The Magpies – Transcript
Season 1, Episode 15: The Haunted Estate Score

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## Intro

Rhi: Welcome back to Duskwall, and thank you for joining us once again. If you’ve already left us a review on iTunes, thank you so very much, and if you haven’t, please consider leaving one, or tell your friends about the show. We really want to keep expanding, and new listeners are the most important part of that.

A few announcements: First, it is officially International Podcast Month. Tess of RPG Casts and I Am Here has organized a huge, month-long podcast extravaganza. Head over to InternationalPodcastMonth.com to see the episodes and reviews that have already been posted. You can hear me as a player in legends of Hyrule, a Legend of Zelda inspired RPG designed by Nora Blake on September 8, and Minna is in a Harry Potter themed game of Fiasco on September 12.

Also, I will be at AcadeCon this year. It’s a board and tabletop game con in Dayton, Ohio that runs from November 9 to 11. If you’re going to be there let me know. Just as with GenCon I’d love to meet some fans and hand out more bookmarks.

One note about today’s episode: I do need to give a content warning for violence against animals. The animals in question are feral dogs, and the violence isn’t too explicit, but if you want to skip over it, timestamps are in the show notes [and marked in the transcript].

Next, Minna is going to tell us about this month’s featured charity.

Minna: According to the True Colors Fund, as many as 1.6 million youth experience homelessness every year, and up to 40% of that number are LGBT+. In Pinellas County, Florida, family resources and local stakeholders and community partners gather to talk and develop a strategic plan to address this problem locally. Safe Connections Resource Center is part of their strategic plan to provide homeless youth with a central point of access for needed services that are imperative to their safety and survival including basic needs assessment, counseling, and referrals.

Family Resources is raising money to renovate a building and open the resource center which is meant for LGBT+ youth and young adults up to the age of 24. If you would like to help make Safe Connections possible, go to www.giveakidahome.org to make a donation.

Rhi: If you’re able, please consider donating a few dollars.

Also, please take some time to visit 5calls.org and call your representatives. There are a lot of legislative threats being put forward by the GOP in the run-up to the midterm elections, and we need to push back against them everywhere we can. And as always, please check to make sure that you’re registered to vote. There have already been reports of outside interference in elections and the republican party has continued to engage in voter suppression efforts. It is critical that we turn out and vote in such overwhelming numbers that suppression and interference can’t change the results.

Now then, let’s get started. Shall we?

## Story Continues [0:02:54]

Rhi: We’re at the edge of The River Dosk. It is pretty late at night, the moon has set, but it’s a couple hours before the shattered remains of the sun will rise. You are almost about as far south in the city as you can get without actually leaving it, sort of the opposite end of the river from where The Lost District is, which seemed a little confusing when The Silver Nails told you that’s where you were to meet them, but lacking better options that’s where you headed.

You make your way there with all of your gear and head to the dock that they told you about, and sure enough there is sort of in an overhang on the river, largely shielded from street view, there is a large ferry that already holds a number of people and about five horses. It’s pretty quiet. It’s the sort of tension in the air that you get before a big heist, just everyone is very focused, kind of on edge.

Tuhan, the member of The Silver Nails who you met previously who gave you the job to steal the Spirit Warden uniforms from The Hive’s auction, spots the four of you and comes over and sort of looks you all over and gives a nod.

Rhi (as Tuhan): Ugh. I was starting to wonder if you’d actually come.

Josie (as Minx): We’re never late.

Rhi (as Tuhan): Oh, it wasn’t lateness so much I was worried about as you seeing sense and not doing this, but you’re here, so… we’ll be on our way. While you’re traveling with us you need to do what we say, when we say it, without question. Once you’re out on your own you handle things however you want, but I am not going to let any of my people get killed because some of you get curious, or scared, or whatever. We clear?

Josie & Madge (as Minx & Phin): Crystal.

Kim (as Blaire): Ooh… Jinx.

[giggling]

Rhi (as Tuhan): All right. Then, let’s get going.

Rhi: A couple of the other Silver Nails help you all onto the ferry, they untie the ropes and set off, sort of heading as silently as possible across the river. There are no lights on the ferry, and aside from the crackling of the lightning wall ahead of you getting closer as you move across the river, it’s very dark. As you look north kind of up in the direction of where The Lost District would be you can see, silhouetted against the lightning barrier, a couple of towers that have some lights in them that you’re guessing are the Spirit Warden outposts.

You make it across the river without incident. The Silver Nails jump off, tie off the ferry on this side, lead their horses off. There’s five Silver Nails who have accompanied you. Tuhan does not do this, but the other four each hold out a hand to pull you up onto the horse behind them, so each of you is riding behind someone… which is probably a very new experience for all of you. I’m betting that none of you have ever been on horseback before.

Madge: Truuue.

Josie: Yeah.

Rhi: Horses are not super common in the city, so this is a bit of a new experience for everyone.

Josie: Minx is visibly uncomfortable the whole time.

Rhi: Aw.

Kim (as Blaire): Do they have names?

Rhi: The woman that you’re riding with says:

Rhi (as Woman): Oh, yeah. This is Ima.

Rhi: And she pats the horse’s neck.

Kim (as Blaire): Ima~

Rhi (as Woman): And I’m Zuri.

Kim (as Blaire): Hi! Blaire.

Rhi (as Zuri): Nice to meet you. Hold on tight.

Kim (as Blaire): Okay!

Rhi: So, where you all step off the ferry, there’s about a good 30 or 40 feet between the river bank and the lightning barrier, so you’re not right up against it but it’s also not a huge amount of space. Tuhan rides her horse up closer to the lightning barrier, hops off, pulls something out of her bag, and does something to the lightning barrier, sticks something into the ground, and the barrier kind of sparks a bit and then an opening appears a couple feet off the ground.

She hops back on her horse, kind of wheels around, pulls back pretty far, like almost right up to the edge of the river where the rest of you are, and then the horse breaks into a gallop, and all of the horses move to follow and as they get up to that larger gap they all leap through.

Josie: That’s metal as shit.

Rhi: So, you all pass through the lightning barrier and land in The Deathlands. I think Blaire is probably the only person who has been in The Deathlands. Phin has been outside the lightning barrier, but it’s on The Void Sea which is a rather different experience.

Madge: Yeah. It’s a whole different beast.

Rhi: Yeah. So, the horses all get through the lightning barrier and you all start riding pretty quickly back north. You’re staying fairly close to the barrier, but if you look out further into The Deathlands it is extremely dark, and it’s not totally quiet where you are. There’s the crackling of the lightning barrier, there’s the horses’ hooves pounding along the ground, but otherwise there’s not the usual background noise of the city that you’re all very accustomed to. You can see sort of in the distance there’s some hills along the horizon, and occasionally you see off in the distance, just barely visible at the edge of the light from the barrier, faint movement. You’re not sure what it is. The Silver Nails are not slowing down long enough to let anybody have a good look.

You ride north back towards The Lost District for a while, and as you get closer you start to see the shapes of buildings, rubble, you can actually see sort of towering above everything the remains of deactivated, broken lightning towers. You get into The Lost District itself. It’s weird riding on the horses through these streets, because it’s in a way as if you just sort of were in Brightstone from a couple centuries ago, but a lot of the styles are even older than that. At one point the quiet is broken by this piercing shriek from somewhere, you can’t really pinpoint where it is. It echoes, and then is gone.

Josie: Minx lets out a small yelp.

Rhi: [laughs] I think the Silver Nail that you’re riding with kind of shakes her head a little.

Josie: [laughs]

Rhi: A couple of the riders do react, like they sort of look in the direction of it, but none of them make to go towards it.

Josie: Probably smart.

Rhi: After riding through the streets for a few minutes you reach a slightly more intact building. It looks like it might have been a bank, or maybe a storefront, it’s a large stone building. The second floor is partially collapsed, but the first floor is pretty solidly built still, and there’s light inside. It looks like there’s some lanterns and some flame burning. As you ride up, a couple people come out from inside the building. Again, they’re Severosi, they have the Silver Nail rings on, and one of them, a person in leather armor with a spear strapped across their back, hair pulled back in a ponytail, walks up to Tuhan almost before she stopped her horse entirely, and just goes:

Rhi (as Person): What took you so long?! And who are- Who are these people?!

