

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 20: Do Not Go Quietly Unto Your Grave

By
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WIND THROUGH TREETOPS AND ALIEN BIRDSONG.

SONG:

LEIF

So... there's this tradition... if you spend a lot of time in space, no matter how old you are, you always plan your funeral. Because space is dangerous. One fried circuit board, one crack in your fuselage and you're dead. The problem with that is, if you're someone who spends a lot of time in space you're also an idiot. And you think you're never going to die. So when you plan your funeral you do it as a fun joke. This has led to a very long tradition of hilariously shitty spaceman funerals. I happen to know how shitty this particular funeral is supposed to be... because it's mine... While I want to keep up the tradition of incredibly bad funerals, I'm afraid I just don't have the heart to do it. Leif didn't die from a malfunctioning airlock or a leaky core. He died saving us. And I just can't turn it into a punchline. So I've asked Effie and Zebulon to say a few words-

CASPAR

Hang on. I feel like I need to know how funny this was supposed to be.

GLORIA

Absolutely.

CASPAR

Was there a musical number?

THE EX

Were you loaded into a canon?

CASPAR

Oooh. That's a good one.

AVA

A reading from the autobiography of Wade Boggs?

GLORIA

I feel like fireworks were involved, maybe a team of elephants.

CASPAR

These are all good ideas.

LEIF

I really don't want to talk about it.

BERTBERT

Actually, it's not even that funny.

CASPAR

Wait, BertBert knows? How come she gets to know?

SHEL

Are all funerals like this?

AVA

No, but wouldn't it be great?

BERTBERT

Just tell them the quote from the end.

LEIF

No.

CASPAR

That's a good compromise, quote from the end.

GLORIA

Is it from Independence Day?

AVA

Cannonball Run?

THE EX

Tootsie?

AVA

Cannonball Run II?

CASPAR

Shaft?

THE EX

I could just read his mind.

GLORIA

You had to make it weird.

LEIF

Rutger Hauer's speech from the end of Blade Runner,
okay?

CASPAR

Oh, booooooooooooo!

GLORIA

Get the fuck out of here.

CASPAR

Disrespectful!

LEIF

It was a cooler choice back then!

AVA

Not really.

EFFIE

Y'all.

CASPAR

... Sorry. Sorry, that's on me.

LEIF

Like I said. Like a lot of things I did back then, it was a bad choice. So I'm making a good choice now. Mucklewain's would you mind?

EFFIE

Of course, Leif.

ZEBULON

I say to you now, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the transient inherit the eternal. Listen, and I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised eternal, and we will be changed. For the transient must adorn itself with eternity, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

EFFIE

In the land of my birth, there is a hill. And upon that hill is a rock where I have sat and watched a changing world. "This rock will not change" I would say. I'll pass from this earth but the rock will remain, ever watchful of the land. But my feet kick the dirt beneath me. Were the granules of soil not once like this rock? Is the rock not a collection of their multitudes? Will the rock not return one day to the dirt? And is my path so different? Neither destroyed nor created, but a collection of dust meant to observe a changing world then return to dust.

(MORE)

EFFIE (CONT'D)

What am I meant to do with this time, Lord, when you have roused me from the dust to observe your creation? Is it only to observe? Perhaps to love. Perhaps to cherish. If it be so, then our dear friend, now returned to you, has fulfilled his purpose. May you accept him into your loving grace.

CASPAR AND LEIF ON THE ROOF.

CASPAR

...Where are we right now?

LEIF

I don't know. I don't think it's civilized. It's nice though, a lot of trees. Reminds me of home.

CASPAR

...

LEIF

...

CASPAR

Where's the wine from?

LEIF

Festen. We helped them out of jam, they were very appreciative.

CASPAR

Oh, this was during Gloria's march to the sea?

LEIF

Yeah. Turns out she's way better at running this place than we were.

CASPAR

We set the bar way low and she went way over it.

LEIF

...

CASPAR

...

LEIF

Sorry I didn't tell you I was a criminal.

CASPAR

That's okay... I used to work at the DMV.

LEIF

You did?

CASPAR

Oh yeah. I was a lifer. I had a pension.

LEIF

No offense but that explains a lot.

CASPAR

I know... I'm also 173 years old.

LEIF

What?

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

How?

CASPAR

Turns out Ava wasn't kidding about that shifting point of null entropy business.

LEIF

How'd you find out?

CASPAR

Ex.

LEIF

How old am I?

CASPAR

Not nearly as old. Turns out I was here for a really long time before you showed up.

LEIF

You didn't know it?

CASPAR

No. Turns out when you don't feel the passage of time you don't feel the passage of time.

LEIF

Damn.

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

...

CASPAR

... So who is BertBert?

LEIF

Fuck...

CASPAR

Sorry.

LEIF

She was my first friend. The Teds dropped me off at Sirius A, I didn't know what the fuck I was doing, and she walked right up to me. Introduced herself. Then I spent several years disappointing her. She has a HIGH standard for the company she keeps. I need to talk to her. It's just always so complicated, you know what I mean?

CASPAR

Do I know what you mean? Remember how I told you about the android with godlike powers that was created by my ex wife from an alternate reality to confront me about leaving her?

LEIF

I still can't believe that's where she's from.

CASPAR

It's bananas.

LEIF

I like her though.

CASPAR

Me too. She's a hoot.

LEIF

...

CASPAR

...

LEIF

I just attended my own funeral.

CASPAR

Yeah... yeah that's a... spicy meatball.

LEIF

Feeling pretty strange about it.

