

**MIDNIGHT BURGER**

Chapter 12: Ted, Just Admit It.

SFX: INTERIOR OF A STARSHIP. FOOTSTEPS DOWN A LONG HALLWAY. A ROBOT WALKS IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

ROBOT SOLDIER  
Good evening, Commander.

TED  
Yeah, Hi.

SFX: BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE  
Begin report.

TED  
About to begin interrogation of asset. Suggested course of action?

COMPUTER VOICE  
Anticipate high levels of anxiety. Anxiety levels should produce desired outcome within 5 minutes.

TED  
Okay, but what do I do?

COMPUTER VOICE  
Desired Mem-sim file not complete. Use of secondary file suggested.

TED  
And then he's just going to cough up the information?

COMPUTER VOICE  
Anxiety levels should produce desired outcome.

TED  
Okay, if you say so.

SFX: DOOR SLIDING OPEN AND SHUT.

TED (CONT'D)  
Hello, Caspar.

CASPAR  
...Hi.

TED

I'm sure you have a lot of questions, have you watched the orientation message yet?

CASPAR

...The what?

SFX: BEEPING. ANNOYING MUSIC.

VOICE

Congratulations, you are a prisoner of the Ted Empire, the premiere destination for all criminals in the Triad Galactic System. The first day of your incarcerated life begins now. Here in the Ted Empire, you can expect the same level of quality treatment you've come to expect from us.

CASPAR

The fuck is this?

VOICE

That's right, the empire that brought you inter-system hyper-tubes, planetary security systems, and the Ted Entertainment Portal has now incarcerated you. To get started on this amazing journey, please submit to all necessary testing. Non-compliance with testing will result in a trip to deep-cold storage.

TED

Okay? We good?

CASPAR

We good?

TED

I need you to watch something for me.

CASPAR

Who the fuck are you?

TED

We'll get to that. Watch this please.

SFX: BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE

Mem-sim, ready. Playing file.

SONG:

CASPAR

Guys?

SFX: RECORD SCRATCH.

EFFIE

Caspar! Yes, hello. Good morning.

CASPAR

Hi.

EFFIE

How are you?

CASPAR

I'm fine, I talked to you ten minutes ago.

EFFIE

Oh course you did. Yes...

CASPAR

Where's Zebulon?

ZEBULON

I am here. Hello. How have you been?

CASPAR

I just talked-... Were you just playing Jazz music?

EFFIE

We were not.

CASPAR

Are you sure?

EFFIE

Yes, I don't know what you mean.

CASPAR

Okay.

ZEBULON

In fact I was just about to put on a bit of "Abide With Me". Puts a lovely sheen on the morning, wouldn't you agree, Dear?

EFFIE

Yes, it's very holy.

ZEBULON

Yes.

SFX: ABIDE WITH ME - OLIVE KLEIN.

EFFIE

Caspar, would you like any of my feelings on our new destination?

CASPAR

I think I'm good. Looks like New Brunswick, New Jersey 2018. Not a lot of surprises in New Brunswick in 2018.

LEIF

Hey. Anybody at all?

CASPAR

No, it looks pretty dead.

LEIF

I'm working on a theory about New Jersey.

CASPAR

There are no theories about New Jersey.

LEIF

This is our third time here with no customers. Maybe we set down here when the diner wants to give us a day off.

CASPAR

Cruel for it to be in New Brunswick.

LEIF

Once is an occurrence, twice is a coincidence, three times is a pattern. This is the third time.

CASPAR

Does this have anything to do with you wanting the day off?

LEIF

It might.

CASPAR

Go ahead, I'm sure I can handle all the nothing that's currently happening.

LEIF

Sweet.

CASPAR

Effie and Zebulon were listening to Jazz and they don't want to admit it.

EFFIE

Caspar!

LEIF

(From the kitchen)  
Busted.

SFX: DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR

Lo and behold. Welcome to Midnight Burger, have a seat anywhere... Ma'am?

AVA

What is this place?

CASPAR

I'm sorry?

AVA

What is this place?

CASPAR

It's Midnight Burger. It's a diner.

AVA

Okay...

CASPAR

Why don't you have a seat at that booth?

AVA

Sure.

ZEBULON

My friends, I wish to speak today on the power of our choices. Though not all be warriors, the Lord hath given us all a sword at birth. A sword to carry with us through our lives. Not for war, not for safety, but a sword that cleaves the path in front of you in twain. A instrument by which one can say "I choose this, and refuse the other".

EFFIE

One who is given this sword of choice may see themselves as an agent of destiny, carving out the world as we know it by choosing. Perhaps you cut away excess, perhaps you pierce the veil of ignorance, perhaps you strike down those that would use their sword against you.

ZEBULON

But at the end of a life of wielding this mighty sword, it may behoove one to ask "Who was it, gave me this sword? And was their will present within it?"

CASPAR

Coffee?

AVA

Sure.

CASPAR

You live around here?

AVA

Uh, no. I live in Ithaca.

CASPAR

What brings you to town?

AVA

Not sure.

CASPAR

Okay.

LEIF

I'm off. Should be back in plenty of time, I'm not going far. Oh. Hello there.

AVA

Hi.

LEIF

Welcome to Midnight Burger.

AVA

Yeah, thanks.