Rhi: Tuhan brings her horse to a stop.

Rhi (as Tuhan): We had some other affairs to take care of in the city. These are, uh, some guests. We’re not going to be responsible for them for much longer. Don’t worry.

Rhi: The other person kind of scowls and gives you all a hard look as you’re helped down from the horses, because I imagine none of you know how to properly dismount. [laughs]

Madge: [laughs] Yeah. Fair assumption.

Josie: I forget if we’ve dropped that we’re The magpies to them.

Rhi: No.

Madge: We haven’t. We’ve kept it to ourselves.

Josie: No? Okay.

Rhi: Tuhan turns to all of you and says:

Rhi (as Tuhan): This is Sazari. They’re the leader of our encampment here.

Josie (as Minx): A pleasure.

Rhi: Sazari just kind of gives you a very curt nod, then looks at Tuhan.

Rhi (as Sazari): What, we’re bringing in tourists now?

Rhi: Tuhan shakes her head and takes Sazari’s arm and leads them off a little ways, and they start having a quiet conversation. The woman who was riding with Blaire, Zuri, starts taking the horses reins and leading them into the building, and you can hear some voices raised from inside as greetings are exchanged.

After a few moments, Sazari kind of shakes their head and also heads off inside, and Tuhan comes back over.

Rhi (as Tuhan): Well, we got you in as agreed. If you come back here they should get you back out again, if you get back.

Josie (as Minx): Thank you for the escort, and I’m glad there is a post to return to. I was expecting our exit to be more frantic.

Rhi (as Tuhan): Well, it still could be. Sazari tells me that they’ve lost two people recently from lifeseeker crows, so keep an eye on the skies.

Minna (as Myra): Lifeseeker crows?

Josie (as Minx): Yeah, hold on a sec. [laughs] That doesn’t sound good.

Rhi: Blaire, you would actually know what these are. In Duskwall, The Spirit Wardens have deathseeker crows, and they are basically magic arcane crows that whenever someone dies in the city they fly out and find the body.

Kim: Sick.

Rhi: Nobody’s really sure which came first, the deathseeker crows that you see in the city or the lifeseeker crows that you find in The Deathlands. Lifeseeker crows only live out in The Deathlands. They’ve got a wingspan on average of about 12 feet.

Kim: Nice.

Minna: [yelps]

Rhi: And they are drawn to life essence. Similar to spirits, they seek out living beings and want to drain their essence in order to survive. Blaire, you’ve probably had a couple close calls with them in your expeditions.

Kim (as Blaire): Pretty babies.

Josie (as Minx): Is there anything out here that isn’t absolutely terrifying? Anything at all?

Rhi: Tuhan just looks at you for a second.

Rhi (as Tuhan): … No.

Josie (as Minx): All right. Well, thank you for the blunt answer on that. I’m gonna go be over here for a moment.

Kim: Blaire is visibly holding back her tongue, because all of this is false!

[laughter]

Rhi: So, Tuhan kind of looks you all over.

Rhi (as Tuhan): Well, I have some things to take care of here, so… good luck.

Rhi: [laughs] And she turns to head inside.

Josie (as Minx): Well, I think Myra and Blaire are the ones with the expertise for what we’re looking for, so lead on.

Minna (as Myra): I have never been out into The Deathlands. We might be reliant on Blaire to some extent.

Kim (as Blaire): Okay!

Minna (as Myra): You’ve been out here, right?

Kim (as Blaire): yeah! But like, yeah, I’ve been outside. I haven’t been to this side of the outside, but I have been outside. I’ve left The Nest.

[giggling]

Josie (as Minx): Well, I should hope so, dear.

Kim (as Blaire): But yeah, also, I’ve passed the lightning barrier like a million times.

Josie (as Minx): Right. So, does anyone have any idea where to begin looking for this thing?

Rhi: So, Avrathi’s notes had a small map sketched in with the location of the estate that they believe the blood-iron ring is at, and it is actually kind of just pretty much due north of where you are. It’s along the river. You have an idea of where you need to go.

Josie: All right. Well, I suppose we should start there.

Kim: Yeah.

Rhi: So you guys are gonna set off?

Multiple: Yeah.

Rhi: All right.

Josie: And did the notes provide a description of the look of the ring, or are we simply looking for…

Minna: Yes. The ring is sort of an iron ring. It has a pitted surface, like lots of little pockmarks on it. When it’s soaked in blood it becomes smooth until the effects ware off, but we’re looking for a pitted ring, basically.

Josie: All right. We really are starting with a needle in a haystack here, but at least we know where the haystack is.

Minna: Well, we can make some guesses where it might be given its precious nature.

Josie: Perhaps.

Madge: Mm-hmm. It’s not like someone will just ditch a ring that powerful.

Rhi: You head off into the streets, moving away from the Silver Nails base, and without the other people who you’d been riding with and the sound of horse hooves it is really quiet. This is probably the quietest that you’ve ever experienced, all of you kind of growing up in cities. Duskwall especially is a very crowded, cramped city. There are always people, there is always noise, and out here it is quiet enough that you can hear each other breathing.

Josie: Speaking of, Minx’s breathing is kind of hitched. [laughs]

Minna: [concerned moan]

Josie: Minx is just kind of visibly terrified the whole way.

Rhi: You get about half way to the estate, and most of what you’ve seen is empty, ruined buildings. You pass through the ruins of some kind of grand plaza. There was a crumbled fountain in the middle, some sculptures that had collapsed and fallen into rubble, it was clearly some place once very beautiful.

## Content Warning: animal violence, animal death [0:16:57] To skip, go to the next timestamp.

Past the plaza, a few more streets up, you all hear, quite clearly behind you, not footsteps… it’s clearly not the sound of another person walking, it’s soft padding with a little bit of a faint click on the stones as if something with claws were walking. You turn to see scattered among the fallen stones and pillars crouched down low is a pack of about five or six, you can’t tell if they’re feral dogs or if they’re wolves or if they’re a mix of the two, but they are clearly following you and are just as clearly being led by the hound at the front of the pack that isn’t sort of slinking along trying to be stealthy, it is standing there staring at you with its eyes glowing blue.

Minna: [hums nervously]

Josie: But it’s not openly hostile yet?

Rhi: Well, since you rolled a desperate on the engagement roll…

Josie: Ah. [laughs]

Rhi: As you all turn around, the lead dog lets out a howl and all of them move in to attack.

 Josie (as Minx): [yelps]

Kim (as Blaire): Puppies!

Minna (as Myra): Um?!

[laughter]

Josie: I have a sword? I’m just gonna kind of cut wildly at it if it gets close, whatever gets close, just frantically trying to stab at them.

Minna: Uh, yeah, let’s try and shoot one before it gets us.

Madge: Shooty-shoot-shoot.

Kim: I’ll shoot too.

Rhi: So, everybody draws pistols, except Minx. Minna, you were the one who said you wanted to do a shoot first, so you get to start off. This is desperate, so when you make this roll you’ll mark experience, and are you shooting at a regular dog or are you shooting at a spooky glowing dog? There’s only one spooky glowing dog, but…

Minna: I think whichever one looks like it’s most likely to be coming at me, frankly. I think she only has a second to-

Rhi: Okay. Yeah. That will just be one of the regular dogs then.

Minna: Can I push myself?

Rhi: You sure can.

Minna: I’m gonna do that.

Rhi: It’s 2 stress.

Minna: Yeah. These are some good dice. I got a 6!

Kim & Josie: Woo!

Rhi: Tell us how that looks with one of these wolf-dog things charging at you. You take it out. It does not attack you. You just stop it.

Minna: Okay. I think what that looks like is she sees them closing in and she just has a moment of clarity when the adrenaline kicks in, and she whips out a pistol and just shoots.

Rhi: Okay. next we’ll have Phin go. I think that first shot, the dogs hesitated a little bit, so you gained just like an extra second of time. I think for you it’s going to be risky, and probably for Blaire as well.

Madge: Yeah. I’ll go for the glow-eyed dog.

Rhi: Okay.

Madge: Yeah. I’m gonna push myself to give myself another die. That’s a 6.

Rhi: Okay! You hit it square on, and it staggers back, and its mouth moves like it should be yelping but it doesn’t make any sound, and it doesn’t fall the way you would expect it to.