CASPAR

Hey, at least you know how it went. Lot of people don't get that.

GLORIA

(on the ground.)
Hey.

LEIF

Hey, Gloria.

GLORIA

One of you come down here and help me.

LEIF

Here I come.

CASPAR

No, I'll do it. Why don't you go talk to BertBert.

LEIF

Okay.

CASPAR

You guys have covered for me in the kitchen long enough.

LEIF

Hey Caspar?

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

I mean, if I'm talking to BertBert...

CASPAR

Yeah, I know. Look we went right into funeral planning mode, I haven't had a chance. I will.

LEIF

Gloria doesn't let shit go unsaid anymore.

CASPAR

I'll talk to her.

CASPAR AND GLORIA IN THE KITCHEN.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Okay so, hi.

GLORIA

Hi.

CASPAR

It is very well organized back here.

GLORIA

Thank you.

CASPAR

Did you ever catch the Parmesan?

GLORIA

Well, it was a beautiful moment, Caspar. The Parmesan teleports from place to place around the kitchen and I can never find it when I need it. So I decided to stop using Parmesan. And that, I think, is the secret to running a time traveling dimension spanning diner.

CASPAR

That's very zen.

GLORIA

I made some changes to the menu.

CASPAR

There's a menu?

GLORIA

There is now.

CASPAR

Ok.

GLORIA

Have you talked to her yet?

CASPAR

Not yet.

GLORIA

How long are you going to do that for?

CASPAR

I'm going to talk to her I haven't had the chance yet.

GLORIA

Im going to hold you to that. Take that pan out of the oven.

CASPAR

The oven? Did I ever use the oven?

GLORIA

I don't think so. The first time I tried to use it there was a book about Napoleon in there.

CASPAR

THATS where I put it. What are these?

GLORIA

Pan de Muerto.

CASPAR

They have little skulls on them.

GLORIA

It's a Day of the Dead thing. Is that weird?

CASPAR

I think the skulls are a little foreboding but I think The Old Man would've loved it.

GLORIA

Okay. Put those on a tray.

CASPAR

Hey, speaking of Napoleon, how was your war?

GLORIA

So great. On the brink of death multiple times. How was your vacation?

CASPAR

Oh my God, the same.

GLORIA

Take those out to them.

CASPAR

Okay. Hey uh... I'm looking for a job.

GLORIA

Really? What kind of skills do you have?

CASPAR

As it turns out I don't have any demonstrable skills, but I do have a real "can don't" attitude.

GLORIA

Well, I'm looking at a lot of resumes right now, I'll be making a decision soon.

CASPAR

Great. I promise I'll let you down...

KITCHEN FADES.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey, you two. I have a plate of cookie type things here and I'm going to bring them outside.

EFFIE

Well that sounds lovely, Caspar.

CASPAR

Yeah.

ZEBULON

...So then you should take them outside to the others.

CASPAR

Yes... So how have y'all been? I heard you turned into robots for a second.

EFFIE

Yes we did, and then later on went in the other way entirely.

CASPAR

No idea what that means, but it sounds fun.

ZEBULON

You mentioned you met some cowboys.

CASPAR

Yeah. Sort of...

EFFIE

Caspar you're being ridiculous-

ZEBULON

Caspar you appear to be biding your time inside with us so as to avoid going outside.

CASPAR

Why would I want to do that? Also why wouldn't I want to be in here with you?

ZEBULON

You are of course more than welcome to be here with us. We've missed you this long while.

CASPAR

And I've missed you guys.

EFFIE

Are y'all having a playing dumb contest?

CASPAR

No, I don't know what you mean.

EFFIE

Caspar, just go talk to Ava.

CASPAR

I will. Not right now.

EFFIE

Then can you at least deliver those confections that Gloria has made, they're just sittin there.

CASPAR

Okay, fine. You're both coming with me though.

EFFIE

I'm bout to knit you a security blanket.

CASPAR

Oh shut up.

DOOR CHIME. BERTBERT, AVA AND SHEL IN THE PARKING LOT.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Cookies!

BERTBERT

So at one point you began to notice that your sun was getting dimmer?

SHEL

What is the thing you're pointing at me?

BERTBERT

Sorry, it records your voice.

SHEL

Okay. Yes the sun was getting dimmer. I'm sure you can imagine how that's bad for me.

BERTBERT

And you think this is because of the Teds building a warp gate?

SHEL

How would I know?

AVA

It definitely was.

BERTBERT

I wish I knew which system it was.

AVA

It was a huge star. We call it a Wolf-Rayet star. There's only a few of them out there.

BERTBERT

Wow. This could've been Billius.

SHEL
What's that?

BERTBERT
Your planet, I think. It was a controversial place.
Some say it had intelligent life, some didn't.

SHEL
I feel pretty intelligent.

BERTBERT
You're obviously an intelligent life form I don't
know how they could've questioned it.

LEIF
Classification bingo. The Teds do it all the time.
They don't like a statistic, they change the
defining parameters. They didn't like that Shel's
planet had intelligent life on it so they changed
the definition of intelligent life.

AVA
Which they probably got away with because someone
like Shel is so rare.

LEIF
That's true. I've been around more than anybody
here, I've never seen a race like Shel's.

SHEL
Is that true?

LEIF
Yeah.

SHEL
I like feeling special but could we maybe tap the
breaks on things that make Shel feel isolated and
alone?

LEIF
Sorry.

BERTBERT
But plant life is everywhere, how could a race like
theirs be so rare?

AVA
Leif, how do you feel about photons as a power
source?

