the harm...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... that the eventual death of these worlds would be the harm...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘Yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘... but that’s not harm in the same way. Life is about change and growth and learning and progress, and sometimes things end, but that’s still part of life and that’s not... taking that away is not an improvement if you’re removing people’s personhood while you’re doing it.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘And let’s take this from a meta-planar perspective, right? When people die, they don’t go away, they move on to other places within whatever you want to call it, the metaverse, right? You’re stopping them from doing that. You’ve trapped them. You’re keeping them prisoner inside yourself.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘I return to the butterfly thing...’

HELEN/AZU [chuckling softly]

‘Mmm...’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... which, again, I am very proud of, I have to say...’

(Laughter)

‘... it’s just...’

HELEN/AZU

‘It’s a good one! It’s a very good one!’

LYDIA/CEL

‘... you know you’re sticking them... thank you, Azu... they’re sticking there, but, you know, that butterfly should migrate. Okay, maybe the butterfly thing is getting a little strained, I will...’

HELEN/AZU

‘No, no, no! I think you’re right. You should let the butterfly flutter about and do it’s business instead of locking it away where only you can look at it.’

LYDIA/CEL

‘Yeah! Exactly, and even if it flies... maybe it’ll be eaten by a predator, you know? Maybe it will! That’s not ideal for the butterfly, but it’s a fact of life and the predator’s happy about it, and the butterfly did get to be free and it got to make decisions... before... I don’t know exactly how many decisions butterflies make – maybe lots of them...’

(Helen chuckles)

‘... but anyway.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘I don’t know how many of the people, Myriad, that you’ve met you’ve talked to. I don’t know how the four of us have ended up here and how we’re the ones communicating with you in this way, but you’ve got four examples of people here. Sure, we know each other, we’re friends, but we’re very different. There’s a lot that the four of us disagree on, but all four of us individuals with different perspectives, different... all of us would choose to live and to die in an imperfect, unstable world, getting to make our own choices rather than be subsumed into you. If the other consciousnesses that you have access to are also there, ask them. Ask them how many would make that choice. All four of us, different perspectives on so many other things would

make that choice. If all those other people would as well, then you see the harm you've done, and then you see the reason to withdraw.'

ALEX (also as Myriad)

'Please wait a moment.' Myriad, sort of, settles into a, literally, a meditative pose beneath the tree.

BRYN/HAMID

'I've got to say that, um, that went a bit better than I expected, so fair enough!'

HELEN/AZU

'Hm.'

LYDIA/CEL

'I do wonder what a moment is to a interplanar creature – you know, we could be here a very long time!'

ALEX

So I'm going to jump ahead two to three heaped deaths of the universe...

(Group laughter)

... okay. Eventually, and by eventually, it is a meaningless statement. It doesn't feel like forever, it doesn't feel like too long. It feels like the right amount of time.

HELEN

Mmm.

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Myriad opens their eyes, ‘We feel that if Lythaniel had compatriots at the time of decision, they would have made a different decision.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh...’

ALEX (as Myriad)

‘We could release the worlds and let them fall as they may, and we understand that in so doing we will change and the worlds that are – some may flourish and some may die – and you understand that we would not be in control of whatever happens next.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘That’s the point.’

HELEN/AZU

‘That’s... yes. Exactly.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Give everyone a chance.’

BEN/ZOLF

‘Life is living, and it might suck sometimes, but it’s a life.’

HELEN/AZU

‘And, you know, what you’ve got here is very beautiful, you could watch the sea forever if you wanted.’

ALEX (also as Myriad)

Myriad looks out to the water for a moment. ‘We could try to make another.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Eventually, it’s your turn in the Initiative Order and you just have to roll that dice!’

(Group laughter)

HELEN

Oh god, it’s just bursting through the [0:42:45] wall!

(Laughter)

LYDIA

That’s another level of meta-planar! Like, that’s the one...

(Laughter)

ALEX

We are all but dreams and numbers!

LYDIA

We've ended up in a Skype-plane!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

In which case, then, Myriad looks up and all of you realise that although it hasn't been stifling, there's been no breeze, and a slow breeze starts to move through the air. It's gentle at first, and it rustles the, he uses the word "leaves" with bunny ears...

(Helen laughs)

... it rustles the leaves and then just one, from near the top, sort of blows out into the air and starts heading out over the waters. Myriad looks at it and begins to smile. It seems to be a very sincere reaction, a pleasant surprise as opposed to puzzlement or anything like that.

HELEN

Awww...

ALEX

And then you see another one detach, and then another one...

BRYN/HAMID

‘Thank you, Myriad.’

HELEN/AZU

‘Yes.’

BRYN/HAMID

‘Good luck.’ Hamid, sort of, instinctively reaches for Azu’s hand, just to hold it.

HELEN

Oh yeah, Azu’s hand is right there!