Madge: Hmm. [curiously] Okay…?

Rhi: It is still up, but it staggered back. It’s also not bleeding, really. It looks like it’s damaged, but there’s no blood.

Josie: Is this a vampire dog?

Rhi: [muffled stage whisper] It might be.

Josie: [nervously] Uh…

Minna: [hums nervously]

Madge: It’s definitely not a real dog.

Kim: It’s definitely a good dog.

Madge: No?

[laughter]

Kim: It’s a good boy!

Josie: I feel like this is the definition of a bad dog.

Kim: Good. Boy.

Rhi: Blaire, what are you shooting at, regular dog or spooky dog?

Kim: I’m gonna shoot the spoopy dog. Ha, 1.

Rhi: Okay. So, you take a shot at the spooky dog, but you hesitate a little bit, because you’ve never seen this before.

Kim: [gasps]

Rhi: You’ve only seen ghosts that like, possess people?

Kim: Yeah.

Rhi: This is weird! And new! And different! And oh man, you really don’t wanna shoot it!

Kim: It’s so cool! [laughs]

Josie: [laughs]

Rhi: By the time you shoot it’s moved from where you aimed, and it slams into you, knocks you flat on your back. You are in a desperate position, basically. It’s just got you pinned down.

Kim: Ruh-roh.

Rhi: And, you do however get a very close look at this dog. It’s pinning you down but it’s not breathing, it’s not doing the dog panting thing or anything, it’s just got you pinned and it’s silent, and there’s no blood coming from the wound on its shoulder, and you can see some other wounds that you’re guessing are maybe older that are also just kind of like, they’re not bleeding but they also haven’t healed, they’re just kind of on its body.

Kim: Weird.

Rhi: That’s got you pinned down. Now Minx, the spooky dog that has Blaire pinned is within stabbing range.

Josie: Yeah. I mean, I’m not thinking super clear anyway, so I think I’m gonna go for the stabbing of it.

Rhi: [laughs]

Josie: Minx just is clearly not thinking as smart-ways as the rest of y’all, because she pulls out a sword and then starts stabbing at it, like:

Josie (as Minx): Back! Bac, rancid curr!

Josie: Ah-ha, I got two 2s.

Rhi: Okay… You take a swing at spooky wolf-dog, and you just miss. You just don’t hit it at all. that means you aren’t paying attention to the regular dog that charges in and bites down on your leg.

Kim & Minna: [gasps]

Rhi: That’s gonna be level 2 harm, Dog Bite.

Josie: Oh geez.

Rhi: You can resist it, or as mentioned earlier you can use armor. [laughs]

Josie: Yeah, you know what, I think I am gonna use armor about it.

Rhi: Okay. I’m gonna say for this that the armor is just gonna negate it, like the dog just clamps down on the armor. It hurts a little, but it doesn’t do any lasting damage and you’re kind of able to kick it off.

Josie: Gotcha.

Rhi: On your load, mark down that you’ve used the armor.

Josie: Mm-hmm.

Rhi: Okay! So, current situation: There is a spooky dog pinning Blaire down, four regular dogs still up, one of which just bit Minx. The dogs have kind of, now that Minx sort of kicked the one back, they’re not actively charging anymore. They’re kind of into that circling thing where they’re looking for an opening. So yeah, who wants to do what?

Minna: Uh, worried about Blaire, so:

Minna (as Myra): Blaire! Do you know if there’s anything we can do with this thing?

Kim (as Blaire): I have no earthly idea.

Josie (as Minx): Do you have an unearthly idea?

Kim (as Blaire): Unfortunately, this time no. I know I usually do, but I have never seen these things before.

Josie: [laughs]

Minna: I think I’m going to Attune to the ghost field.

Kim: Oh, interesting.

Rhi: Okay. Are you just trying to look into the ghost field, or are you wanting to do something by attuning?

Minna: I think it’s more of kind of a gathering information on this.

Rhi: Okay. You look into the ghost field. The four regular dogs have sort of ghost field signatures similar to that of humans and other living beings. The dog that has Blaire pinned down, it’s glowing very bright, but it looks stretched out and thin, kind of gaunt or starved. You can tell, it’s bright enough in the ghost field, that this is not a living being, this is a ghost or something else.

Minna: So, I don’t think that attacking it physically is going to do anything.

Rhi: Well, like, when Phin shot it, it reacted, and it’s favoring that leg now.

Minna: You either banish the spirit or you destroy the body so utterly that it can’t do anything.

Josie: So what you’re saying is hit it really, really hard. Can an unusual weapon be something like, I don't know, a flashbang or firecrackers or something?

Rhi: So like, grenades are I think something that have to be custom built at this point, they’re not super regularly available.

Josie: I could do a flashback about it.

Rhi: Sure. I mean, and you guys do have Seeks who is a creator of such things.

Josie: Yes.

Rhi: Yes. If you would like to do a flashback, I’ll say that’s gonna be a 1 stress flashback, and you can acquire I’ll say a flashbang grenade.

Josie: Sweet. Awesome. Yeah, I just wanna throw that into the middle of the other dogs and hopefully they bug out.

Rhi: Okay. Yeah. Go ahead and make a roll for that.

Josie: Okay. Karma’s coming back to bite me. That’s double 1s. [laughs]

Rhi: Okay. Um…

Josie: Makes sense. Minx is still freaking out and shit.

Rhi: I think you just don’t know how to use it properly.

Josie: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Rhi: Like, Seeks was explaining it, but was explaining it very quickly and got distracted by other stuff so you didn’t quite process it, so you like just take it out and throw it and don’t pull a pin or anything, and it just kind of goes [metal settling on the ground “tink” and “thunk” noises].

[laughter]

It lands in the midst of them and they just kind of like look at it, and then look back at you.

Josie: [laughs]

Josie (as Minx): Apparently these are harder than they look.

Madge: I have demolition tools.

Rhi: Uh-huh.

Madge: Sooo, I could do that.

Rhi: I will remind you, it is currently on top of Blaire.

Madge: Yeah. Oh gosh, yeah. Um…

Rhi: [laughs]

Minna: You could wrestle it off of Blaire and then demo it. [laughs]

Madge: Yeah, I’ll do that. I’ll tackle the dog. That’s a 6.

Rhi: You just rush over and tackle the wolf-dog off of Blaire.

Madge: I want to be rolling with it with a stick of dynamite in my hand…

Rhi: Okay!

Madge: …and then like stick the dynamite in its mouth and light it.

Kim: Holy shit.

Rhi: Yes! I am 100% onboard with this. Absolutely.

Madge: [giggles]

Rhi: You’re gonna need to make another roll.

Madge: I’m gonna do Wreck for that one.

Rhi: Mm-hmm! Yep, that is definitely Wreck.

Madge: Two 5s and a 6.

Rhi: Okay, a 6. Yes. So, tell us how this looks, because you succeed.

Madge: So, how it works is, as I’m doing a roll with the dog I’m trying to stick the dynamite in its mouth, and I strike a match on the cobblestones or whatever, and I light the stick, finish shoving it in the dog’s mouth, and scramble away really quick. [laughs]

Rhi: Yeah. The dog kind of whips its head around a little bit, and then there’s an explosion, and then there’s not a dog anymore.

Madge: Yeah. [laughs]

Rhi: And the rest of the dogs just book it.

Madge: I feel bad, but—

[giggling]

Rhi: I mean, it was not gonna do good things to Blaire.

Madge: Yeah.

Rhi: The sound of the explosion sort of echoes a little bit, and then you hear the dogs running off, and then that quiet returns as the four of you are standing / lying in the street.

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Josie: I was expecting vicious creatures and ghosts in succession, but lucky us, we got them both at the same time. Heh.

Madge: Yeah. Why would anything be easy for us?

Josie (as Minx): You know, I suppose that’s a good question.

Rhi: So, you all continue on towards the Narathi estate, and it remains pretty quiet as you are making your way up there. You go past another large manor house, and something in front of this one, it’s not the Narathi estate, it’s not where you’re heading, but there’s something on the ground in front of this estate that kind of catches everybody’s eye. It looks like a body, like remains, and it’s in the, you know, to you all, pretty old fashioned plague doctor uniform. It’s face-down on the ground, one arm still kind of outstretched and clutching a bag, looks like probably a doctor’s bag, and if anybody gets a little closer they can see that there is still a rusted dagger embedded in its back.

