

[Here to Judge- Episode 5 ]

Cast:

Priya Hall

Leila Navabi

Robin Morgan

[Here to Judge Theme Song]

Priya: Welcome to Here to Judge where we scour the internet to dissect dilemmas and decide who's to blame. Here to Judge today is me, Priya Hall.

Leila: Me, Leila Navabi.

Robin: And me, Robin Morgan.

Robin: 'Am I the asshole for proposing to my girlfriend with a videogame relic instead of a ring and refusing to buy a ring after?' My girlfriend and I met in a Skyrim meme page in 2014 and have been together for six years. Last week was our anniversary and I decided I wanted to propose. Since we met via Skyrim, I thought I'd propose with the Amulet of Mara, which is the symbol that someone is ready for marriage. She doesn't really wear jewellery or anything and has never shown me a ring she likes when we've talked about marriage so I thought it would be sweet to have something that brought us together. I set up this whole picnic with our favourite things and when I proposed she looked sad and asked about a ring. I told her I thought the Amulet of Mara was sweet because we met via Skyrim. The other day she sat me down and she said she thought the Amulet was very sweet and she liked it, but she wanted to go ring shopping. I told her I'd already bought the necklace and I didn't see any reason for a ring since I didn't propose with one. She said she appreciated the sweet gesture but she really wanted a traditional ring. We got in an argument and it's been tense for the last few days. Am I the asshole?'

Leila: Mm? Is she meant to wear this thing or what is it? I'm confused.

Robin: It's the Amulet of Mara.

Priya: An amulet's a necklace isn't it? Is an amulet a necklace?

Leila: I don't know what that is. I'm going to Google amulet because I've never heard of that before.

Robin: It's the Amulet of Mara, that's the only information I'm giving you and you need to decide whether someone is an asshole.

Leila: Oh wait it's a good luck charm. It looks like a dream catcher vibe. It looks like something they would sell in Camden Market in one of those white people hippy shops.

Robin: I love the disdain that you said that with.

Leila: You know exactly what I mean though don't you?

Priya: Yeah, 100%.

Robin: Yeah totally, it's sort of, it comes with free incense.

Leila: Yes.

Priya: And it will turn your skin green if it comes in contact with it for too long.

Robin: Oh yeah, big time.

Leila: Oh gosh if she's got to like be with this piece for a very long time I would just like...

Robin: Do you mean the man or the item? [Laughs]

Leila: No I mean the amulet, with this piece.

Robin: With this piece of ass?

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: Yeah [laughs].

Priya: Jesus, Leila's changed.

Robin: Really sexist.

Leila: I just don't know what to call an amulet. The only thing you can call it is 'amulet' isn't it?

Robin: The Amulet of Mara, I prefer the full title please.

Leila: Who's Mara?

Priya: I don't know anything about Skyrim but how detailed is it that a videogame has a specific amulet for someone who's ready to be betrothed?

Robin: Very true. I've never played it. I think it was supposed to be this incredibly immersive thing where people would get sort of lost in the game. Like sort of you'd spend just an entire day playing it and you could clearly meet people, you know, on a meme page and then badly propose six years later. Would you be disappointed if somebody? Because it's quite sweet when you think about it. Like it's specific proposal based on where they met. And it's like, and it's about the symbol of the Amulet of Mara is the symbol of marriage.

Leila: I'll tell you what concerns me, is that he wants to get married to her but clearly he doesn't know her well enough to get her something she likes. And I think that that is in itself, if you're proposing to someone, you ought to do it with something you know that they like and not something that's just sort of, do you know what I mean?

Robin: Mm.

Leila: Clearly they don't know each other very well.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: What do you think Priya?

Priya: I agree. Like also getting aggy when she sits him down and calmly explains her point of view. And then immediately taking to Reddit.

Robin: Yeah.

Priya: It's not a good sign for a marriage I don't think. I don't know much about marriage but I feel like that's not great.

Leila: Yeah.

Robin: Did she say yes? I don't think she said anything.

Priya: Yeah she's got the amulet right so the deed is done.