LYDIA/CEL

‘Myriad, are you interested in hugs at all? Is that a...?’

ALEX

Myriad, sort of, takes a moment and seems to be thinking what you mean.

Then, sort of, offers arms open as though, like...

LYDIA

Cel crouches down, because you said they were very small...

ALEX

Yeah, as, like, quite a short child.

LYDIA

... and I think leans in and gives him a very tight hug, I assume, like, as beautiful leaves swirl around in a...

ALEX

Yeah! it feels real, for what it's worth, to all meaning of the word, and eventually, sort of, Myriad releases you, I guess. You can carry on hugging should you wish though...

LYDIA

No, no!

ALEX

... but, er, leaves do start pouring from the tree and, by pouring, I mean more than you would fit on a tree because those branches get very small towards the top if you see what I mean.

HELEN

Oh, that's so many people.

BEN/ZOLF

'Just don't forget you have a chance, right? You've done an awful lot of harm, but at least you are taking some steps to undo it, so... I dunno, just live your life well, okay?'

HELEN/AZU

‘Yeah.’

ALEX

Myriad doesn’t seem to react beyond just another benign, I guess, smile.

BRYN

Hamid reaches out his other hand towards Zolf and Cel.

LYDIA

Yep. Grabs.

BEN

Nope!

(Helen chuckles)

BRYN

Fair enough!

HELEN

Well, Hamid’s only got one other hand...

BRYN

Yeah!

(Laughter)

Holding Azu's hand and Cel's hand – that's fine!

ALEX (also as Myriad)

So, as leaves begin to pour from the tree, increasing an impossible amount to be clear, it seems to never run dry. It starts to begin obscuring the vision slightly. There's a moment of, sort of, not stillness because of the action, but a moment of calm, let's call it, because it's like, white noise visually almost. And the last thing that you hear Myriad say is an echo of the words earlier, just, 'Best of luck' and then it starts to dissolve a little bit, visually, it starts to become just the colours themselves until eventually all of you find yourselves...

LYDIA

Back on the battle-map?!

(Laughter)

ALEX

Azu.

HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

You become aware of birdsong.

(Helen gasps)

Not much, and it's not close, but you definitely become aware of birdsong and you realise that, at some point, the white noise wind that you were hearing has started to re-form into... more like the wind of a high place.

HELEN

Okay. I open my eyes.

ALEX

You're seemingly stood on what's left of Big Ben.

HELEN

Oh!

ALEX

The pieces are everywhere. You're not atop the top, it has, sort of, come down slightly.

HELEN

Am I lying down?

ALEX

You are, yes.

HELEN

Can I roll Perception Check to see if...

ALEX [laughing]

Yes! Give me a Perception Check!

HELEN

Yes, I wanna see if everyone else is there.

[Rolls dice]

That's 21.

ALEX

I'm going to say that you stand up for the sake of it, if I may?

HELEN

Yes.

ALEX

So, standing up, you see everyone who was at the tower with you are around you. For a moment, you fear the worst as all of them are laid out, but you see that they're all asleep. You see that, rather less pleasantly, there's quite a lot of remains around the place from what, presumably, used to be the guardians of the plant...

HELEN

Okay.

ALEX

... at which point you notice that the plant itself isn't there. Not dead, just is not there. There is a large hole where it used to be, but it is not there, and you see that the... looking around you see a few more figures seem to be dotted around the place, seemingly sleeping.

HELEN/AZU

Azu yells, 'Wake up! Wake up right now! Everybody up, up, up... up we go!'

(Bryn laughs)

'You've got it. Get up!'

(Laughter)

ALEX

Everyone in here, and all of the NPCs we have been discussing previously atop, start to do so.

BEN

I was unconscious.

HELEN

True!

ALEX

So, you also awake.

BEN

How many Hit points am I on?

ALEX

I'll give you a guess!

BEN

Well, it's either max or one!

ALEX [laughing]

It's one! It's one!

HELEN

I look for... I look around to ascertain that... oh wait, no, you've already said everyone's there... um, in which case I'm going to first look for Hamid and see if he's waking up okay?

ALEX

Yeah, he's there, waking up. Mm hmm.

HELEN

Okay, then Kiko?

ALEX

Mm Hmm.

HELEN

And Emeka. And they're all coming to alright?

ALEX

Everyone's coming to. Everyone's very confused, because everyone clearly was mid-doing a thing and now waking up.

HELEN [laughing]

Okay. I'm going to sit next to Kiko while she wakes up.

BRYN

I start looking around to assess the wider situation.

ALEX

London's still a mess from the fight, but you can see quite down low at street level, beneath the, sort of remains that are littering the place, and now that it's just the remains, it's actually not spreading as much as you think. It's not like a sea or anything. There are a few people seemingly waking up and looking around, quite confused, at street level.