Kim: Ooh.

Josie: Hmm.

Minna: Wait, are they facing towards the door or out of the door?

Rhi: Away, it looked like they were coming back out of the manor and fell.

Josie (as Minx): Well, given how old the dagger is, at least hopefully the person who placed it there isn’t here anymore.

Minna (as Myra): Yes. My guess would be that this happened at the time of the plague, which would be 200-some years ago?

Kim (as Blaire): It’s incredibly well-preserved if it’s that old.

Madge (as Phin): Well, I’m not touching it.

Rhi: Am I safe to assume that Blaire has gone over to poke at it a bit?

Kim: Oh yeah.

Josie: [laughs]

Rhi: So Blaire, like, it’s a skeleton. So, yeah, that’s just a thing that’s there.

Josie (as Minx): Well, that is somewhat distressing. I don't know why anyone would attack a doctor. What’s in his bag?

Rhi: You gonna take a look, Blaire?

Kim: Um, sure.

Rhi: Blaire, inside the bag is dust, some shards of broken glass, and a couple of like palm-sized stones that are pretty smooth that have a bunch of runes engraved on them.

Kim: Ooh.

Rhi: They’re not runes that you’re familiar with at all. there’s two stones like that.

Kim: All right, well I’m gonna hang onto the stones.

Madge: That’s a good idea, maybe.

Kim: I’m gonna take both of them.

Rhi: Okay. You guys gonna continue on?

Madge: Yep.

Kim: Yeah.

Rhi: It’s just another few streets after the plague doctor that you reach your destination. The Narathi estate like most of the buildings in The Lost District is a bit crumbled, it’s not fallen completely into ruin, and you can kind of see the remains of the grandeur that it once had. It’s a three story building, kind of sprawling, large windows most of which are broken, the front door is a set of double doors one of which is kind of half fallen off the hinges and sort of hanging inside. It does back up to the river, basically, so this is actually reasonably well-illuminated because you’re within a couple hundred feet of the lightning barrier. You guys gonna head inside, or do you wanna look around the outside at all?

Madge: Yeah, let’s head in.

Kim: Heading in, yep.

Rhi: Okay. you step into the front hall, and it was clearly once a very beautiful place. There’s marble floors, a grand staircase towards the back, doors and archways leading off further into the house, and Minx, this catches your eye immediately. There are paintings on the walls, quite a number of them. There’s probably like five or six just in this front room.

Josie: Ooh. What are they of?

Rhi: It’s kind of interesting, looking at them. some of them are landscapes of the city or The Void Sea, there’s a number that seem like they were probably painted from the back of the house like of the river.

Josie: Mm-hmm.

Rhi: Some of them are portraits. You have been getting into art more, learning more about it, different styles and things, and these are all made by someone with a lot of technical skill, but they don’t seem to have a lot of personality to them.

Josie (as Minx): Well, I shall have to decide on my way out, I think. They’re not particularly great, but they might have value by simply coming from this area.

Josie: Minx for the first time is kind of relaxing a little bit, and clearly distracted by the paintings. [laughs]

Rhi: You’ve got several doors leading off of this room and the stairs heading up. Where do you guys wanna start?

Josie: I wanna look through doors on this floor and see if there’s a parlor or anything.

Madge: I’m gonna head upstairs.

Rhi: Okay.

Josie: [sarcastically] Let’s split up. We’ll cover more ground that way.

Rhi: [holding laughter] I was just about to ask: Are you guys all just gonna walk into this spooky house and immediately split up?

Kim: Yeah. We’re gonna Scooby Doo this shit.

Josie: Yeah, I mean, it’s tradition.

Rhi: All right. So, Minx, you’re gonna go look for a parlor, Phin, you’re heading upstairs. Blaire and Myra, what are you two up to?

Minna: So, my thought is that probably this ring would be wherever the master of the house is, so I’m going to go looking for him and probably start with like where I would think the bedrooms are.

Rhi: Okay. you would imagine that’s probably up on the second or third floor, so you and Phin might be heading in a similar direction to start.

Minna: Sure, sounds good.

Rhi: And Blaire, where are you going?

Kim: I think I might follow Myra if that’s okay.

Minna: Sounds good to me.

Rhi: [laughing] Three of you are heading upstairs and leaving Minx alone on the ground floor.

Josie: [laughing] Okay. Minx got distracted and now she’s alone. Perfect.

Rhi: All right. We’ll start on the ground floor then. We’ll start with Minx. You said you’re looking for a parlor?

Josie: Yes.

Rhi: You’re able to find what you’re guessing is the parlor, it’s kind of towards the front of the house, big windows, some sort of ruined couches and things, more art hanging on the walls. Yeah. Are you looking for anything in particular in here?

Josie: A, any small valuable items, and B, I’m very specifically looking for like secret compartments or levers or the like, like how we broke into that one guy’s house and they had a secret lab, I want to look for more stuff like that.

Rhi: Ah~ Yes. That makes sense. I am gonna say, I mean, yeah, however you wanna do that. It’s probably going to be either Survey or Study.

Josie: I can do a Survey.

Rhi: Hmm. This is gonna be controlled for the moment. There’s not really any immediate threats.

Josie: Six.

Rhi: Six, okay. So, you find both things you were looking for. You’re sort of poking around, and there’s a side table that has a tarnished silver tea set on it, and you pick that up like ‘eh, I could polish this off and probably get a little money for it,’ and then as you set one of the tea cups back down on wood inlay on the top of the sideboard there’s a click.

Josie (as Minx): Huh.

Rhi: You sort of lean down and find a secret compartment that has a small pouch of money in there, of coin, at a quick glance it looks like it’s about 2 coin worth, and a very finely made dagger with some jewels set into the hilt that’s probably worth another couple coin.

Josie: Ooh. Sweet.

Rhi: Okay. so yeah, you find those and you’re feeling pretty pleased with yourself, and then you realize it’s gotten really quiet down here.

Josie (as Minx): Well dears, I do think we’ll at least make out well on this score for once. … Dears? Hello?

Rhi: [grinning] So, I think on that note we’ll cut upstairs. I think the three of you have headed up. Myra and Blaire, you were going to try to find a master bedroom or something?

Kim: yeah.

Rhi: Yeah? Phin, what were you looking for upstairs?

Madge: I’m looking for a study.

Rhi: Okay. Yeah, I think you end up sort of splitting. Phin, you go off, Myra and Blaire, you head in another direction. We’ll follow Phin for the moment. You are able to find a nice study with a lot of, again, sort of similar to the parlor downstairs, a lot of the furniture has fallen into ruin and disrepair, the shelves are full of moldy, rotted books, there’s a very large impressive desk at one end of the room. There are no paintings in here, interestingly.

Madge: I’m gonna start with the desk, and I’m gonna start looking also for secret hatches and the like.

Rhi: Okay. this will also be controlled for you.

Madge: What does a Devil’s Bargain look like?

Rhi: Ooh. Hmm.

Madge: The floor could be worn down and weak underneath the desk.

Rhi: Oh! Yeah! Yeah. The floorboards under the desk are kind of rotted and weak, and they are gonna start to give way under you while you’re searching.

Madge: Okay. that’s a 3. [into hands] Hubris!

Rhi: So, this was controlled, so what happens is you start opening drawers and sort of feeling around, and you move the chair out to the side and step in, and the floorboards kind of splinter under your foot. You know that it’s like okay, I could either risk it and keep searching and hope I find something, or I can back off and hopefully not cause this to completely collapse.

Madge: What if I step back from this desk and throw a mound of moldy books on it to purposefully send it through the floor to break it open.

Rhi: … Yeah. [laughs]

Madge: Cool.

Rhi: Yes. I will allow that.

Madge: That gets me three dice, because I’m looking to Wreck this thing. [laughs]

Rhi: Yeah, yeah.

Madge: [whines]

Rhi: What did you get?

Madge: My highest is a 3.

Rhi: You start throwing books, and the books just don’t seem to have enough wait. That seems to be the problem, that they’re just falling to dust as you throw them.