LEIF

(Aside)  
Um, am I still good to-

CASPAR

(Aside)  
Yeah, go ahead. Doesn't look like she's going to turn into a lava beast or something.

LEIF

Ok, cool. I'm off to Princeton!

CASPAR

Have fun.

AVA

Who do you know at Princeton?

LEIF

What?

AVA  
I have some friends who work there, who do you know  
at Princeton?

LEIF  
Oh, uh, nobody, just y'know... A janitor.

AVA  
You know a janitor at Princeton?

LEIF  
Buddy of mine, from high school.

AVA  
Ok.

LEIF  
I'll be back.

CASPAR  
(Aside)  
Remember what happens if you're not back, okay?

LEIF  
(Aside)  
Don't worry about it. If I get stuck in a spot,  
I've got a contingency plan.

CASPAR  
(Aside)  
You do?

LEIF  
Don't worry about it. See you in a few hours.

SFX: DOOR CHIME.

AVA  
Who was that?

CASPAR  
That's the cook.

AVA  
But then who's going to make my food?

CASPAR  
I will.

AVA  
You don't seem like the cooking type.

CASPAR

I'm not, but I've heard that New Brunswick is famous for its incredibly low standards so, when in Rome. What can I get you?

AVA

A BLT.

CASPAR

Coming right up.

AVA

Hey, so, help me out with something.

CASPAR

(In the kitchen)  
What's that?

AVA

When I look you up on my phone, you're not there.

CASPAR

Yeah, uh, that's not surprising we just opened.

AVA

Oh yeah?

CASPAR

Yeah, it's not going well.

AVA

My phone does say that something else is here?

CASPAR

... Oh yeah?

AVA

Yes, Elmwood Cemetery.

SFX: PAN DROPPING IN THE KITCHEN.

AVA

You okay in there?

CASPAR

Yeah. A cemetery huh?

AVA

Yep.

CASPAR

Looks like your phone might not have the most recent data.



AVA

Uh-huh. Hey, do me a favor. When my BLT is ready, bring it to me in the parking lot.

CASPAR

The parking lot?

SFX: DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR

Ma'am?

CASPAR

Guys. Are we in a cemetery right now?

ZEBULON

We seem to be.

CASPAR

I don't understand, when I look out the window I just see a street.

ZEBULON

Yes, though to the left and to the right..

CASPAR

Effie, maybe you could've given me a heads up about this?

EFFIE

The Lord told me of a quiet place of rest and I thought well...

CASPAR

Fucking hell, you guys.

ZEBULON

Our apologies.

CASPAR

She's just standing out there in the parking lot waiting for me.

ZEBULON

She does appear to be oddly taking it in stride.

CASPAR

Yeah, okay. Fine. Fuck it. Here we go.

SFX: DOOR CHIME. SOUND OF A NEARBY CITY STREET.

CASPAR

Well, damn. Would you look at that?

AVA

We're in a cemetery.

CASPAR

Yes, we are. Have you noticed that the presence of smart phones in our lives has greatly reduced our ability to bullshit with each other?

AVA

You have a roadside diner in the middle of a cemetery.

CASPAR

You know, when you don't pay attention to changing zoning laws, things can-

AVA

You and your friend suffer from whisperers disease.

CASPAR

We suffer from what?

AVA

Whisperers disease. When you whisper you think it takes away everyone else's ability to hear... I'm glad to know you don't think I'm going to turn into a lava beast.

CASPAR

Don't take that personally.

AVA

Your friend has a contingency plan in case he doesn't make it back in time?

CASPAR

Crime in New Brunswick. The sun goes down, things get bad.

AVA

I'm a theoretical physicist.

CASPAR

Congratulations.

AVA

I would like to know how one of the particular equations in my head led me here.

CASPAR

Lead you here?

AVA

How about you finish making me that BLT and we have a nice chat.

CASPAR

Okay.

SFX: SOMETHING POWERING DOWN. THE SOUND OF THE DINER IS REPLACED BY THE DRONE OF A MASSIVE SPACESHIP.

CASPAR

Why are you showing me my memories?

TED

Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR

Who the fuck are you and where the fuck am I?

TED

You're on a starship. You're a prisoner.

CASPAR

The prisoner part was clear. Who are you?

TED

You are currently under arrest by the Ted Empire for operating an unregistered vessel.

CASPAR

Seriously?

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

This is a traffic stop?

TED

I'm afraid it's much more serious than that.

CASPAR

Since you kidnapped me, I certainly hope so.

TED

You haven't been kidnapped, you're being detained.

CASPAR

What's the difference?

TED

...Honestly not much. What's the last thing you remember?

CASPAR

We were floating in space. A big ship appeared. There were some storm troopers. I got shot with some sort of ray gun.

TED

It was a stun gun, you'll be fine.

CASPAR

Okay. The Ted Empire?

TED

That's correct.

CASPAR

Your planet is called Ted?

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

And anyone from Ted is called a?

TED

Ted.

CASPAR

You're the Teds.

TED

I understand that this is a very common name on Earth and that our name may sound very humorous to you, let me assure you we've heard all the jokes.

CASPAR

Oh, I bet I can find some new ones.

TED

Can you tell me the whereabouts of a Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR

No.

TED

You're not going to tell me?