LEIF
Great. Dependable, but it's mellow, y'know. You're
not going to break any records with it.

AVA

But on Shel's planet with it's powerful star,
photosynthetic energy is off the charts, allowing
certain life forms to evolve past the norm.

CASPAR

Cookies?

LEIF

Berts could we talk for a second?

BERTBERT

I'm working.

SHEL

That's okay, you guys talk I want to explore the
surroundings a little.

EFFIE

Don't go far, Shel.

SHEL

I won't!

AVA

I'm going back inside. BertBert, the effects of the
wind chimes have probably worn off. Our next stop
probably won't be in this timeline, so you should
probably make arrangements.

BERTBERT

My ride's on the way. But Ava, I really would like
to sit down with you for some questions before I
go. I have so many questions.

AVA

An interview with a journalist? Twist my arm.

CASPAR

Cookie?

DOOR CHIME.

ZEBULON

Caspar, perhaps we should go inside and allow Leif
and his friend some time-

CASPAR

Where'd Ex get off to? Maybe she wants a cookie,
let's go see.

ZEBULON

Does she eat?

CASPAR

Shut up.

LEIF

...

BERTBERT

...

LEIF

Hi.

BERTBERT

Hello, Leif.

LEIF

I'm glad you're okay.

BERTBERT

Thank you.

LEIF

If I had known you were a prisoner of The Teds I would've-

BERTBERT

I know.

LEIF

I would've burned the whole thing to the ground, Berts.

BERTBERT

And probably would've been killed in the process. I don't need heroics, Leif.

LEIF

I understand.

BERTBERT

You know what I need?

SONIC BOOM IN THE DISTANCE.

LEIF

Wait... did you hear that?

BERTBERT

Hear what?

LEIF

Something just entered the atmosphere.

BERTBERT

Oh come on.

LEIF

I'm serious.

BERTBERT

Leif, you're not required to talk to me and I'm not going to insist, okay-

LEIF

It was in that direction, come with me.

BERTBERT

I'm fine.

LEIF

Hey. I know we won the battle but all of us are still on the most wanted list. This is probably an uncharted planet, nobody should be stopping by. Come with me.

BERTBERT

Fine.

INSIDE THE DINER. AVA AND THE EX. EX WALKS IN FROM THE KITCHEN.

THE EX

Oh. Hi.

AVA

Hello.

THE EX

Gloria gave me a taco. I think to get me out of the kitchen. I don't eat though, so now I'm just standing here with a taco in my hand, do you want it?

AVA

You should try it, I thought you were trying to be more human.

THE EX

Well, I tried a margarita one time and it was fun but... I don't know where it went, if you know what I mean?

AVA

Weird.

THE EX

Yeah.

AVA
What's your energy source?

THE EX
Y'know, just a positive attitude.

AVA
Seriously, though.

THE EX
Seriously I... don't actually know.

AVA
You can't do a systems analysis or something?

THE EX
No. I'm really good at crawling inside other peoples heads but, poetically, I can't crawl inside my own.

AVA
Irony of ironies.

THE EX
I remember my creator saying something about ambient cosmic energy.

AVA
Your creator. That's right. Caspar's ex-wife.

THE EX
That's the one.

AVA
I can't even imagine what she was like. What kind of a nut bar do you have to be to create something like you just to yell at your ex?

THE EX
She wasn't really thinking clearly at the time. She was a very accomplished person. One of those people who could bend the whole world to her will. Always got what she wanted. And when you always get what you want but there's this one thing that you can't get, it tends to drive you a little crazy. And when brilliant people go a little crazy they sometimes accidentally create the most powerful android in the universe. Oops.

AVA
She created an android with godlike powers on a goof?

THE EX
See, for me it's more disturbing if she could do it on purpose. If you can make something godlike on purpose, what does that make you?

AVA
Good point.

THE EX
You would've liked her though.

AVA
A brilliant nutcase? Of course I would have.

THE EX
Anyway, I don't know much about myself but I guess it's not much more than you know about Effie and Zebulon right?

AVA
I think I'm starting to figure them out, actually.

THE EX
Oh yeah? What's their deal?

AVA
Can't you just read my mind?

THE EX
Yeah, do you want me to?

AVA
No. I think they're a collapsing waveform.

THE EX
That sounds cool.

AVA
On a quantum level, particles act like waves, but when they're being observed they act like particles again. A long time ago, Caspar walked into an empty, dust covered diner and the radio came on. Suddenly two people existed. And I think that when no one's around, they don't.

THE EX
You think they only exist when there's someone else around?

AVA
Yes. And if no one is around and they do still exist, is it because I'm wrong or is it because they are still, in some way, being observed?

THE EX
...It is such a bong rip being around you.

AVA
I know, right?

THE EX
...

AVA
Look, just make your case, okay?

THE EX
What case?

AVA
You want me to be forgiving or understanding or something. You want to tell me that Caspar's not such a bad guy.

THE EX
Well, he's not such a bad guy, Ava. But I'm not worried about it. Your anger towards him is like a collapsing waveform, it only exists when it's being observed.

DOOR CHIME.

GLORIA
Hey, the foods almost ready, where is everybody?

AVA
I don't know, they all started doing their own thing.

GLORIA
Their own thing? What kind of fucking funeral is this?

AVA
The kind that's on an alien planet for a dead guy from the future. How much tradition were you expecting exactly?

GLORIA
Did you try the Pan de Muerto?

AVA
The what?

GLORIA
The cookies.

AVA

Oh. No, I didn't.

GLORIA

Is it too weird that they have skulls on them?