Madge: [grunts angrily]

Rhi: So…

Madge: Yeah. What I’m gonna do [laughing] is I’m gonna run over Loony Toons style and try stomping on the weak floorboard right at the edge of it.

Rhi: [laughing] Okay. yeah. Go ahead, and you can roll Wreck again, but I think this is gonna be risky now, because you’re now facing the possibility that you could fall down with the desk.

Madge: I know. I know~ [laughs] I got another 3.

Rhi: Oh no! All right. Welp, we knew what was gonna happen here. So yeah, you go over and you jump up and down on the boards and it’s not doing anything, so you jump up and down harder and it’s still not doing anything, so you jump up really hard and come down with both heels and it cracks and splinters, and… I think we cut to Minx who is tentatively creeping back out into the hall. You just hear this cacophony as a desk and Phin and a lot of floorboards come crashing down.

Josie (as Minx): [shrieks]

[laughter]

Josie: I think Minx is gonna throw herself back into the wall in abject terror.

Rhi: So Phin, that is gonna be, as you are kind of sprawled in this mess of broken wood, I think you’re gonna take level 2 harm.

Madge: Yeah.

Rhi: You can resist or you can burn armor.

Madge: I’ll burn my armor for that

Rhi: Okay. You’re just kind of lying there in the heap of desk.

Madge (as Phin): [coughs] I feel like my ears are ringing just a little bit.

Rhi: Yeah. [laughs] So, Blaire and Myra, let’s cut up to you real quick. I think you two are still kind of searching the halls looking for the master bedroom, and you haven’t found it on this floor yet, and you’re kind of heading back towards the stairs to see maybe if you need to go up to the third floor, and then you hear loud crashing sounds, a distant scream, all coming from the ground floor.

Kim (as Blaire): That doesn’t sound good.

Minna (as Myra): No, it doesn’t. do you think that was Phin?

Kim (as Blaire): Honestly, I do. We should check it out.

Minna (as Myra): Yeah… Yeah, let’s go do that.

Rhi: You two head back downstairs. I think they come across Minx still plastered to the wall, eyes wide with terror first.

Josie (as Minx): [exasperated breathing] Ah… gods…

Madge (as Phin): Ugh…

Josie (as Minx): Phin…

Minna (as Myra): Are you all right?

Madge (as Phin): [weakly] Ugh… I fell through the floorboards with a desk, so I’ve been better.

Minna (as Myra): yeah, that’s not great. Do you want a hand up?

Kim (as Blaire): Why did you do that?

Madge (as Phin): Um, so, let’s just- I didn’t do it on purpose. I was walking towards the desk and the floor just gave out under me, completely unprompted.

Minna: [grinning] I love that selective editing.

Madge (as Phin): [laughs] Totally unprompted, it just fell out from under me.

Minna (as Myra): I guess we better be careful when we go back upstairs.

Madge (as Phin): Yeah. It’s really weak up there. You don’t know… you better- Can someone just help me up, please?

Minna (as Myra): Yeah.

Minna: Myra offers her a hand up.

Madge (as Phin): Thank you.

Madge: And she’ll get up.

Rhi: Yeah. The desk however, Phin, as you wanted is shattered into many pieces.

Madge: Yay!

Josie (as Minx): Blaire, can you give me a favor real quick?

Kim (as Blaire): Mm-hmm?

Josie (as Minx): And check- My soul hasn’t left my body, has it?

Rhi: [suppressing giggles]

Minna: [quietly] Oh my God…

Kim (as Blaire): Uh… No? You’re still breathing, definitely.

Josie (as Minx): Everything’s fine. Everything’s fine.

Kim (as Blaire): You’re good.

Josie (as Minx): Phin’s okay, I’m okay, everything’s fine.

Kim (as Blaire): Yeah. Everything’s cool.

Josie (as Minx): We are not splitting up again, just so you all know.

Kim (as Blaire): Aw.

Minna (as Myra): That’s fine with me, although we had better be careful.

Madge (as Phin): I’m splitting away from the group to dig through this debris.

 Rhi: Okay.

Madge (as Phin): I got a 6! [laughs]

Rhi: So Phin, as the others are talking you start digging through, and Myra makes it like two steps in your direction before you like straighten up triumphantly with a ring of keys in your hand.

Madge (as Phin): Ha-ha! [laughs]

Rhi: The keys are not labeled, but they’re all fairly heavy looking important keys. I’ll say there’s five of them.

Madge: Does one of them look like it could be a skeleton key?

Rhi: Yeah, you know what, yes. I’ll say that one of them is.

Madge: Cool.

Josie (as Minx): Well that is quite fortunate.

Madge (as Phin): Yeah.

Josie (as Minx): But now we need to find something worth opening.

Madge (as Phin): Well, basements or master bedrooms or something like that will probably be locked, especially if people have been carted off from here after they died, they’ll lock it to keep looters out.

Josie (as Minx): Indeed. I was looking for secret compartments in case they had any knowledge on what the ring was.

Madge (as Phin): And how’d that go?

Josie (as Minx): Uh, I found some coin, and then you dropped in.

Madge (as Phin): All right. So, let’s head upstairs and try to find that master bedroom, yeah?

Josie (as Minx): Sounds fine to me.

Rhi: You make your way up to the third floor since Blaire and Myra pretty much determined the master bedroom didn’t seem to be on the second floor. You get up to the third floor, start looking around, and you do eventually find what you’re guessing probably leads to the master bedroom as it’s a set of very finely carved double doors, the handles of which have been chained shut and locked with a padlock.

Kim: Let me get at that.

Rhi: Well, I mean, Phin has that ring of keys, so you can check that first.

Kim: Oh, right.

Madge: Yeah. Let’s try the keys. Use item, skeleton key.

Rhi: Yeah. [laughs]

Josie (as Minx): I will admit it’s somewhat strange opening locked doors the normal way.

Rhi: The skeleton key doesn’t work on this, because it’s not like a padlock that’s part of the doors in the house necessarily, but one of the other keys does open it up and you’re able to pull the chains off. You gonna open up the doors?

Madge: Yep.

Rhi: All right. Phin, I assume you’re doing the opening.

Madge: [nervously] Yeah. [laughs]

Rhi: So you pull open the doors, and a skeleton kind of falls onto your legs.

Minna (as Myra): Oh--

Josie (as Minx): [howls in fright]

Kim (as Blaire): Ah!

Madge (as Phin): Okay! All right! Okay! Okay! I’m done! Nope!

Josie (as Minx): Minx is very suddenly about 20 feet away.

Rhi: [laughs]

Madge (as Phin): I shake my legs. I like kick the skeleton off.

Rhi: Yeah. It’s not like actively grabbing on you. It seemed like it was up against the door.

Madge (as Phin): It’s not an alive skeleton, but it still freaks me out!

Rhi: Oh yeah. Yeah. Basically you opened the door and it seemed like it was kind of up against the door, and when you opened it up it just fell forward, and it’s now in a sort of dusty, not really held together heap on the ground.

Madge (as Phin): [huffs]

Rhi: Those of you who are still close to the door, so everyone but Minx who’s now at the far end of the hall, can see that the inside of the door has scratch marks.

Kim: Oh shit.

Madge: Oh, this is pleasant.

Minna: [with pity] Oh…

Madge: Phin’s gonna step over the skeleton, [laughs] and start looking around the bedroom.

Josie: Minx will very slowly enter the room after everyone else has.

Josie (as Minx): Listen, I know our profession is a hard one, but it baffles me how the rest of you are so much less phased by this.

Minna (as Myra): I mean, it’s nothing attacking us.

Madge (as Phin): I worked with fish guts every day from when I was three.

Josie (as Minx): I don’t see how fish guts translates to human skeletons in haunted houses, but I’ll take your word for it.

Madge (as Phin): It drops a layer of not being phased by any shit.

Josie (as Minx): [deep exhale]

Rhi: All right. So, how do you guys wanna go about searching the room here?

Madge: If there’s a vanity or something I’ll go to that and start searching.

Rhi: Do you guys just all wanna do a group action to search the room as a whole?

Players: Yeah.

Rhi: Okay. Who is going to lead the group action?

Josie: I have 6 stress open.

Minna: Okay.

Rhi: Yeah, so just let me know what skill you’re all rolling.

Josie: I’m doing Survey.