CASPAR

I'm new to this but I'm guessing being held captive on a prison barge means that I shouldn't give up any information.

TED

It's not a prison barge it's a military vessel.

CASPAR

And you say I'm here why?

TED

You're under arrest for operating an unlicensed warp-capable vessel.

CASPAR

The diner?

TED

I know you call it that, but to us it's a vessel.

CASPAR

It's really not though.

TED

It's capable of traveling temporally, dimensionally and spatially, is that correct?

CASPAR

Yeah.

TED

And how is that not a vessel?

CASPAR

Because there's a neon sign outside that says "Eat".

TED

Clear that up for me, why do you have a sign outside that says "Eat"?

CASPAR

To let people know we're a diner and not a vessel.

TED

Are you reminding people to eat?

CASPAR

We're letting people know what we do, for example there should be a neon sign outside this ship saying "Detaining people for bullshit nonsense."

TED

I urge you to take this seriously.

CASPAR

Oh really, Ted? Are you urging me?

TED

Don't call me Ted.

CASPAR

No, I'm calling you Ted, you're Ted now. Why were you showing me one of my memories, Ted?

TED

We'll get to that in a second. Do you know what happens to people who don't comply with questioning?

CASPAR

According to the terrifying woman in that video they get put in deep-cold storage, I'm assuming that's some sort of suspended animation?

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

Well you're threatening an Earthling with a nap, let me tell you how that's going to go.

TED

Can you tell me what these are?

SFX: THUD OF A LARGE STACK OF NOTES ON THE TABLE.

CASPAR

Are those Ava's notes?

TED

These are the notes of Dr. Ava Maddox.

CASPAR

Why do you have them?

TED

We need to know where she is.

CASPAR

I would strongly advise against that.

TED

Why?

CASPAR

Because you took her notes, and they are the only thing she cares about in the multi-verse, which means that she's marked your whole civilization for genocide. And if there's anyone who can pull it off-

TED

According to our records she's been aboard your vessel for some time and yet when we showed up, she was gone.

CASPAR

According to your records?

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

Why do you have records on her?

TED

We have extensive records on you, her, Leif, the new girl Gloria, and whatever that talking box of yours is.

CASPAR

You do?

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

Why is that?

TED

It's our mission.

CASPAR

It's your mission to collect records on us?

TED

That's part of our mission.

CASPAR

Oh, wait I know what this is.

TED

You do?

CASPAR

We ran into this robot a while back named Boofar. Boofar said that there were people out there looking for us, that our "vessel" was a kind of "white whale" that a lot of civilizations look for. A "white whale" is a-

TED

I know what a white whale is.

CASPAR

So is that what this is? You're on some sort of science mission? You're going to tag my ear?

TED  
This isn't a science mission it's a military operation. We're looking for Dr. Ava Maddox. You need to tell me where she is.

CASPAR  
Uh... nope. No, I don't.

TED  
You seem unusually calm for someone who's in so much danger.

CASPAR  
This is actually the safest I've felt in a long time.

TED  
I can turn you into an ice cube at the drop of a hat.

CASPAR  
Well the jokes on you, because you're not wearing a hat.

TED  
Caspar, goddamnit-

SFX: DOOR SLIDING OPEN.

TED  
What is it?!

ROBOT SOLDIER  
We have detected a vessel.

TED  
Good for you!

ROBOT SOLDIER  
Shall we set course to intercept?

TED  
What were the orders I gave you an hour ago?

ROBOT SOLDIER  
Intercept all vessels in the quadrant.

TED  
And we're having this conversation why?

ROBOT SOLDIER  
...

SFX: DOOR SLIDING CLOSED.



CASPAR

Lot of robots on board?

TED

It's all robots on board.

CASPAR

You're a robot?

TED

I'm... not me, I'm not a robot, everyone else is.

CASPAR

I see... You're speaking English.

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

So was the lady in the video. Does everyone speak English on Ted, Ted?

TED

Everyone who serves aboard this ship is required to speak English.

CASPAR

You're the only one who serves on this ship, Ted.

TED

I mean, if anyone else were to serve on this ship they would have to speak English.

CASPAR

Do you think about that a lot? Finally having someone else to talk to?

TED

I have someone to talk to right now and it sucks. So, no.

CASPAR

Speaking English, that's a specific requirement.

TED

We have a specific mission.

CASPAR

What's that?

TED

Right now it's finding Dr. Ava Maddox.

CASPAR

Okay. When you were abducting me did you think to look for her between the cushions in the booths, because things get stuck down there.

TED

Can we-

CASPAR

Spare change, your favorite pen, an ambassador one time-

TED

I was hoping that this interrogation would go smoothly.

CASPAR

Well it's good to have a dream.

TED

Did you think I was kidding about deep cold storage?

CASPAR

I think the problem there is, I have no idea what it is. Describe it to me, really paint a picture that will help me feel the fear you're going for.

TED

We freeze you in a block of chemical ice where you will be semi-conscious, forever, until we decide to thaw you out.

CASPAR

Are meals provided?

TED

It's suspended animation, there are no meals.

CASPAR

Okay, I have a clear picture now but, no, still not doing it for me.

TED

I see.