AVA

It rules that they have skulls on them, they were on a tray being held by Caspar so I didn't have one.

GLORIA

Uh huh. How long do you think I'm going to tolerate that behavior?

AVA

We're going to find out.

GLORIA

Whatever. I'm going to go get everyone.

AVA

Have fun.

LEIF AND BERTBERT ON THE TRAIL.

LEIF

It came from over there, I think.

BERTBERT

Whatever it is could be a thousand miles away, Leif.

LEIF

I just want to make sure there's nothing nearby. Sorry, all this time back in The Triad has made me a little jumpy.

BERTBERT

Its fine... Did you seriously consider making a time machine to fix things with me?

LEIF

Like I said, I only talked about that when I was drunk.

BERTBERT

Well that's great, nobody ever says anything true when they're drunk.

LEIF

When you realize you've gone in the wrong direction with your life, sometimes you turn that regret into a person.

(MORE)

LEIF (CONT'D)

You convince yourself if you patch things up with them, you can roll back all the mistakes you made. That person for me, was you. And that's unfair. You're not a symbol, you're a person. That's what the time machine plan was about.

BERTBERT

Okay.

LEIF

Look, just tell me why your mad at me. Not because I don't know, just to get it all out there. Here we go. Let me have it.

BERTBERT

Fine. I was always mad about your criminal nonsense but tried to look the other way. I was incredibly mad that you joined up with Låfftrax who is a fucking murderer, but I was even more furious when I find out YEARS later that you had actually left the pirate life and were just wandering around as a cook. You're a terrible cook.

LEIF

I know. In my defense I had to keep a low profile. The Teds AND Låfftrax were looking for me at that point. What if they tried to use you against me? So I kept to the outer rims and didn't make waves... and then suddenly there was a diner... it was nice not being that guy for a while. Then we got trapped here in The Triad and it all came back to haunt me.

BERTBERT

Maybe that was for the best.

LEIF

Not for the old man, it wasn't... look this is stupid. I'm sure the sonic boom was nothing, probably just Vapian Roamers like it always is. We can head back.

BERTBERT

Uh. I think we've solved the mystery.

OLD LEIF

Hello Leif.

LEIF

...Old Leif.

OLD LEIF

It's good to see you.

BERTBERT

How many of you are there?

OLD LEIF

Just two now, Berts. It's good to see you, too.

BERTBERT

Sure... look I'm going to head back to camp so you can catch up with yourself.

LEIF

Berts. I'm glad we talked.

BERTBERT

Me too, Leif.

LEIF

...Look at you.

OLD LEIF

Look at me.

LEIF

You're wearing robes.

OLD LEIF

I am.

LEIF

Caspar told me you're on an Urt Moon now. I didn't believe him.

OLD LEIF

I am. Mrunmayi Salil. It's been great. A lot of time to think about things, let go of things. It's beautiful there, and the Urt Monks have created a really beautiful sanctuary.

LEIF

Wow... It's so hard to imagine myself meditating.

OLD LEIF

It was for me too.

LEIF

How did you find us?

OLD LEIF

The old man. He still had his end of life beacon on.

LEIF

Of course he did.

OLD LEIF

I picked it up on Mrunmayi. So I followed the diner's pre-print and that brought me here. Thought I'd check in on you.

LEIF

I appreciate it. You just missed the funeral. Our funeral.

OLD LEIF

How was it?

LEIF

Good.

OLD LEIF

You didn't do the Blade Runner speech did you?

LEIF

No, thank god. Effie and Zebulon said some really nice bible stuff. Although, what Effie said was almost Buddhist Transcendentalism, it was kind of weird.

OLD LEIF

I had no idea what you were getting up these past few months. There's no news feeds at the monastery. I got into a ship I borrowed and it all hit me at once.

LEIF

Pretty crazy, right?

OLD LEIF

I'm really regretting not having a Gloria in my timeline.

LEIF

She's really something, huh? It's funny, it all kind of started with her. We show up in Arizona, she walks in the door, after a minute she knocks over the radio. Then Caspar starts getting agitated, then he shoves Ava into deep space, then the Teds show up, then she declares war. It all started with her.

OLD LEIF

It's funny you say that. My entire time in the diner I always felt like it was waiting for something. Like there was a missing piece.

LEIF

I still feel like there's a missing piece.

OLD LEIF

I know what you mean. But with you all I don't feel that way.

LEIF

Really?

OLD LEIF

Yeah. It's like the pieces are in place but something else is missing.

LEIF

What?

OLD LEIF

I'm not sure. I never did much thinking about what the diner was. That was always Ava's department. But when you're learning how to meditate at a secluded monastery, the mind does tend to wander. I guess if I had to choose a word it would be... purpose. Purpose seems to be missing. I know you prefer to see the world as a bowl of chaos, Leif. You all do. But I think the next challenge is, "for what purpose". You've struggled to stay together. Now you're together. So then... what now?

LEIF

We are... different.

OLD LEIF

Yes. The cosmos conspired to make all three of us very different. So if you're spending any time today regarding this funeral as your own... It's not. It's just a funeral for an old friend named Leif.

LEIF

You should come up and say hi.

OLD LEIF

... Actually... I think this is all I came here to do. This should be a day for you all. I just thought I should come check in on you.

LEIF

I appreciate it. It's been a weird day. Don't be a stranger okay?

OLD LEIF

You know, I've given up all my worldly possessions but I did hang on to a deep scanner. If I see you show up in the neighborhood, I'll swing by for a Monte Cristo.

LEIF

Sounds good.