LYDIA

Is Cel still [0:48:23 mutagined]?

ALEX

No.

LYDIA

Oh! **[muttering quietly]** How long has it been? More than an hour!

BRYN [laughing]

Three deaths of the universe, according to Alex!

(Laughter)

LYDIA

Yeah, I suppose! Yeah, I don't think I've got just Fly as a thing – oh, I can, though, I can Beast-shape into a hawk...

HELEN

Nice!

ALEX

Okay, cool.

LYDIA

... hawks can see...

(Laughter)

... um, so...

ALEX

You do that via a potion drink, right?

LYDIA

Yep.

ALEX

Okay, cool. So, you drink your potion as normal. Nothing happens.

HELEN

Ohhhh...

LYDIA

Oh my gosh, have we removed magic from the world? Interesting.

HELEN

Surely not?

BRYN

Hamid attempts to bring out his wings.

ALEX

Nope.

BRYN

He's gonna try cast Fly?

ALEX

Nope!

BRYN/HAMID

Uh uh... 'Okay, so we've removed magic from the world.' Erm, Hamid is going to run over to the collapsed building where Skraak was. He's pretty slow now and it was a fair way away, but he's still heading in that direction.

ALEX

I'll return to Hamid in a second then.

BRYN

I assume we're also just losing all bonuses from magical items, too?

ALEX

I'm afraid so! They haven't ceased to exist, like, it's not like you're all naked now or anything...

(Helen laughs)

... that's an extra element that, thankfully, I don't have to deal with, but, er...

BEN

And anything in a Bag of Holding will no longer exist, one would assume?

HELEN [laughing]

Or all empty out at once!

BEN

Yeah, or just vomits itself out, yeah!

HELEN

Good thing I got rid of all those marbles, eh?!

(Group laughter)

ALEX

Azu, is there anything you're wanting to do now that you've established that everyone in your immediate presence is waking up?

HELEN/AZU

Azu says to Kiko, 'Are you alright?'

ALEX (as Kiko)

‘Yeah. Yeah, I am, yeah! Confused, but...’

HELEN/AZU

‘Oh! Wonderful! Erm, lemme just, erm, because you probably fell or something...’ and Azu’s going to attempt to cast Lay on Hands on Kiko.

ALEX

Azu can attempt that. It won’t work, but you can attempt it!

HELEN/AZU

Er... Azu says, ‘Oh no!’

ALEX (as Kiko)

‘What’s wrong?’

HELEN/AZU

‘Er, the, the... the gods aren’t there... **[gasps]** topaz!’

ALEX

It’s not there.

HELEN/AZU

‘Ahhhh, ohhh... Kiko, something is... well, something went right, but I think we’ve had a side effect! Oh dear. Okay. Alright.’

ALEX

Zolf, what are you up to?

BEN

Realising that my legs don't work!

ALEX

Yeah, fair. That'll happen.

BEN/ZOLF

'A little help here, anyone? Bloody legs are broken!'

ALEX

Wilde comes over.

BEN/ZOLF

'Hiya. Well, I think we did it.'

ALEX (also as Wilde)

Wilde seems very shellshocked. 'Is this one of times where I should be ecstatic and you're just, you know, keeping it back or is this one of those things where there's an enormous and terrifying 'but'?'

BEN/ZOLF

‘No. I think we did it. My legs are off, broken. Can’t use them, so that’s great!’

ALEX

Wilde starts to cry.

(Helen gasps)

BEN/ZOLF

‘Oh come o... [sighs]’

ALEX

Like, properly starts to cry...

HELEN

Ohhhh...

BEN/ZOLF

‘Yeah, yeah. Yep.’

ALEX

He drops down next to you and then, sort of, just envelops you in a hug.

BEN/ZOLF

‘Alright, yeah, yeah. Okay!’

(Laughter)

ALEX

He's not going to be particularly helpful for a little while, I don't think.

BEN

I'll just give him a pat on the back.

LYDIA

Cel is going to check for Barnes and check that he's corporeal, because they're a fan of him being corporeal!

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX (also as Barnes)

Barnes is corporeal, very much so. you can tell because he's currently shoving Carter off, going, 'Get off, get off!' just looking around trying to figure out what's happening!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Ahh...

LYDIA/CEL

‘Hey, er, so, er... it seems like we saved the world, but we also broke it, so, um... I think that your practical skills, which are not reliant on magic, will be in very high demand in the reconstruction of the world! Just flagging that up! I think there’s going to be quite a lot of rebuilding to do. I don’t know if anyone got injured in the fight or... we should probably go and help some of the people that have just woken up from...’

BRYN

I have to ask – what’s happened to Brutor? Is he just...

(Helen gasps)

LYDIA

Oh yes!

BRYN

... ordinary pugweiler again?!