CASPAR

Being semi-conscious doesn't sound so bad. Some people work their whole lives to get semi-conscious have you even met a Buddhist or an EDM artist?

TED

There are other things-

CASPAR

Yes, I'm sure there are other things you can do to me, I'm sure you have a pain stick or something.

TED

No, but we can make one.

CASPAR

OR, how about you share some information with me. Maybe it'll put me in a sharing mood. Make that Stockholm Syndrome kick in. Stockholm Syndrome is a-

TED

I know what Stockholm Syndrome is.

CASPAR

Okay. Hey. Start there. You're an alien from another planet, where'd you get all your Earth knowledge from?

TED

It's my job, I'm an Earth Expert.

CASPAR

An Earth Expert? That sounds like a terrible job.

TED

It is.

CASPAR

And how did this become your chosen profession?

TED

We don't choose professions on Ted, we're assigned professions according to our skill set.

CASPAR

How inspiring. What was the skill that got you this job?

TED

A high tolerance for idiocy.

CASPAR

Yeah, you'd definitely need some of that studying Earth. I mean, World War I alone.

TED

Actually my favorite is the Bucket War.

CASPAR

The what?

TED

In Italy. Two provinces, Modena and Bologna. Modena stole the bucket from the well in Bologna. So they went to war. Two thousand people died.

CASPAR

Wow. You know, I know that sounds ridiculous but when you find a REALLY good bucket-

TED

My favorite part is that, to this day, you can still go to Modena and see the bucket displayed as a point of pride. Two-thousand people dead, over a bucket, and they're bragging about it. That's what it's like studying Earth.

CASPAR

You don't seem too happy with your career placement.

TED

It's better than the alternative.

CASPAR

Doesn't sound like there is an alternative.

TED

Earth, for example. When a child is born on Earth you tell them "When you grow up, you can be anything you want to be." You don't tell them that, along with that statement, comes a gigantic obligation to actually be something. So they go out into the world to "be something" and realize that there are multiple barriers standing in the way of them "being" anything at all. And then they beat their head against the wall for a while and finally end up settling for whatever the status quo demands they do. And when they finally do give up, because they were told "you can be whatever you want to be", it's then their fault that they didn't end up being anything. I'll take my system over yours.

CASPAR

That's pretty dark, Ted.

TED

But the music's nice on Earth.

CASPAR

That's true.

TED

Some of it.

CASPAR

That's... true.

TED

So, there. I gave you some information, can we get back to the matter at hand?

CASPAR

And what was that again?

TED

Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR

Right. That. The memory you showed me, that's pretty fancy technology.

TED

It's called a Mem-Sim. We can re-enact most memories.

CASPAR

Mem-Sim? Are we sure about that name?

TED

I don't know, I'm not a naming expert, I'm an Earth expert.

CASPAR

Well why didn't you just use this unfortunately named technology to get the information out of my head?

TED

We're working on it. The simulations take a while to put together. In the meantime I thought I'd come in here and try and cut to the chase rather than wait.

CASPAR

I see. So the information you want from me, you're going to get it anyway, but you want to get it faster?

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

Because it'd be more convenient for you.

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

Well, I'm sure I'm going to be very helpful, then.

TED

Deep-cold storage, Caspar.

CASPAR

Why did you show me that memory? That was her first day at the diner, why show me that?

TED

Why do you think?

CASPAR

Oh, is it quiz time?

TED

Sure.

CASPAR

Okay um.. um um um um.. oh! She found the diner.

TED

Using a mathematical equation, she found your vessel. We would like to know that equation.

CASPAR

Her notes aren't enough?

TED

No.

CASPAR

Huh... How fast does this ship go?

TED

Caspar.

CASPAR

Just curious.

TED

It doesn't matter how fast it goes.

CASPAR

But it matters to me, Ted. I'm trying to make a point.

TED

Like most ships in The Triad we travel mostly through tubes.

CASPAR

Tubes?

TED

Warp tubes. They're set up throughout the three systems. You fly through a tube it sends you from one place to another through spatial distortion. Like a highway.

CASPAR

And you said "The Triad"?

TED

Playing dumb isn't going to get you anywhere, Caspar.

CASPAR

I don't know what The Triad is.

TED

It's my understanding you've been aboard your vessel for quite some time, you have no idea what The Triad is?

CASPAR

I may zip all around the cosmos but ironically I don't get out much.

TED

Three galaxies. The Milky Way, Andromeda, and Triangulum. They're all connected through a series of several thousand warp tubes.

CASPAR

Like a highway.

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

And who built this highway?

TED

We did.

CASPAR

Aha. So if anyone in these three galaxies wants to go anywhere, they have to talk to you?

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

I imagine that gives the Ted Empire quite a lot of power.

TED

It does.

CASPAR

And it must be very frustrating for you when you encounter something that can travel without using one of your tubes.

TED

...Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR

Y'know, it's funny. You're an advanced civilization with deep-cold storage and spaceships and Mem-sims and intergalactic highways and you are desperate to find a scientist from a planet who's greatest technological achievement is a phone with a camera on it. That's odd, isn't it?

TED

Okay... we're done for for now, please enjoy several hours of Ted Empire propaganda.

CASPAR

Is there popcorn?

SFX: DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND CLOSED. ANNOYING MUSIC PLAYS AGAIN.