Minna: Survey sounds good~

Josie: I got a 1.

Minna: I got a 5!

Kim: I got a… 1.

Madge: I got a 6.

Rhi: Six, okay. The result is a 6. Minx, you’re gonna take 2 points of stress.

Josie: Mm-hmm.

Rhi: You guys kind of fan out across the room and start looking around, opening drawers, checking wardrobes. Phin, you don’t find anything in the vanity but then you go to the bedside table and you find in a drawer an old, kind of cracked, but still intact journal. It appears to have been the personal journal of Omid Narathi who was the lord of the Narathi house at the time of the plague. Some of it’s hard to read just because of the age, like some pages stick together and you don’t want to pull them apart lest the whole thing crumble, you know, the pages have yellowed pretty badly, the ink is hard to make out at some points, but you are able to get the general gist of it. A lot of it is just the very boring daily diary reporting of things.

Madge: Mm-hmm.

Rhi: But then, kind of through the last several months, there’s mention of the plague, of deaths, of people getting sick. He mentions that he has dismissed his entire staff for fear of contamination and illness. Then, there’s sort of some comments as he’s going that Yara doesn’t seem to care at all about the plague and everything, he just keeps working at his art as if somehow that’s going to be worthwhile or profitable even when all this is over. The last few pages, the handwriting gets really bad and it becomes even more difficult to read, but you’re able to pick out that Lord Omid contracted the plague, and the last entry is just kind of scrawled across a page of ‘he locked me in here,’ ‘he’s going to let me die and take the estate,’ things along those lines.

Madge: Mm-hmm.

Josie: Mmm.

Madge (as Phin): Well, that certainly worked out for Yara, a big, empty estate in a quarantined district that no one can ever reach again. Huh.

Josie (as Minx): I suspect there are many similar tales around this district.

Madge (as Phin): Yup.

Rhi: There is mention kind of earlier on when he’s complaining about Yara’s painting, he does make mention a few times of Yara being locked up in his studio all day.

Josie (as Minx): And there’s nothing hidden in the bedroom?

Rhi: You do find, sort of collectively as you’re doing your search, you find another 3 coin worth of money and jewelry and valuables.

Madge: Cool.

Josie (as Minx): I think perhaps each of you should take one since I helped myself earlier. I think the studio is our next destination.

Madge (as Phin): Yeah.

Minna (as Myra): Yes. I think it’s worth checking out.

Kim (as Blaire): Yeah.

Rhi: So, basically at the other end of the third floor, you find another bedroom and next to it is a door that is locked. The bedroom is covered in the same paintings that you had seen downstairs. There’s also a lot of books in here.

Minna: What kind of books?

Rhi: The pages are pretty badly damaged, some of the covers are damaged beyond being able to recognize them, but for where you can read the titles some of them are like art books, art history, technique, that sort of thing. There’s also a number of occult arcane books. Some of them you recognize the titles, Myra, as ones that you came across in the library in your research. The books that he has of the arcane seem to relate to either ideas of sorcery which is sort of a catch-all for different types of magic that aren’t really as well understood, and there’s a number of histories, and there’s a stack of books that are religious in nature. They seem to be affiliated with the Church of Ecstasy.

Josie: That sounds like a fun church.

Rhi: Yeah, Church of the Ecstasy of the Flesh. It’s the state religion.

Minna (as Myra): It’s fun except for the part where some people volunteer to be literally hollowed out and purified, quote unquote “purified.”

Josie (as Minx): Ah. That’s less fun.

Rhi: Yeah. They find the soul to be evil and an abomination. They revere the physical body. In some ways it leads to very good things, in other ways it leads to people having their souls removed from their bodies.

Josie: Ah.

Rhi: It’s a mixed bag. There’s a small number of books that seem to be religious in nature, and those have additional pieces of paper stuck in them like marking pages and things.

Josie: Okay.

Rhi: In the bedroom there is another door that is locked.

Josie: We have a skeleton key.

Madge: We do.

Rhi: Phin, you’re able to go over, open up the door, this does appear to be the studio. There’s a number of canvases leaning up against the wall, more paintings hanging on the walls in here, there’s a table that seems to be covered in paint and paintbrushes and other art supplies. In the middle of the room there is an easel with a half-finished painting on it. It’s a weird painting. It looks like he was painting while looking into the ghost field. Everything’s very washed out, and then there’s kind of like bright sections of vague humanoid forms where there were spirits.

Josie: Hmm.

Rhi: Kind of in the back of the room is a large pile of rags, basically, it looks like. In front of the half-finished painting is another skeleton, collapsed on the floor, curled in on itself.

Josie: Oh dear. Minx is gonna kind of softly give the skeleton a wide birth, but go over to the painting and just sort of gingerly tap at it a few times.

Rhi: It’s a painting.

Josie: All right.

Rhi: Yeah, painting doesn’t do anything.

Josie: I’m gonna take this one. It’s the only unique piece in this entire place.

Rhi: [chuckles] I assume everybody else is kind of moving into the room?

Madge: Mm-hmm.

Minna: I’m gonna go look at the skeleton.

Rhi: Okay. Myra, you look at the skeleton, and it’s not exactly in the fetal position but it’s a little bit curled up and has both arms kind of curled up to its chest. You can see on one hand there is a ring—

Minna: A pitted iron ring?

Rhi: Indeed. Just as you notice that, the pile of rags in the back stirs.

Kim: [deep inhale]

Minna: [seethes] I don’t suppose that’s just a rat, is it?

Rhi: It’s a very large pile of rags, and it shifts and starts to rise.

Josie: Take it and let’s go. We should be leaving.

Kim: I want to Attune!

Rhi: Okay. Blaire, you very quickly look into the ghost field, and when you do that you realize with no small amount of horror exactly what this thing is. You’ve heard about these, you’ve never actually encountered them.

Kim: Uh-huh.

Rhi: What you see is a sort of faint outline of a large being…

Kim: Okay.

Rhi: …inside of which are the glowing signatures of probably about a dozen spirits that are trapped within this outline.

Kim: Oh fuck.

Rhi: You realize that this is a harvester. You’ve never encountered one before, but you’ve read about them. they are creatures that devour ghosts, but rather than consuming them and destroying them the ghosts are just sort of held within them. harvesters will just consume more and more spirits becoming more bloated and powerful with life essence.

Kim: Oh shit.

Rhi: They’re quite dangerous, but even if you managed to kill one, killing one unleashes all of the ghosts inside of it, so you then have however many starving, angry ghosts that were trapped spilling out.

Kim: I guess I could maybe \do with help\. Can I tell, can I make a guess at how many spirits this harvester has, or no?

Minna: You said a dozen?

Rhi: Yeah, like a dozen, like 10 to 12.

Kim: Okay. Ten to 12 at once might be hard to handle.

Rhi: Yeah. It’s a lot. So, you’ve got Blaire’s eyes glowing looking at this thing, her job probably drops. Minx is going uh, grab it and go, grab it and go. Phin, what are you doing?

Madge: Uh- [laughs] I am backing up and clutching my spiritbane charm.

Kim: I don't know if that’s gonna do anything. This is like a mega ghost.

Madge: I am still trying. [laughs]

Minna: Yeah. I think Myra’s doing the exact same thing.

Rhi: Nobody’s grabbed the ring?

Minna: Myra’s going to grab the ring, but she’s clutching a spiritbane charm as she does.

Rhi: Yeah. You are able to wrench the ring off. As soon as you’re holding the ring it feels kind of oddly warm, and for a second you just really wanna slip it on your finger, but the moment passes.

Josie: Cool. We’ve got the one ring with us. That’s gonna be great.

Minna: I mean, every person we knew of who has seemed to possess it was later arrested for cannibalism~

Josie: Hooray. [laughs]

Rhi: Meanwhile, the harvester has risen up to its full height of about eight feet.

Kim: Hoo.

Rhi: It mostly appears to be just sort of a very large humanoid that’s draped in rags. There’s not really a face, but there are two glowing points of light vaguely where you would expect eyes to be, and it kind of swings around and is going to start advancing on whoever is closest, which I think is probably Blaire.

Kim: Ack! Okay.

Josie: [laughs]

Rhi: What are you all gonna do?