OLD LEIF

And hey. All the spiritual mumbo jumbo aside. The Old Man died surrounded by people who love him, defeating an old enemy. It's the dream. Goodbye Leif.

LEIF

I'll be seeing you.

CASPAR, EFFIE AND ZEBULON IN THE WOODS.

CASPAR

173 years, Mucklewains.

ZEBULON

That's quite a collection of time.

CASPAR

I am older than all post-Soviet nations. I am older than the Queen of England. I am older than the automobile. I am older than all forms of popular music.

EFFIE

Not to diminish your moment Caspar, but you're still playing in the minor leagues from a biblical perspective.

ZEBULON

This is very true. The son's of Adam lived for hundreds of years.

CASPAR

All of them?

ZEBULON

Well, the youngest was Enoch, who only lived to the age of 365.

CASPAR

What?

ZEBULON

Then upwards of that Noah lived to the age of 950 and his grandfather, Methuselah, lived to 962.

CASPAR

Boy that Mediterranean diet really is something, isn't it?

EFFIE

You can make fun if you like, Caspar, we're just trying to let you know you're in good company.

CASPAR

I don't know why I'm getting into this because I'm sure the answer is somehow "Jesus" but is there any good reason why everyone in the old school bible lived longer most civilizations?

EFFIE

Well, I imagine because they had a whole lot to do, Caspar. They had just left the garden of Eden and had to, over a long period of time, figure things out.

CASPAR

Like what?

EFFIE

Like perhaps how to hand out freshly made cookies to one's friends and not hide in the woods with the whole darn tray.

CASPAR

Very funny. I panicked.

ZEBULON

That was fairly clear, Caspar.

CASPAR

After 173 years I shouldn't be panicking about anything. Everything should be boring. Even in this place.

ZEBULON

I don't imagine all those years we spent were quite the same as the one's we'd spent back home. I imagine they flew by unnoticed as perhaps they did with the sons of Adam. Trudging across the landscape, waiting for a new world to begin.

CASPAR

Have you two just been sitting there for 173 years waiting for me to, I don't know, snap out of it this whole time?

ZEBULON

I'm sure it may seem that way, Caspar, but we've not sat here with secret knowledge all this time. It has been a journey, even for us.

EFFIE

It has. We've learned many things about ourselves
in your absence.

ZEBULON

Yes, we've learned that we can, at times, inhabit
automatons.

EFFIE

Yes. And also at times become two other people
entirely.

CASPAR

Yeah I got a taste of that before remember?

EFFIE

Well yes, but now we can do it on demand.

CASPAR

That sounds like a fun trick but I don't ever-

STATIC BUZZING.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Oh god.

ZEBULON

(As Frank.)

Doc, coming up next we've got Caspar, calling from,
it says here, hiding in a glade of trees.

EFFIE

(As Dr. Barbara)

Well that's quite a location, isn't it Frank?

ZEBULON

Definitely a first.

EFFIE

Caspar, it says you're calling from a glade of
trees, I'm a little jealous, it sounds nice. How
can we help you tonight... Caspar are you there? did
we lose him?

CASPAR

Hello, Dr. Barbara.

EFFIE

There he is, Caspar I'm sensing some hesitation,
not to worry, just try and remember you're the one
who called in tonight.

CASPAR

Oh is that what I did?

EFFIE

Caspar, Frank and I are all nestled in here in the studio and we're very happy to talk to you. Frank, what are you drinking over there?

ZEBULON

Doc it's a spicy Mexican hot chocolate.

EFFIE

Oh, well my goodness. I'm sitting here with my camomile tea feeling like a fool.

ZEBULON

It is pretty great.

EFFIE

I've got some warm beverage fomo. Is that what they call it Frank? Fomo?

ZEBULON

I think so.

CASPAR

What the fuck is happening?

EFFIE

Alright, Caspar, talk to us. How can we help you tonight?

CASPAR

... I spent some time away. I had to take care of some things. And while I was away I learned some things. Now I'm back and there's people who don't know I learned these things... and they hate me. Now I have to go back in to all those old feelings and dredge them all up when what I really want is to move on.

EFFIE

Caspar it sounds to me that you've done some very exciting emotional work for yourself lately, is that fair to say?

CASPAR

... Yeah, okay, sure.

EFFIE

It's nice to be on a journey isn't it? Doing that hard work and having the wind at your back is quite a feeling, isn't it?

ZEBULON

I know it is for me, Doc.

EFFIE

You know what I like about taking a journey, Caspar? You get to take others with you. And don't you want to take this person with you on this journey of yours?

CASPAR

... Yes.

EFFIE

And listen to that wonderfully honest answer you just gave, wasn't that wonderful, Frank?

ZEBULON

It was really nice, Doc.

EFFIE

I really want you to hang onto that feeling, Caspar. Let it be the North Star of your journey. And just remember that some journeys are smooth sailing and some are all about throwing the jeep into four wheel drive and getting over that rocky terrain. What do you think of that?

CASPAR

Sure, Dr Barbara. Sounds great.

RADIO STATIC.

EFFIE

(Back to herself.)
Wasn't that somethin'?

CASPAR

Let's head back.

GLORIA AND SHEL IN THE TREES.

GLORIA

Shel?

SHEL

Seriously, I'm just standing here.

GLORIA

Shit. I'm sorry. We keep doing that.

SHEL

It's okay.

GLORIA

I'm trying to track everybody down, the foods almost ready. I know you're not going to eat it but you should be there, it's a special occasion.

SHEL

Sure...

GLORIA

... What is it?

SHEL

... This is the place.