VOICE

The Ted Empire, we're not just the empire that carries your friends and family across The three galaxies, we're also the empire that keeps your planet safe when you've finally come home with our new and improved orbital plasma cannons...

SFX: BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE

Begin report.

TED

About to begin second interrogation session. Remember when you said heightened anxiety levels would produce the desired outcome? That was fun.

COMPUTER VOICE

Please reduce sarcasm levels.

TED

What are your suggestions?

COMPUTER VOICE

Psychological profile suggests using a forceful tone.



TED

A forceful tone? I threatened to freeze him in a block of chemical ice, but a forceful tone is going to do it?

COMPUTER VOICE

According to psychological profile.

TED

Is this the same psychological profile that said this would be over in five minutes?

COMPUTER VOICE

Daily sarcasm allowance exceeded.

TED

Oh, to hell with it. Fine. Forceful tone.

SFX: VOICE FADES BACK IN AGAIN AS WELL AS THE SOUND OF CASPAR SNORING.

VOICE

... And soon, when the Billius sector Dyson Sphere is complete, we'll be able to construct a next generation Ubertube™ that will be able to send your starships to several luxurious and highly profitable sectors in ports outside The Triad-

SFX: DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND CLOSED.

TED

Rise and shine.

CASPAR

Heeeeeey!

TED

I'm impressed, we design our propaganda so no one can sleep through it.

CASPAR

I do live to impress you, Ted.

TED

Would you like some coffee?

CASPAR

Yeah, I'd love some.

TED

Good, we don't have any.

CASPAR

Well played.

TED  
Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

SFX: AVA'S NOTES THUMP DOWN ON THE TABLE.

CASPAR  
You keep bringing her notes in here, I know you have them, you don't have to keep bringing them in here.

TED  
Yeah, I'll keep that in mind. Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR  
You don't have to keep saying her full name, I'm pretty sure I know who you're talking about.

TED  
Caspar, where is she, goddamnit!

CASPAR  
Why is there yelling now?

TED  
I made this as easy as I could, now it's time for yelling!

CASPAR  
Okay, then!

TED  
You want to be our prisoner forever!

CASPAR  
I don't know! What are your prisons like!

TED  
A block of ice!

CASPAR  
I feel like we've gone over this before!

TED  
We have!

CASPAR  
Okay!

TED  
... Fuck this.

CASPAR

... Did you try to come in here guns blazing? Is that what happened, Ted?

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

Your heart wasn't in it.

TED

I know.

CASPAR

A for effort, though.

TED

Where is Dr. Ava Maddox?

CASPAR

Baja California.

TED

No, she's not.

CASPAR

No, she's not.

TED

I know I can get this information from you.

CASPAR

Well, while you're changing tactics, I've been watching your propaganda for several hours, would you like my thoughts?

TED

No.

CASPAR

Here are my thoughts. You guys suck. You have your finger in every pie in three galaxies. Transportation, planetary security, banking, agriculture. You guys control all of it.

TED

We don't control anything, we sell very effective products.

CASPAR

Lot of choice in the marketplace, a lot of healthy competition?

TED

No, but that's not our fault.

CASPAR

So, I'm trying to figure out where I fit in to all this, I mean, I'm just a guy. Then I realized, if I controlled everything it would really piss me off if there was suddenly something that I couldn't control. Like say a diner that can traverse space, time, and dimension.

TED

Look at you, you figured it all out.

CASPAR

And this whole ship, your job is to be the Midnight Burger-hunter.

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

Which is why everyone speaks English.

TED

Yes, because for some reason the most powerful artifact in existence is completely populated with residents of the most back-water dumbshit-factory in the universe! Fucking Earthlings.

CASPAR

So you're trying to track down the diner because what? It's embarrassing?

TED

Yes! It's incredibly embarrassing! You know what we have to do to make one warp gate? We have to harness the power of an entire star. We black out an entire solar system just so we can go a few million light-years. And then YOU assholes go shooting through the system without harnessing anything, doing good deeds, asking people if they'd like to hear the specials!

CASPAR

Where's the harm in that?

TED

Because you make people imagine something better. And that's bad business for us. So they commissioned this ship to hunt down Midnight Burger, harness its power and if we can't do that, destroy it!

CASPAR

Wow. An entire empire of hall monitors.

TED

Just tell me where she is, Caspar.

CASPAR

Ted. No.

TED

Caspar, look. I want to keep your people safe. If you work with me, I can assure that happens.

CASPAR

Safe from what? Not being found?

SFX: BEEPING.

TED

Do you see this image?

CASPAR

It looks like wind chimes.

TED

It's- I know it looks like wind chimes, it's not wind chimes.

CASPAR

I mean it REALLY looks like wind chimes-

TED

It's a space station. It just went on line. It's emanating a field. Brand new technology. As long as this station is emanating its field, the diner is going to be trapped in our territory. It's only a matter of time before it's ours.

CASPAR

In your territory?

TED

That's right.

CASPAR

Which is three galaxies?

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

And how many trillions of light years is that?

TED  
...It's a lot.

CASPAR  
It's a whole lot.

TED  
You have to admit, it's less than that's what it was,  
though.

CASPAR  
So your master plan that spells out imminent doom  
is that you've gone from have no chance of finding  
us to having what? A .0001% chance of finding us?