Kim: Oh, hmm-hmm, what can I [inaudible mumbling]

Josie: I see it as just an inanimate pile of rags, right?

Rhi: Yeah. I don't know that Blaire has explained what this thing is yet.

Kim: Will one of my lightning hooks harm it? I imagine it would, right?

Rhi: It might do something. You can give it a shot.

Kim: All right. I’m gonna mark off a lightning hook on my inventory. I’m gonna hold my lightning hook at the ready.

Rhi: So, Blaire has just whipped out her lightning rod and is aiming it at this creature which is continuing to advance on her. The one thing that you’ve got going for you is that it is not speedy. It does not appear to be moving very quickly at the moment.

Kim: Oh, good.

Rhi: It’s just sort of lumbering towards Blaire.

Josie: Can I- I don't know. Minx is kind of terrified right now.

Rhi: Yeah.

Josie: Is anyone else intending to grab Blaire, or should I do it?

Madge: Um, how close am I to Blaire?

Rhi: I think you guys can all- It’s not a huge, huge room, so you guys can all be relatively close to each other.

Madge: Okay, then I’ll run forward and grab Blaire.

Rhi: What are you doing once you’ve grabbed her, pulling her back?

Madge: Yeah. I’m gonna start running backwards, because it is time to go! [laughs]

Kim (as Blaire): No!

Josie (as Minx): Yeah.

Rhi: So Phin grabs Blaire and pulls her protesting out of the room, and I think when you guys sort of pass back through the door there’s this loud chorus of shrieking as if every ghost within the harvester just screamed, and it starts pursuing you. It’s moving a little faster now. You all make it through the bedroom out into the hall, and you hear a crash as it just kind of breaks through the wall Kool-Aid man style.

Josie: Oh geez. Throw shit at it? To slow it down and keep running.

Rhi: Yeah, so you’re throwing, knocking stuff over to try and get into its way, you hear stuff, it sounds like things are just kind of being crushed underfoot. As you guys reach the top of the stairs there’s another scream. Who’s at the back of the group?

Minna: It might be Phin. Didn’t Phin push Blaire out?

Kim: She kind of pulled me, so I have to imagine—

Madge: Yeah.

Minna: Okay. If you’re being pulled, I’m also down to be at the back of the group.

Rhi: All right! Myra volunteered. It lets out another chorus of screams and sends a lightning bolt of electroplasm—

Kim: What the fuck? It can do that?

Rhi: You could too, it’s a Whisper ability. It sends an arc of lightning, electroplasmic lightning arching through the ghost field and it slams into Myra.

Madge: [whines] No~

Rhi: Myra, you’re gonna take level 2 harm, Electrocuted.

Minna: I am gonna resist that. That’s a 5.

Rhi: Okay. you’ll take 1 point of stress. It’ll drop down to level 1, Zapped.

Josie: Can I light a lantern and throw it at it to try and catch it on fire? [laughs]

Rhi: Yeah. You can definitely try and do that.

Josie: I wanna do that thing.

Rhi: All right. What are you gonna roll to do that thing?

Josie: I’m gonna do a Skirmish.

Rhi: This is gonna be risky.

Josie: I don't know why I’m trying to do things tonight. I got a 2 and a 3.

Rhi: Oh no! [laughs] So, you light the lantern, you throw it, it hits the harvester, and the rags do burst into flame…

Josie: Uh-huh.

Rhi: …but it doesn’t really seem to have much of an effect, it just keeps walking towards you and now it’s on fire and is setting the hallway around it on fire.

Josie (as Minx): Okay! Just keep running!

Minna (as Myra): Phin! How did you get the floor to break earlier? Can we do it again?

Madge (as Phin): Uh, it wasn’t on purpose!

Rhi: Or, you guys could run back to the study where Phin fell through and just jump down that way.

Minna: Shit, that’s right.

Josie: Oh, yeah, that’s a thing we can do.

Madge: Yeah, let’s do that. [laughs]

Josie: Yeah.

Rhi: To specify what the consequence was of that bad roll, I’m going to be starting a clock for—

Josie: Place burns down?

Rhi: Yeah, “the house goes up in flames”, and we’ll make that a 6. So, you guys run to the study. You can either just jump and take level 1 harm, or you can make some kind of roll to climb down more carefully but it’s gonna take a little more time, and you still have this thing coming up behind you setting everything on fire.

Madge: I’ll go down carefully and I’ll do a Finesse roll for that.

Rhi: Okay.

Madge: Oh, I also have climbing gear.

Rhi: Oh, wonderful.

Josie: That’s a thing.

Rhi: Yeah. You can set up climbing gear, and then if you just leave it everybody else can climb down it as well.

Madge: Yeah, and I’ll do that.

Rhi: Okay. yeah, so go ahead and make your roll.

Madge: That’s a 2.

Rhi: Okay. so you tie off the rope, throw it down, swing yourself down on the rope and start climbing down, and you’re about half way down. The floorboard beam that you had tied the rope to also gives way, so you fall, the climbing gear comes down with you, and everybody else is not gonna be able to take advantage of it.

Kim: Ugh.

Madge: Okay.

Rhi: But, you’re down, and I’m gonna say that with the time it took for you to secure that and then climb down, the house is more on fire.

Kim: Whoops.

Josie: [groans]

Madge: Great.

Rhi: Yep. Who’s next?

Josie: I think- I don't know. I think Minx might just take the jump.

Rhi: Okay. I think it’s just gonna be Bruised, you just kind of land in a roll and get banged up a little bit.

Josie: Okay.

Rhi: Minx is now on the first floor.

Minna: I’m going to attempt to Prowl.

Rhi: Okay.

Minna: That’s a 4.

Rhi: Okay. you also are able to climb down. You don’t get hurt, but it takes a little while, because you’re trying to be careful about it, so we’re gonna tick that clock up again. The harvester is closing in and setting everything on fire. There’s just a lot of fire.

Josie: [nervous noises]

Rhi: Blaire, you are the only one still upstairs. How do you wanna get down?

Kim: Am I rolling anything to just jump?

Rhi: If you’re just gonna jump and take the level 1 harm, no, you don’t roll.

Kim: All right. I’ll take the harm.

Rhi: Okay. yeah, you also just take Bruised. What I’m picturing is like everyone else is kind of scrambling down Blaire is the last one, she kind of hesitates and looks back just as the harvester comes in the doorway, and she’s just like ‘fuck this!’

Kim: Yep!

Josie: [laughs]

Rhi: And jumps down. [laughs] All right! You guys are all on the first floor. The ceiling above you is starting to smolder.

Josie (as Minx): Let’s get out of here. Let’s keep going.

Kim: Yep!

Madge: Yeah, we’re going.

Rhi: I think at this point you’re able to book it out of the house. You made it to the first floor. You burst out the doors and take off running into The Lost District. How far are you gonna run before slowing down?

Minna: Far!

Josie: Yeah, as far as we can.

Rhi: [laughs] All right. So eventually you guys do have to slow down a bit, because none of you are marathon sprinters. Phin is probably still doing okay, but-

Madge: Yay.

[chuckles]

Rhi: You guys slow down and look back and you can see flames sort of licking up over the tops of buildings and a pillar of smoke rising up, but nothing seems to be following you, so you make your way back through the district to the Silver Nails encampment, and a couple of the Silver Nails seem to be on patrol outside walking together. When they see you they both kind of reach for their side arms, and then—

Josie (as Minx): It’s just us. It’s the tourists.

Rhi (as Guard): Holy shit. You’re alive?!

Josie (as Minx): yeah! Yeah.

Madge (as Phin): Yep.

Kim (as Blaire): yeah.

Rhi: One of the guards is Zuri who Blaire rode over with, and she just heaves a huge sigh.

Rhi (as Zuri): Damn it. I lost another bet.

Josie: [laughs]

Minna (as Myra): Did you bet against us?

Madge (as Phin): I would’ve.

Rhi: She just gestures at Phin. [laughs]

Kim (as Blaire): Seriously?

Madge (as Phin): Yeah.

Rhi (as Zuri): Yeah. I was not expecting you all to come back. We heard gunshots a little while ago, and then nothing, and figured that was probably it.

Josie (as Minx): To be fair, there was a harvester.

Rhi (as Zuri): A- I’m sorry. There’s a harvester?!