GLORIA

What is... oh... it is?

SHEL

Yeah, I think so.

GLORIA

Here?

SHEL

Here.

GLORIA

How do you know?

SHEL

Um... I don't actually.

GLORIA

What do you mean?

SHEL

They were all talking about me back there...
Apparently I'm really rare. There's not a lot of
things out there like me. I may be one of a kind.

GLORIA

Of course you're one of a kind.

SHEL

I mean... The only one. It got me thinking. How long
am I supposed to search for? I could wait around
forever. Get so big that I don't even fit inside
the diner anymore. I've got a lot of work to do.
Maybe it's not about me finding it, it's about me
choosing it.

GLORIA

How do you know it has everything you need?

SHEL

I don't. My sun was different but this planet has
two of them, so that could be interesting. The soil
is good. There's a river nearby... Look around. See
these huge trees?

(MORE)

SHEL (CONT'D)

They're all connected to each other under the ground. They share water, they share information, if one of them is sick they can send nutrients, they talk to each other. And when I wondered over here they started talking to me too.

GLORIA

What are they saying?

SHEL

"Hello."

GLORIA

Man, Shel, I'm going to worry about you so much though.

SHEL

I know. But I'll be okay. I mean, let's be real, I'll probably be safer here than in the diner.

GLORIA

Yeah, okay. That's probably true. Wow... this is a big step, Shel.

SHEL

Gloria, I have to revive an entire race of people. It's only big steps from now on.

GLORIA

I wish I knew, I would've thrown you a going away party.

SHEL

Technically a funeral is a going away party.

GLORIA

Sure, I guess... so how does it work?

SHEL

How does what work?

GLORIA

How do you make a whole race of people?

SHEL

Are you asking me how I make babies?

GLORIA

Well don't say it like that, it sounds weird.

SHEL

Why do you need to know?

GLORIA

Because I'm not just going to drop you off and say good luck, I need details.

SHEL

Okay. It's not complicated. I get flowers on my back.

GLORIA

Okay.

SHEL

And then the flowers turn into seeds, and then I take good care of the seeds, and then, if I'm lucky, they turn into something like me.

GLORIA

Are you scared?

SHEL

No. I'm excited. It'll be nice to do something that doesn't make me feel out of place.

GLORIA

I guess it's been kind of rough living with us, huh?

SHEL

No. I learned a lot. More than anyone from my race has ever learned. It's kind of the reason I'm stopping here. That guy Caspar, he came all that way just to be with his people. I felt that. People need their people. I need some of that. I guess sometimes you find them and sometimes you have to make them from flowers on your back.

GLORIA

We can't be your people, can we?

SHEL

No. It's like they're waiting out there to be born.

GLORIA

I understand... you know I learned something from you, too.

SHEL

What did you learn?

GLORIA

That I'm mad.

SHEL

You're mad? What are you mad at?

GLORIA

Everything, kind of.

SHEL

You're not mad at me, are you?

GLORIA

No, no. Not at you... When I left my planet things were NOT going well. It was a mess. And I think when I first climbed aboard the great space coaster over there it was to get away from all that. I was trying to escape. And then I met you, and I saw what The Teds had done to you, and I saw the same old shit that I was trying to get away from. I couldn't get away from it. I had to face it.

SHEL

That doesn't sound like any fun.

GLORIA

I had something I really loved back on Earth. It was a restaurant, like the diner but, y'know, it stayed put. Every ounce of myself went into it and then, in an instant it was gone. There was nothing I could do about it. I could only sit there and watch it happen. Sell off the appliances that I had just bought a few months ago, give all the food away to friends. Take the sign out of the window. There was literally nothing I could've done. Here's the thing. Out here, with the diner, I fucking won. We actually beat the bad guys. And that does not happen where I'm from. Where I'm from you duck and cover and hope for the best, hope that the random clouds of destruction that swirl around don't choose you this time. I could... this shouldn't be a rare feeling but, I could do something. The world wasn't a horror show that I had to just sit there and watch. It was like I wasn't in the audience anymore, I was in the story. And this story could end up however I wanted it to.

SHEL

There's random clouds of destruction on your planet?

GLORIA

It's a metaphor. Sometimes. Anyway, I'm going to hang on to that feeling. And I found that feeling because of you.

SHEL

Well... you're welcome.

GLORIA

You've got to come back and say goodbye to everyone, okay?

SHEL

I will. Just give me one more second with my new friends, okay?

GLORIA

Okay... Are you sure you're going to be okay?

SHEL

I'm going to be okay, I promise.

GLORIA

Okay. The food's almost ready, which means nothing to you but come on back and we'll put your feet in some wine.

SHEL

Sounds good. I'll be right there.

GLORIA

Okay.

GLORIA GOES AND SHEL SIGHS HEAVILY.

THE EX

That was sweet.

SHEL

Oh fuck! Jesus! Shit!

THE EX

Sorry.

SHEL

So that's what that's like.

THE EX

Did you not know I was here?

SHEL

I didn't!

THE EX

Well. Hi.

SHEL

Hi.

THE EX

I was sitting right here.

SHEL

I... I can kind of sense when they're around.

THE EX

How's that?

SHEL

I'm not sure. I think it's because of these spores that I emit. They interact with their brains so I can speak their language but it kind of gives me a residual...

THE EX

Vibe?

SHEL

Sure. Gloria's over there, Leif is off that way somewhere, Ava's at her booth. But with you...

THE EX

Aha.

SHEL

I can't read you.

THE EX

That makes sense. I'm just a little bit different from them.