TED  
I hate my job.

CASPAR  
Of course you do, Ted. According to you, you've  
been doing it since the day you were born.

SFX: BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE  
Coffee.

SFX: COFFEE POURING. CUP BEING SET ON TABLE.

CASPAR  
Thanks.

TED  
It tastes terrible apparently, we don't know how to  
make it.

CASPAR  
Thanks?

TED  
You're not acting in accordance with your  
psychological profile.

CASPAR  
I'm noticing that.

TED  
We thought you'd be wracked with anxiety if you  
were away from your vessel.

CASPAR  
It's a diner.

TED  
What's going on?

CASPAR  
I don't know. Is it possible there's something comforting about being a prisoner?

TED  
At first, maybe.

CASPAR  
Look, Ted, I know you're upset, but it's like you said, your stupidly-named device-

TED  
Mem-sim.

CASPAR  
Right, that one. Any second now it'll suck the memory out of my head and I'll be useless to you.

TED  
We're having problems with your brain.

CASPAR  
Preach, sister.

TED  
They're saying it's because of all the time travel. It's effected your brain. The older memories are easy to get to but not the newer ones.

CASPAR  
Sounds like that's giving me all sorts of tumors. That'll be fun one day.

TED  
So until they figure it out the only choice-

CASPAR  
I'm not going to tell you-

TED  
I know. I know alright? Enough already.

CASPAR  
Oof, Ted your coffee's terrible. Pull up a chair, let's talk. I'll talk about anything you want to talk about except for the thing you want to talk about. C'mon, you've been chasing the diner around for God knows how long, you've got to have questions. Have some terrible coffee.

TED  
Coffee's poisonous to a Ted.

CASPAR  
It shows.

TED  
I have a question.

CASPAR  
Here we go.

TED  
Babba Yaga's Hut.

CASPAR  
What?

TED  
According to my records you made several stops in Eastern Europe, 15th and 16th century?

CASPAR  
Oh right. We spent some time there.

TED  
Doing what?

CASPAR  
There were a lot of Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition at the time, we gave them coffee and food on their way.

TED  
That didn't seem strange to them?

CASPAR  
Well, no one was really drinking coffee in Europe at the time so yeah, it was a little strange.

TED  
I mean for 15th century jews to see a diner along the road.

CASPAR  
Yeah, it was strange. So they called it Babba Yaga's hut. It's an old folktale. There's this old witch, she has this hut with giant chicken legs and it can magically take you wherever you want.

TED  
So they looked at your diner and saw a hut with chicken legs.



CASPAR

Yeah, I guess. They saw what they needed to see.

TED

So my question is, how do you know you're not doing the same thing? How do you know you're not seeing a diner because that's what you need to see?

CASPAR

I don't know, Ted. You've been forced from birth to study a planet you hate and you insist that that's a good thing. How do you know you're not seeing what you want to see? Travel around the cosmos enough and the most common thing that you'll see is someone looking at something they can't explain and seeing something they need to see. So yeah, it's possible, my question is: what difference does it make?

TED

How do you do that? How do you just swim in ambiguity like that? Flying around in a magical diner and you never stop for a second and say "Hey, what the fuck?" You just shrug your shoulders?

CASPAR

Doesn't every line of questioning eventually lead to shrugging your shoulders. Issac Newton is like "Guys, check it out, gravity." And everyone's like "Cool, why's it there?" Shrug.

TED

I think we've figured out that particular shrug.

CASPAR

But then there's another shrug after that, and another shrug and another shrug and another shrug. Turtles all the way down. "Turtles all the way down." What's the reference? C'mon, Earth expert.

TED

Uh, the Regress Argument in Epistemology.

CASPAR

Boom. You would crush on Jeopardy.

TED

My people don't like the regress argument.

CASPAR

Oh, you mean the argument that says you can never really know anything? That's because you come from a planet of smartypants knowitalls. Look at you out here.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

You're trying to chase down this thing you can't explain, when you catch it you're going to try and explain it and if you can't you're going to what?

TED

Destroy it.

CASPAR

Blow it up, Ted. That's hilarious. "I can't explain this thing, so I must destroy it." Are you sure you're not human?

TED

It says in your file you worked at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

CASPAR

Yeah, that's right.

TED

What did you do there?

CASPAR

Y'know, you take a number and come up to the counter. I was that guy.

TED

Not a high skilled job.

CASPAR

I don't know. You've got to know what you're doing.

TED

It's not the kind of job where you would encounter the Regress Argument.

CASPAR

No. But there was a lot of shrugging. "How're you going to pay that fine?" Shrug. I guess I picked it up somewhere on the diner.

TED

How long have you been there?

CASPAR

I don't remember. I walked in the door one day, turned on the radio and it was all a blur until Leif showed up. Other people made me notice the time. Little did I know you were out there the entire time trying to track us down in your Mystery Machine ...Hey, wait a minute. You were there. You found us. You kidnapped me, you took Ava's notes, why'd you leave? The goal was to catch us, right?

TED

Leif.

CASPAR

Leif?

TED

We have a bit of history with Leif. He was anticipating us.

CASPAR

Anticipating you how?

TED

He had a Purple Nullifier.

CASPAR

What kind of Willy Wonka candy is that?