[0:52:42 Lydia and Helen talking over one another]

HELEN

... armour...

LYDIA [squeaking]

... stuck in the armour!

(Bryn laughs)

ALEX

So, I'm gonna have to jump to that. Cel, as you're saying that, you hear a gentle, sort of, *[echo-y sound of a dog barking]* coming from inside an enormous set of plate armour.

(Laughter)

LYDIA

Cel goes over to check inside the armour.

ALEX

There is a small, very confused-looking pugwieler looking up at you from inside what, from his perspective, is an enormous metal cave.

(Bryn laughs)

LYDIA/CEL

Cel grabs the dog and holds it awkwardly...

[dog woofs intermittently]

(Bryn laughs)

... 'Hello buddy! Um, thanks for your help in the battle up there. I don't know, do you have a name? Do you have a... wuff wuff... okay...'

(Laughter)

LYDIA/CEL

‘Um... I used to be able to turn into animals and then understand them much more... Er, I could call you, I could call you...’

BEN/ZOLF

From the hug... ‘Hang on a minute, is that bloody Brutor?!’

[dog barks in earnest]

‘What the hell is Brutor doing here?!’

(Laughter)

ALEX

I’m going to use that to cut to Hamid, if I may.

BRYN

Hamid is, yeah, examining the rubble, trying to start to shift it, calling out Skraak’s name. He probably keeps trying to cast magic or use his claws, and nothing’s working and he’s having very little impact on the rubble.

ALEX

Give me a Perception Check.

BRYN

[Rolls dice]

I think, if I haven't miscalculated my bonuses, that is still 31, somehow?!

ALEX [laughing]

Without magic?!

BEN

I mean, skill points exist.

BRYN

I mean, they're just skill points, right?! You know...

ALEX

Hey, hey, it's all good! What did you roll on the dice?

BRYN

Er, a 16.

ALEX

Yeah, it's feasible. So, you're looking around for a little while and you're starting to despair because you aren't going to be able to move an entire building. You're just not. Where do you even start? And as you take a moment to straighten your back and just look around, you see Skraak is sat atop what used to be a chunk of the roof a little way off. He hasn't noticed you, and is looking out at the city.

HELEN

Ahhhh...

BRYN/HAMID

'Oh, thank the gods!' I'll scramble up there to join him.

ALEX

Skraak hears you at that point and turns around. Skraak looks worse for wear. Skraak looks like he's been through the wringer a couple of times, but...

BRYN/HAMID

'Are you okay, Skraak?'

ALEX (as Skraak)

'Did we win?'

BRYN/HAMID

'I think so, for some definition.'

ALEX (as Skraak)

'Then, yeah. That was easy!'

(Laughter)

BRYN/HAMID

Rusty Quill Gaming – [218] – [Erasing The Line]

‘Good. Good.’

ALEX (as Skraak)

‘What happens now, then?’

ALEX

And I think I might close the campaign there.

[shrieks and sighs]

LYDIA

Alex, why did you have to leave up... why add this extra cruelty? Like, you just said, ‘you know what...’

(Helen sighs)

‘... what’s going to happen is joy and ecstatic-ness – how can I complicate that?’

(Helen laughs)

I suppose that is life, innit?!

HELEN

Ahhh...

ALEX

Change happens.

LYDIA

Yeah. It does, it does.

ALEX

I will say, there will be some epilogue content where we'll find out a bit more, and I'll... I'm not going to leave you all, like, oh no what's happened, but, er... yeah. And that was Erasing the Line, which you all did!

BEN

Yup!

HELEN

Well – shout out to James Ross!

(Group laughter)

Since he's not here!

LYDIA

I feel like we should all go get shawarma!

HELEN

Yeah!

ALEX

Shall we get some shawarma?

BRYN

Or very, very drunk!

(Laughter)

HELEN

Mmm...

ALEX

Well, while we all do that, we'll be here next week with a... I promise with some epilogue content, but for the last time as part of the campaign...

BEN

An awkward outro!

ALEX

An awkward outro!

(Group laughter)

EVERYONE

Bye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

ALEX

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LYDIA/CEL

While the awkward conversation, kind of, continues, Cel is just going to back away with two thumbs up, grinning, like, looking over their shoulder at Myriad so they don't step... and then like, turn around, 'Hey, buddy...'

ALEX [laughing]

Sorry! Sorry!

LYDIA

I know, it's cool!

ALEX

Because in this universe there are gods and gods are technically a smaller scale, almost in some ways. ‘Hey buddy’ is just...! Hey little buddy!!

BRYN

Kobolds, dragons, liches, interdimensional STs – they’re all buddies!

(Laughter)

LYDIA

Every interdimensional parasitic creature is just a friend you haven’t made yet!

ALEX

Little buddy is a state of mind, not a state of being!

(Laughter)

[FADE]