SHEL

Just a little... Do you... not have a brain?

THE EX

I don't know tons about myself. But I can tell you that my creator described me as "single structure crystalline adaptive". I think that means that my brain and my body are the same thing.

SHEL

Weird.

THE EX

I know right?

SHEL

Somebody made you?

THE EX

Yeah. She was nuts... so you're staying here, huh?

SHEL

I am.

THE EX
Scary, right?

SHEL
No. No I think it's going to be fine... it'll be fine.

THE EX
Uh huh.

SHEL
It'll be hard. It'll be hard but I think I can come up with a plan, I think I can figure it out.

THE EX
Sure... so, another fun fact about me is that I can read minds.

SHEL
Even mine?

THE EX
Yep.

SHEL
I was hoping I was different.

THE EX
Nope.

SHEL
So you read my mind?

THE EX
Just a little bit. Just kind of read the book jacket.

SHEL
The book jacket?

THE EX
You're scared out of your mind, Shel.

SHEL
I am. I can't tell them that.

THE EX
I know.

SHEL
They won't understand.

THE EX
I know.

SHEL

I don't know what I'm going to do.

THE EX

I know that too.

SHEL

It's impossible. I'm just one person. One person shouldn't have this responsibility. It's too much. If I... if I fail it's like my race dies all over again. That's too much for anybody.

THE EX

Right again.

SHEL

I'm not prepared for the responsibility. I'm not prepared for the guilt that I'll feel when I fail.

THE EX

Way ahead of you.

SHEL

We're plants, okay? Our lives aren't supposed to be stressful!

THE EX

You're right.

SHEL

Sorry, I guess I've been holding that in for a while.

THE EX

I guess so.

SHEL

This is too much. This is going to be a disaster.

THE EX

You know what I've noticed? There's this pattern the universe has of giving a lot of work to people with very little power, a very little work to people who are very powerful. Have you noticed that?

SHEL

No, not really.

THE EX

You're a four foot tree who has to regrow an entire planet's worth of people and I am maybe one of the most powerful beings in the universe and all I had to do was track down somebody's ex-husband. How's that fair?

SHEL

It's not.

THE EX

There should be a partnership don't you think? Between the powerful and the powerless? They should hang out more.

SHEL

What are you talking about?

THE EX

I got all my powers back yesterday.

SHEL

You were LESS powerful yesterday?

THE EX

When we destroyed the wind chimes I got them back. I can see time now. How it twists and turns. I can travel through it if I want. Like the diner does.

SHEL

You can see my future?

THE EX

All of them, yes.

SHEL

Do I want to know what happens?

THE EX

In almost every timeline, you fail, Shel. You try your hardest in all of them, but in the end it's just too much for one person.

SHEL

...Fuck.

THE EX

Which is why I'm going to stay too.

SHEL

You're... what?

THE EX

I'm going to stay here. With you.

SHEL
What... why? Why would you do that?

THE EX
Because you need help.

SHEL
That's the only reason?

THE EX
Does there need to be another reason?

SHEL
I don't know, is there one?

THE EX
Yes.

SHEL
What is it?

THE EX
I think what you're doing is important. I believe in it. So I want to help.

SHEL
In my limited experience with other beings there's not a lot of that attitude going around.

THE EX
I know, but there is with me.

SHEL
Forgive my paranoia but I don't even know you.

THE EX
I'm great.

SHEL
Okay, but also terrifying.

THE EX
Not really, though.

SHEL
You destroyed all those scary metal things.

THE EX
They're the bad guys.

SHEL
You only do that to bad guys?

THE EX
Yes.

SHEL
Who decides who the bad guys are?

THE EX
Shel. Look, you'd be helping me out, okay?

SHEL
How?

THE EX
Because... Because I'm immortal. And invincible. And I can travel through space and time. And I'm very, very strong... and I need that to mean something. I have to give it meaning. And I'd like to do that with you.

SHEL
... What does my future look like if you stay?

THE EX
Honestly? Fucking great.

SHEL
... okay... so like... how strong are you?

THE EX
Real strong.

SHEL
Like, could you pick up that boulder?

THE EX
Yeah... oh, you want me to pick it up right now?

SHEL
Yeah.

THE EX
Okay, hang on.

THE EX STRAINS AS THE HUGE BOULDER IS LIFTED ABOVE HER HEAD.

SHEL
Oh my God.

THE EX
What do you think?

SHEL
Can you throw it?

THE EX
Where?

SHEL
Over there!

THE EX
Okay... here... we... go!

PAUSE AS THEY WATCH THE BOULDER GO SAILING. IT SMASHES
AGAINST NEARBY ROCKS.

SHEL
Holy shit!

THE EX
Cool right?

SOUND OF A ROCKSLIDE.

THE EX (CONT'D)
Oh... oops... made a Little Rock slide there.
Uninhabited planet right?

SHEL
Yeah, yeah, it's fine. Do you think you could move
a river?

THE EX
I don't see why not.

CASPAR
Is this the Highland Games? What the hell is
happening over here?

EFFIE
Did she throw that whole rock all the way over
yonder?

THE EX
I did.

SHEL
Hi everyone!

ZEBULON
Y'all, Caspar is going around seeing if anyone
would like cookies and for some reason he has
decided to approach the two people who do not eat.

CASPAR
Shut up.

SHEL
Effie, Zebulon, I've decided I'm staying here.

EFFIE
Really?

SHEL
Yep.

ZEBULON
Are you sure, Shel?

SHEL
Yeah. It's a nice place, don't you think?