TED

It's a bomb. A very dangerous one.

CASPAR

Leif had a fucking bomb in the diner? Get the fuck out of here, Leif would never do that.

TED

Let me show you one of my memories.

SFX: KEYPAD BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE

Mem-sim ready.

TED

Roll 212.

SFX: MEM-SIM POWERING UP.

ROBOT SOLDIER

Please remain calm, no sudden movements.

SFX: ROBOTS MOVING INTO THE DINER.

LEIF

You fucking people? Are you kidding me?!

TED

Leif, I need you to remain calm! We're not here to hurt anyone!

LEIF

Does that include the one you just put on the ground?!

GLORIA

What did they do to Caspar?

EFFIE

What is the meaning of these Jack-Boots!

ZEBULON

Such wanton violence has no place here!

TED

Caspar's going to be fine. Nobody needs to get hurt. Leif, I need you to lead your people out of this diner peacefully-

LEIF

I have a Purple Nullifier.

TED

... Leif, stop fucking around.

LEIF

I've got my hand on the switch right now.

TED

Bullshit.

LEIF

Fine.

SFX: SOUND OF THE PURPLE NULLIFIER.

ROBOT SOLDIER

Purple Nullifier identified.

GLORIA

Leif, what is that?

TED

Leif, stay calm. You use that and you kill all your friends.

GLORIA

Uh, WHAT?! Leif!

LEIF

I know that. But I also know that Teds follow the rules. And what are the rules for a Purple Nullifier?

TED

...

LEIF

Come on...

TED  
Make concessions and fall back.

LEIF  
Exactly. So get going.

GLORIA  
I don't remember going over bombs at the STAFF MEETING!

LEIF  
Trust me.

TED  
... Leif.

LEIF  
You think I wasn't expecting you at some point?

ROBOT SOLDIER  
There is no sign of the doctor.

TED  
Fucking goddamnit, Leif.

LEIF  
Get out. Now.

GLORIA  
...yeah. Get out. He's not afraid to use whatever that thing is. You think we aren't afraid to meet our maker, we hang out with a pastor all day.

ZEBULON  
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for thou art with me.

EFFIE  
I'd be might interested to see what Saint Peter has to say about you all. Let's head up and see him.

TED  
You people are fucking crazy... Fall back. Grab Caspar and grab the notes. This isn't over, Leif.

LEIF  
It absolutely isn't over.

SFX: MEM-SIM POWERING DOWN.

CASPAR  
Fucking asshole. He had a fucking bomb in the diner.

TED  
It's not just a bomb. When a Purple Nullifier is activated it turns everything in a 500 meter radius into purple goo. Hence the name.

CASPAR  
Are you sure he wasn't making that up? It sounds made up.

TED  
I've seen them. It's not pretty. And we know that he has one.

CASPAR  
So he threatened to take out everyone, you guys included?

TED  
That's right.

CASPAR  
Who the fuck have I been working with?

TED  
Leif's worn a lot of hats since he left Earth. You think he was on board your diner because he liked making hamburgers?

CASPAR  
Yes!

TED  
That says a lot about you. Here, I'll show you his rap sheet.

SFX: BEEPING.

TED  
Here's his dossier. This is a list of all his offenses across all systems. It'll scroll like this for about five minutes.

CASPAR  
Oh, come on. "Impersonating a baker"!

TED  
That's illegal in three systems.

CASPAR  
He told me he was a cook.

TED

He was, for a while, but then he started working for someone very dangerous named Låfftrex, that's where he racked up all these offenses. We thought he had gotten out of the game or had been killed because we hadn't heard from him for a very long time. Then our intelligence comes back that he found his way on board your vessel. The perfect place to disappear.

CASPAR

But then he left for a while and came back.

TED

Yeah. We're not sure what that was about.

CASPAR

Goddamn.

TED

Anyway... when we knew we couldn't take the diner, we thought taking the doctor and her notes would be a good consolation prize.

CASPAR

But she wasn't there so you took me instead.

TED

Yes.

CASPAR

Well at least you got her notes. Should be good enough, right?

TED

...

CASPAR

What?

TED

We can't read her notes.

CASPAR

Whaaaaat? Seriously?

TED

They're written in code. A code we can't seem to decipher.

CASPAR

No.

TED  
It's a code without numerical values, it just looks like squiggly lines.

CASPAR  
Wow. Ted. This is a serious own goal for you guys.

TED  
Not if you tell us where she is.

CASPAR  
I mean, you finally catch the thing you've been chasing, but you get scared off by a bomb threat that, let's be real, was probably a lie. THEN you decided you'll take the scientist, WHO WASNT THERE, and THEN you decide to take her notes WHICH YOU CANT READ. In a panic move you grab me instead who, let's be real again, is the most worthless member of the Midnight Burger staff. At least Gloria could've taught you Spanish.

TED  
You're not worthless if you can tell me where she is.

SFX: DISTANT EXPLOSION.

CASPAR  
... What was that?

TED  
Nothing, I'm sure it's fine.

CASPAR  
An explosion? On a Space ship? You're sure it's fine?

TED  
It's fine.

CASPAR  
... Is it though?

TED  
I'll be right back.

CASPAR  
Yeah, Check on that.