Robin: Yeah sure. She's been cursed with the Amulet of Mara.

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: How much is an Amulet of Mara? That's what I'm going to look up.

Priya: Fuck knows?

Robin: It's an excellent question.

Leila: Right, hang on. Amulet of Mara, purchase. Right they're like 50 quid off Etsy.

Robin: OK.

Priya: That's not enough I don't think.

Leila: Or £14 off Etsy.

Priya: [Laughs] Definitely not enough.

Leila: Do you remember that £1 Poundland ring thing?

Robin: Oh yeah. It was a good PR thing about a year and a half ago for Valentine's where basically they brought out a £1 engagement ring. And the idea was in the same way that some people propose with like Haribo rings of like, I can't afford it now but this is a symbol of how much I love you and I will buy you one. But I think, is there a twist to that

story? Like did those like start burning people? Or am I just imagining that?

Leila: Yeah I think something happened. Yeah, not to be libellous about anything but allegedly they did start to give people a chemical reaction and then you have to get it cut off and stuff.

Priya: That sounds about right.

Leila: I think that ultimately they're not right for each other because it does not to be this big of an issue. They could go out and buy a ring, like 100%.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: He could take her out.

Robin: But they met a Skyrim meme page. That doesn't happen often. You need to cling onto that, I think.

Priya: Match made in heaven.

Leila: Hang on. What is Skyrim? I'm going to look at it because, oh OK, so Skyrim is a war sort of thing.

Priya: Aren't they dragons? I've seen the memes but never played the game, I don't know anyone who plays the game.

Robin: You're too worried you'll fall in love.

Priya: Yeah that's it [laughs] Pretty solid at the minute, don't want to get distracted.

Robin: [Laughs] I stay away from the meme pages in case I fall too deeply.

Priya: Just on the off chance.

Robin: [Laughs]

Leila: Looks Game of Thrones-y I guess. Vikings. I don't know. I don't think he's an asshole. I just think they're not compatible. I'd say take this as a sign.

Robin: I think Priya's point of the fact that as soon as there's a slight disagreement he jumps on Reddit. I think that that's an asshole behaviour.

Leila: Yeah it is.

Robin: But who knows, maybe the next episode will be 'My fucking shit boyfriend bought the Amulet of Mara'. I have the update.

Leila: Right.

Robin: 'Hello everyone, here's a link to my previous post from a month ago in which I proposed to my girlfriend with the Amulet of Mara from Skyrim and I was a big asshole (as many of you pointed out) because she wanted a more traditional ring. Well here's an update for you. We got married! I realised pretty quickly after posting my original post that I was the asshole and my feelings were hurt because I'm an idiot. So we picked out a ring together, and in that we decided hey, let's just elope. So we both picked out a ring and now we're married. Thank you for everyone who tried to knock some sense into me. I am very happy with my wife and I'm glad we both got what we wanted. She also wore the Amulet as we got married but she didn't want me to post any of our actual wedding photos on the internet, so I'm just posting the rings. That's it, we're happy, a ring was bought and now we're enjoying nerdy married life.' I am calling bullshit on this. I think he got criticised online, this never happened and I think he's trying to get upvotes on Reddit.

Priya: Do you think so?

Robin: None of this happened. 'Oh yeah but she didn't want me to post any pictures of the Amulet.' Fuck off, she left you pal. She left you.

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: Oh no.

Robin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. She's met someone else on a meme page, on a Spyro meme page [laughs].

Priya: She took the Amulet and she scarpered.

Leila: I think OK, definitive asshole or not asshole? I think asshole.

Robin: He said he was the asshole.

Priya: Yeah I think it's like you said Leila.

Leila: Yeah.

Priya: He doesn't know her so, asshole. And now he's a liar according to Robin.

Leila: It's a fake story.

Robin: He's a dirty, dirty liar. I bet he's shit at Skyrim as well.

Priya: [Laughs]

[Here to Judge Interim Music]

Leila: 'My, 32 female, husband 33 male, is adamant that my next computer will be a Windows PC adding to my already huge pile of stress'.