Kim (as Blaire): [stretched] Yeah.

Minna (as Myra): I wouldn’t go… uh, we’ll tell you where the mansion is. I wouldn’t go there.

Rhi: [laughing] I think the other guard kind of leans over like:

Rhi (as Guard): Is that smoke?

Minna (as Myra): It’s on fire.

Kim (as Blaire): It- All right, yeah, it’s on fire. We- We set it on fire.

Rhi (as Guard) The harvester? The harvester’s on fire?

Kim (as Blaire): Yeah.

Josie: [fights a giggle]

Minna (as Myra): I believe the thought was that it might help slow it down, but I don’t think it worked out that way.

Rhi (as Guard): N-Nope. No.

Kim (as Blaire): Most of us were panicked.

Rhi (as Guard): I- You know, I—

Minna (as Myra): Harvester comes after you, you just do whatever you can.

Josie (as Minx): Usually fire kills things that aren’t ghosts.

Rhi (as Guard): I understand the logic. I do, but…

Minna (as Myra): Oh God. Is it just gonna stay on fire?

Rhi (as Guard): I don’t know… Why don’t you come over here?

Rhi: They kind of bring you around to the front of the building.

Rhi (as Guard): Wait here. I’m gonna go let Sazari know about the situation.

Minna: I think that once we’re alone, Myra’s gonna turn to Minx and be like:

Minna (as Myra): Oh God, what if we’ve burned down The Lost District?

Josie (as Minx): I mean, to be fair, it was already lost.

Rhi: So, you hear some yelling from inside, kind of indistinctly, and then four of the Nails come tearing out like with their horses and just go riding off into the district, and then behind them Sazari comes out.

Rhi (as Sazari): This is why we don’t usually bring people here.

Josie (as Minx): That is entirely fair and justified, and we would like to be leaving promptly.

Rhi (as Sazari): [heavy sigh]

Minna (as Myra): Whenever you are next crossing.

Rhi (as Sazari): Oh no, we’re gonna have you head out right now.

Rhi: Sazari and a few others come out with their horses and pull you guys up onto the horses and you go riding back across The Deathlands. By this point it’s just barely past dawn, so you can see like just the faint end of the visible sun in the sky. You ride back to the point in the lightning barrier. This time Sazari is the one to go and fiddle with something and create the gap. The horses jump through, and then Sazari basically lights a flare and sticks it in the ground at the river bank.

Rhi (as Sazari): Someone should be by in a couple hours. We kind of have to go deal with the situation now, so um, good luck.

Rhi: And then they head out, they all mount back up and jump back through. It’s not a couple hours. You guys have to like hang out there for about an hour, but you’re inside the lightning barrier so it’s not too bad. The ferry comes back across with two Silver Nails on it kind of pulling it across, and they get you back to Duskwall.

Josie (as Minx): Oh, precious Duskvol, precious shitty Duskvol, I never thought I’d be so glad to see you.

[laughter]

Rhi: So yeah. You guys made it back. You got the item you were looking for plus a good deal of money. You may or may not have set half the district on fire, but you know, not where anybody that you care about lives.

Madge: Yeah. No one lives there.

Rhi: There’s a few Silver Nails.

Josie: Except The Silver Nails, but they can just move.

Madge: Yeah!

Rhi: Yeah. They can leave. They got horses. They’re mobile.

## Downtime [1:07:41]

Rhi: All right! So, downtime activities. Let’s start with Minx.

Josie: I mean, I did take like that half-finished painting, so like while I’m indulging in the art gallery and getting that fenced and stuff like that I just keep flashing back to all the paintings in the house and what it took to just get that one painting, and just feeling myself running down the halls past all these paintings again, and just generally having a very bad time with flashbacks.

Rhi: Yeah, and it’s not very relaxing, it doesn’t get rid of a lot of stress.

Josie: Nope. [laughs]

Rhi: So Minx is not having the best time ever at an art gallery.

Josie: Nuh-uh.

Rhi: Myra, what are you up to?

Minna: So, does everyone just kind of agree that Myra takes care of the ring?

Madge: Yeah.

Josie: Mm-hmm.

Minna: Okay. I think that Myra is left holding the ring when everyone else is kind of broken up after their harrowing adventure. She just like turns the ring over in her hand and just thinks back to all the terrible stories she’s heard about it, like cannibalism and a sorcerer killing his own son to make it potentially, the fact that it draws on human blood to do what it wants to do… and she just shivers a little bit at the idea of anybody actually using it. She heads straight for the vault. She climbs down the ladder and finds, I think there’s probably some drawers in there somewhere, and she puts it in a drawer all on its own and closes it up, and climbs hastily back up and just breathes a sigh of relief when the vault locks behind her.

Rhi: All right. Uh… so you guys have that hanging out in your base now. Phin.

Madge: Yeah!

Rhi: What do you get up to?

Madge: Phin is actually reading books [laughs] about certain subjects so that she can upgrade her Insight a little more. I’m trying to think of what kind of books she would read, but she’s reading, improving it basically. It’s rough, but it helps.

 Rhi: Okay. yeah, so Phin just swipes some books from Blaire or Myra’s stash and- [laughs]

Madge: Yep.

Minna: She doesn’t have to swipe it. She can just ask.

Madge: Nope. I swipe.

Rhi: [laughs] Listen. Listen. … You’re thieves.

Madge: I have a thing!

[giggling]

Rhi: Okay, and Blaire.

Kim: Yeah. Blaire’s held up in her room really intently poking around at these weird rocks.

Rhi: Okay. you do some like, you go digging through your books, because you’re like I’ve gotta figure out what these runes mean.

Kim: Yeah.

Rhi: You’re able to find in one of the older books that you have some symbols that look similar to these runes that seem to be about healing and protection, and there’s one that the best translation is like ‘leech,’ of like drawing something out.

Kim: Ooh.

Rhi: The idea that you get is that maybe they were trying to use these as part of their treatment of the plague.

Kim: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Rhi: But you’re not sure like how they would have worked or if they would have worked at all, but you at least managed to kind of figure out their purpose in your study, and you’re like really proud of yourself after working it all out.

Kim: Cool.

Rhi: I think where we’ll wrap up is, you know, after you guys kind of all go to take care of your various things, you come back together as you so often do at The Hound’s Paw, and you guys can sit down at your table, and Rigney comes over with your drinks and is eyeing you all looking a little worried.

Rhi (as Rigney): Uh, hey, is everything all right? You look a little shaken, collectively.

Josie (as Minx): Oh, we’re just- Things got tight for a moment, but we’re fine.

Rhi (as Rigney): All right. Well…

Rhi: He reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope.

Rhi (as Rigney): Those reporter friends of yours dropped by again. They wanted to know if you could come up to their offices next time you had a chance.

Rhi: He sets the envelope down on the table and heads back to the bar.

Josie (as Minx): [sighs] That should be much more pleasant and normal.

Minna: Waits for that to be absolutely not the case. [snickers]

Rhi: I just smiled the biggest smile.

Josie & Minna: [giggles]

Rhi: Whoever opens up the envelope, it’s just a quick note from Lani that says: “Found some new leads, need your help, stop by as soon as you can.”

## Outro

Rhi: Thanks for listening. The Magpies will be back in two weeks. In the meantime, follow us on Twitter at @magpies\_pod.

The Magpies podcast is hosted and produced by Rhi. Follow me on Twitter at @rhiannon42.

Blaire Culhane is played by Kim Kogut. Follow her on Twitter at @kimdianajones.

Minx is played by Josie. Follow her on Twitter at @DragonGirlJosie, and watch her art streams at  picarto.tv/DragonGirlJosie.

Myra Keel is played by Minna. Follow her on Twitter at @mynaminnarr.

Phin Haig is played by Madge. Follow her on Twitter at @madgequips.

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## Blooper [1:13:28]

Minna: [laughing] Oh God! Is it just gonna stay on fire?!

Rhi: [laughs] Was that in or out of character?

Minna: Out of character, because Myra wouldn’t be laughing about it.

Rhi: Yeah. [laughs, catches her breath] I haven’t decided.

Minna: Okay. Let me calm down and ask that in character.

Rhi: Yeah, because I do have—

Minna: But I have to stop giggling at some point before I speak as Myra again.