SFX: DOOR SLIDING OPEN AND SHUT.

COMPUTER VOICE  
Mem-sim ready.



CASPAR

Oh yeah?... Play file, roll file, show me the file.

CLIP: SCENE BETWEEN CASPAR AND AVA RIGHT BEFORE HE SHOVES HER INTO DEEP SPACE.

SFX: MEM-SIM POWERING DOWN.

SFX: BEEPING.

COMPUTER VOICE

File deleted.

SFX: DOOR SLIDING OPEN AND SHUT.

CASPAR

Everything okay? Were you guys trying that Diet Coke and Mentos thing?

TED

Nobody's out there.

SFX: BEEPING.

TED

Bridge, what was that sound?

SFX: STATIC.

TED

Bridge?

CASPAR

I have some experience with this. There's nothing more ominous than static.

SFX: DOOR SLIDES OPEN. THREE ROBOTS WALKING.

TED

Hey, you three! What's going on?

ROBOT SOLDIER

Intruder alert, deck 12.

TED

Intruder? Who is it?

ROBOT SOLDIER

Intruder unidentified.

TED

Well go find out and report back to me.

SFX: ANOTHER DISTANT EXPLOSION

TED  
What the hell?

ROBOT SOLDIER  
Please remain inside.

SFX: DOOR SLIDES SHUT.

TED  
Who's here, Caspar?

CASPAR  
I don't fucking know.

TED  
Is this a rescue attempt?

CASPAR  
Seriously?!

TED  
What else could it be?!

CASPAR  
I don't know, man. Does anybody know where I am?

TED  
No.

CASPAR  
Well then this is probably a You problem.

TED  
Is there anyone that wants you dead?

CASPAR  
Absolutely. Most things!

TED  
This wouldn't be Leif, it's not his style.

CASPAR  
Of course it's not Leif, I still don't believe you about him, the guy collects baseball cards.

TED  
Shit. I know who it could be.

CASPAR  
Uh-oh. Who is it? Is it The Mandalorian?

TED  
Låfftrex.

CASPAR  
Låfftrex, who is this Låfftrex?

TED  
A pirate.

CASPAR  
A space pirate, Ted.

TED  
Yes, a space pirate.

CASPAR  
Oh, man. You know it's never lost on me how dumb it  
can get out here.

TED  
Låfftrex is incredibly dangerous.

CASPAR  
Well if it is Låfftrex, you're fine, they're  
probably just after your Spanish Gold!

TED  
We're leaving, let's go.

CASPAR  
What? Why?

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

TED  
Let's go.

CASPAR  
The robots said stay here.

TED  
The robots are idiots, let's go!

CASPAR  
Fine.

SFX: LASERS FIRING.

CASPAR  
Oh shit!

TED  
This way!

SFX: FOOTSTEPS IN THE HALLWAY.

ROBOT SOLDIER

Drop your weapon. Do not come any closer.

SFX: ROBOT BEING DESTROYED BY LASER.

TED

Goddamn it, those things are worthless.

CASPAR

Where are we going!?

TED

This way.

CASPAR

We can't run away on a space ship.

TED

In here.

SFX: AIRLOCK.

CASPAR

What's that?

TED

Escape pod, get in.

CASPAR

You really want to spend more time with me?

TED

There's only room for one, get in.

CASPAR

What? Why aren't there more escape pods?

TED

Yeah, let's put a bunch of escape pods right by the holding cells, great idea.

CASPAR

What are you going to do?

TED

Here, take the notes. The pod will send out a beacon and you'll get picked up by another Ted ship, they'll figure it out from there.

CASPAR

Ted, no, don't do this, you're going to get killed.

TED

If you had told me where The Doctor is I wouldn't have to! Feel bad now?! Good!

CASPAR

Ted.

TED

When they find you, I suggest you tell them where the doctor is. The trap's already been sprung on the diner, Caspar, it's only a matter of time before we catch it now.

CASPAR

Ted, I tossed her into space.

TED

What you are talking about?

CASPAR

I swear. She put the diner in danger so I put her in a space suit and launched her off the edge of the parking lot into deep space. I don't think she made it back. I think I may have killed her.

TED

Why did you just tell me that?

CASPAR

Now you don't need me. Get in the escape pod, Ted. I'll be fine.

TED

Why did you just tell me that, whoever's attacking us is going to kill you.

CASPAR

The thing about your life being in danger... What if you think you deserve it?... Keeping the notes though!

SFX: TED BEING SHOVED INTO THE ESCAPE POD.

TED

Caspar!

SFX: AIRLOCK CLOSING.

TED

(Behind the glass)  
You motherfucker! Open the airlock!

CASPAR

This is good, Ted. There's very few things worth sacrificing your life for. How do you launch it? Is it the red button?

TED

You piece of shit!

CASPAR

Okay, red button, here we go!

SFX: ESCAPE POD BLASTING INTO SPACE.

CASPAR

Nice guy.

SFX: LASER FIRE HAS SUBSIDED. HIGH HEELED SHOES WALKING AROUND THE CORNER.

CASPAR

Låfftrex the Pirate, huh? How does one walk the plank in space?

SFX: FOOTSTEPS APPROACH THEN STOP.

THE EX

Hello, Caspar.

CASPAR

You?!

**THE END**