Robin: Love this already.

Leila: 'I am currently in school' I think this is like school as in, in America where any place that you learn something is a school.

Robin: Sure [laughs].

Leila: That's why she's 32 and in school. 'I am currently in school (I returned to school last year to start a new career as a nurse) and with the pandemic, things are absolutely shit. Distance learning is kicking my ass but I'm

trying my best. This past week I decided that my computer which had been starting to have issues all year has become too unreliable. Between previously being a stay at home mum and now being back at school, I don't have much of an income of my own. I did discuss buying a new computer using our shared savings and my husband was of course fine with this. The problem came when I said I wanted a MacBook like my current computer. My husband HATES Macs. He is a diehard PC gamer and a developer...

Robin: Ohhhh.

Leila: ...and knows quite a bit about computers and always ranted about how Macs suck or whatever. Which is fine, he has an opinion. But he does not want me to use our shared money to buy a Mac. I personally have used Macs since I was five years old.' What? OK.

Priya: Who trusts a five-year-old?

Leila: I'm putting a pin in that. 'And I just like them. I don't want to deal with the stress of getting used to a different one on top of taking different classes and parenting two little kids. His objection is purely based on the fact that he thinks Mac is an inferior product. I am so fucking stressed about this right now. I just want to get my new computer so I can stop dealing with the problems my current one has. I told my husband that it's such an issue for him, I'll just put the computer on my credit card. I self publish books and make a couple of hundred pounds a month from royalties so I could pay it off within a few months. I don't know how to talk to him about this because he seems adamant that I use our savings to buy a Windows computer. I don't want to go behind his back but my anxiety and frustration is going up as my exams and other deadlines draw nearer. Any thoughts about how to help him see my view?' Right that's a lot for one isn't it?

- Priya: I think we should take a moment to acknowledge how amazing the original poster is. In that she's been a stay at home mum looking after this guy's kids. And now she's going to uni to become a nurse in a pandemic and then this dude's giving her grief. Nah. Leave him!
- Robin: And she self publishes books as well.
- Priya: Yeah. She's incredible. Leave him.
- Leila: Everyone I've ever met who prefers PCs over Macs, I'm not saying has a PC over Mac, I mean prefers, if they have a choice they would choose a PC, then they're strange.
- Priya: I don't know anything about Mac so I can't comment on that but.
- Leila: But if my girlfriend said to me 'Oh sorry, can I use this amount of money to buy a computer?' I literally would not care which computer it was. I'd say 'Just choose the one you want'.
- Priya: Exactly.
- Leila: Do you know? Why would you give a toss?
- Robin: Yeah it's super controlling.
- Priya: Yeah, telling your partner that they can't do anything is insane. And then also giving them grief when they're in the middle of a really stressful situation. And then on top of that, her going 'Well I'll use my own money then' and him still giving her grief. No, it's not OK.
- Leila: He's trash. I hate this man.
- Robin: Is the husband Bill Gates?
- Leila: [Laughs] That's the only reason for an excuse here isn't it?

- Robin: Do you know what I mean? The fact that she was like, I've used Mac products since she was five, I was like, is this Stephanie Jobs?
- Leila: Yeah how long have Macs been around? Because in my head...
- Robin: My grandparents used to have an iMac in the late '90s which were the sort of desktop coloured ones with the sort of cool cute things.
- Priya: Like on Zoolander.
- Robin: Correct. And me and my nan still email to this day.
- Priya: Aww. You and your nan email?
- Robin: I taught her how to text as well on a Nokia 3310, that she still owns.
- Leila: Oh that's cute!
- Priya: That's so sweet.
- Robin: I think this woman needs to leave her husband. I think he sounds like a piece of shit. Really controlling. Really unappreciative of what she does. And also just like as you say like if you're that passionate about Windows to the point that you're going to try and like have arguments with your partner, like assess your priorities man. Like she sounds so stressed.
- Priya: Imagine torpedoing your marriage.
- Robin: Yeah exactly right? Like go into a counsellor, well it's a really bleak one of those Mac versus PC adverts [laughs]. Like a really bleak version of it.
- Priya: [Laughs]
- Leila: I think he's a dickhead.
- Priya: Yeah.

Robin: It's so rare that we get one of these ones which is just like a complete consensus which none of us have tried to think, well what about the other side?

Priya: No.

Robin: Like this guy sounds like a fucking tool [laughs].

Leila: She's training to be a nurse.

Priya: She's looking after two of his children. Two of them!

Robin: And writing brilliant books, I imagine.

Leila: Yeah clearly, she's earning a couple of hundred quid a month, that's good isn't it?

Priya: Yeah it's not easily done.

Leila: I want to read her book. I think one of us has to be devil's advocate now.

Robin: Uh OK I'll be the devil's advocate. I think she is the asshole because she has bad taste in men.

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: [Laughs]

Priya: He's just irredeemable.

Robin: [Laughs] So damning.

Leila: Yeah he is though. She's done nothing wrong.

Robin: I just feel like it's not, maybe I'm not that like a crazy tech person but I mean I just don't care that much.

Priya: No.

Robin: I use a Mac but I can use a Windows, it's fine.

Priya: And also if your partner was going to get a computer that you weren't going to use, surely you wouldn't pipe up and tell them which one to get.

Leila: I wouldn't give a single fuck.

Robin: Like if it was like, I'm going to use this typewriter. I'm going to use a vintage typewriter to do all my work, and I'm going to clackety-clack all night. Da-ding, clackety-clack, da-ding, every single evening. You'd be like 'Honey, can we maybe tone it down?'

Priya: I'm going to do all my typing in the early hours of the morning.

Robin: Yeah I'm going to dictate all of my assignments.

Priya: [Laughs]

[Here to Judge Interim Music]

Robin: 'My, 25 male, subs 23 female, 26 female, 22 male, 28 male, 28 male, have unionised'. [Laughs] 'I have been in a committed polyamorous dominant submissive relationship for the past three months. I'm the dom, and I have five subs, three men and two women. It's been going great. And it's all consensual and everyone is having a good time. We do not live together but we hang out at my apartment almost every day. And it's not purely a sexual relationship either, we all share an emotional connection and it's like any other relationship but poly and BDSM. Of course as the dom, there are some rules. They need to call me master. No kissing anyone except for me. If I tell someone to do something they do it, within bounds of course. The punishment depends on the person, some of my subs get whipped. Some publically humiliated. It all depends on what I agree on with each sub. We have safe words too and we stop the role play whenever anyone says one. It seems weird to vanillas...

Leila: Is that a slur?

Robin: ...but this is what we enjoy and we like to be open about it.' It is a slur in that I feel very targeted, I don't know

why. 'But this is what we enjoy and we like to be open about it. Everything has been great. At least I thought everything was going great. I woke up a couple of days ago and told one of my subs to get me a cup of coffee. He didn't do it. I told him that I was going to punish him (public humiliation which can be easily resisted) and he said he wouldn't do it. Now, if one of my subs acts like this, I break it off with them. So I threatened I would kick him out of the relationship. The other subs said if I kick him out they all leave. That's right, my submissives have unionised. What a sentence I've just said. They handed me a sheet of paper with a list of demands. The demands included, I'm not sharing all of them for their privacy. Allow kissing between subs and demands that are only to be followed after 8pm' [laughs] Very much the after eight rule of dom/sub.

Priya: [Laughs]

Robin: 'I tried to negotiate but they were firm in their demands'. Yes unions, yes please. Yes McCluskey. 'I couldn't punish them, my hands are tied lol, I have no power anymore. I told them I would think about it for a couple of days. They haven't left me yet, they still stay overnight but this list of demands is lingering over our relationship and our sex life. They want to keep it dominant and no one has stepped up to replace me. They thought about finding a new dom online but only if I don't give into their demands. I want to negotiate because I don't want to give up too much power. But I offered kissing subs only after 6pm and follow demand after 1pm. I also offered following each demand separately but not both together. I really do have feelings for them and they have feelings for me. But the power balance was shifted when they unionised and I don't know what to do. The relationship isn't as satisfying anymore and I don't know if it ever will be. What should I do? Do I get them a new dom and leave them? Or do I give into their demands and relinquish some of my power?'

Priya: Now I don't know much about this but I feel like if they're unionising he's probably doing it wrong. Like, isn't the whole point of it that they've consented to...

Robin: Yeah you enjoy that power dynamic within the relationship.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: Do you know what? I honestly like have no problem with this sort of thing. Like you know, enjoy your life and if it's consensual cool.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: I do think, is demanding a coffee part of this sexual agreement?

Priya: Well so some people enjoy being made to clean people's flats. And to pay for stuff for them. It's not always a sexual act.

Leila: Where do I get one?

Priya: So they call them pay pigs, the ones that just...

Robin: Pay pigs?

Priya: Pay pigs yeah, so someone will be online and they'll just send a list of things they want to a person and that person gets off on buying those things.

Robin: And what website is this though? What's the address?

Leila: Yeah what's the address? [laughs]

Robin: Paypigs.org.

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: I'm amazed at that.

Robin: Yeah I'm a deeply lazy person and that is shocking to me.

- Leila: Does that mean I could say, I mean you know me and my girlfriend have a very vanilla relationship to use the slur used.
- Robin: [Laughs] Slur.
- Leila: And if I were to say, if I suggest a sub/dom relationship wherein I get to be the dom, she'd have to be the sub but it's only related to making cups of tea for me. Is that allowed?
- Priya: She would have to like that a lot. And do you think that's going to work realistically? [laughs]
- Leila: No. That's not fair. How do you?
- Robin: Well you're in the same situation as the OP you know? How do I negotiate?
- Leila: Five subs?
- Robin: He's 25.
- Leila: How has he managed this? How has he got five people doing shit for him?
- Robin: Yeah exactly. He must be very charming.
- Priya: Yeah it's true [laughs]
- Robin: As you said Leila, you know whatever you want to do in your own relationship, you do you. But I really enjoy how stressed this guy is getting about it.
- Priya: [Laughs]
- Robin: The fact that like even this kind of like ratio of five to one sub to dom, also has its kind of like relationship idiosyncrasy, do you know what I mean? Like it's really cute, I like it a lot.
- Priya: I like that they're all still staying over but just like quietly seething and like presumably holding meetings, sedition.

- Robin: Exactly. They've probably got like a sub WhatsApp group.
- Leila: [Laughs]
- Priya: He needs to crackdown on communication [laughs].
- Robin: Imagine that? Being in your own flat and your subs all get a text notification sound so you check your phone and it's not yours [laughs]. It's just like, are you guys, are you going to text me?
- Priya: [Laughs]
- Leila: I feel like if your biggest enjoyment in life is being dominant then having five people say 'No it's not happening like this'.
- Priya: Yeah.
- Leila: Does that do the opposite for you? Is he going to be like repulsed?
- Priya: This is what he's saying isn't he? He's like, the relationship isn't as satisfying anymore and I don't know if it will ever be. Like if that is what works for you, then at that point then forming a union and the threat that they might do it again, surely takes the fun out of it. No?
- Leila: But surely they're having a horrible time because they enjoy being submissive.
- Priya: Not anymore.
- Leila: So yeah maybe this is why...
- Robin: They're being very proactive now aren't they?
- Leila: Yeah.
- Robin: It's really not what they want in the slightest. I think he got greedy...
- Priya: Yeah.

Robin: ..with the amount of subs he had. And the more people you have in your dom/sub relationship as I've always said, you grow the risk of them unionising.

Priya: [Laughs]

Robin: I've always said it.

[Here to Judge Theme Song]

Melanie: This has been a Little Wander production. Music from Rhodri Viney. Local artwork from Sam Roberts. Voice from Melanie Walters. With special thanks to Beth Forrest, Steve Pickup, Sam Roberts, Henry Widdicombe, and Jo Williams. Other podcasts from Little Wander include: I Wish I Was An Only Child, and Welcome to Spooktown. Subscribe now on iTunes, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

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