EFFIE
It is lovely. Certainly worse places to make a fresh start.

ZEBULON
Isn't that wonderful, Caspar?

CASPAR
Sure, yeah. Mazel tov. Welcome to your new civilization. Um, don't build malls, and, y'know there's never enough post offices.

EFFIE
Oh, you know, that is true, that is a good notion, Caspar.

ZEBULON
Shel are you sure you'll be alright here by yourself?

THE EX
They won't be. I'm staying too.

EFFIE
Oh.

ZEBULON
Oh?

CASPAR
What?

EFFIE
Hmm.

ZEBULON
Hmmm.

EFFIE

Well...

ZEBULON

Well, it's an odd pairing but...

EFFIE

But it feels right, doesn't it?

ZEBULON

It does.

CASPAR

Hang on.

ZEBULON

And Shel will certainly be safe with someone such as you around.

EFFIE

Oh I do not envy the creature that crosses you two.

THE EX

It's true.

CASPAR

Shel, can you take the radio please?

SHEL

Sure.

CASPAR

Ex, come here.

THE EX

I'm sorry can I help you?

CASPAR

Yes, by coming here.

SHEL

Do you think Caspar's mad that I'm taking his friend?

EFFIE

Caspar will be just fine, Shel.

ZEBULON

He gets attached, though he wouldn't know it.

EFFIE

How are you feeling, Dear?

SHEL

I feel good, I think. I wasn't a second ago but. I don't know, I saw her throw that rock and I got really excited.

ZEBULON

She'll be a very useful companion.

EFFIE

Certainly more useful than we have been.

SHEL

...Jeez, I have a whole planet.

ZEBULON

You do.

SHEL

What am I going to do with it all?

EFFIE

Whatever you like, I imagine.

SHEL

I guess I have to name it. Should I name it something from the Bible?

EFFIE

Well that's a nice sentiment.

ZEBULON

But perhaps... no, Shel. You shouldn't.

SHEL

No?

ZEBULON

You are forging your own path. Writing your own book, in a way. It should be something that comes from within you. Something that looks forward. It's a beautiful gift you've been given. A fresh start. A chance to do things right without the impediments of evil.

EFFIE

And if evil ever comes calling, at least you now have a strange lady that can hurl large stones at them.

SHEL

Absolutely.

CASPAR

What are you doing?

THE EX

I told you.

CASPAR

What... this doesn't feel a little random to you?

THE EX

No, it actually feels really perfect.

CASPAR

What happened to your quest for humanity?

THE EX

I'm done with it.

CASPAR

You're just going to toss that aside and start a sentient nursery?

THE EX

No, I mean, I'm done. I figured it out.

CASPAR

You figured it out.

THE EX

Yeah.

CASPAR

Humanity?

THE EX

Nailed it.

CASPAR

Well you're the first can you share the secret to humanity, please?

THE EX

The secret is this. What I'm doing with Shel.

CASPAR

What are you talking about?

THE EX

Look, don't be mad, but I may have gone rooting around in your head one last time.

CASPAR

Goddamnit.

THE EX

Just one last time, for old times sake.

CASPAR

I'm assuming "boundaries" aren't the secret.

THE EX

The Velveteen Rabbit. It was your favorite. Do you remember that one line? "Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you."

CASPAR

I remember the line.

THE EX

Being human is something that happens to you. And what happens to you... is each other. Ava was telling me about Effie and Zebulon, and how she thinks that when no one else is around, Effie and Zebulon don't exist. A collapsing waveform, she calls it. The thing is, you're all sort of like that. You come to exist in each other. You're not in there Caspar.

GLORIA

(Calling from the diner.)

Okay, can everyone get their asses back here please? I've got a whole taco situation and it's just sitting here.

THE EX

You're in there. So get in there.

FORK HITTING A GLASS SEVERAL TIMES.

LEIF

Everyone, can I have your attention while we're all enjoying these amazing tacos that Gloria has prepared?

BERTBERT

Yeah, Gloria, oh my God. I can never eat space Mexican food again, I'm ruined.

GLORIA

That's what I like to hear.

THE EX

Should we try eating?

SHEL

Absolutely not, I've got my feet in a bucket of wine and that is all I need. I'll be needing a recipe for wine before I go, by the way.

LEIF

I've got one for you... Everyone I just wanted to say a few things. I am Leif.

(MORE)

LEIF (CONT'D)

I was born in Northern California to a couple of hippies. I became an engineer. Did some really cool shit. Then, I left Earth and started roaming the galaxies. I bummed around for a while. Learned some things. Then I started doing some crimes here and there, mainly because I thought it was cool. Then wound up turning into way more serious of a criminal than I had meant to be. Then I left the life and became a cook. And then suddenly there was a diner... I'm sorry that I subjected you all to the very slow roll out of who I actually was. But, like Shel not telling us that they were poisonous-

SHEL

-sorry again!

LEIF

-I just wanted you all to like me. I promise that there are no more revelations about this guy right here.

BERTBERT

Except for you thinking that Star Wars is problematic.

CASPAR

Oh, come on.

LEIF

Listen-

BERTBERT

Or that your left thumb had to be regrown in a Truskan med bay.

GLORIA

What?

AVA

Simultaneously cool and gross.

LEIF

No MAJOR revelations. Okay?

GLORIA

Leif. We love you. Water under the bridge, okay?

LEIF

Okay. Shel, let me give you that recipe.

SHEL

Yessssssssssss.

ZEBULON

Well that was a wonderfully honest speech by Leif, wasn't it, dear?

EFFIE

It was lovely. You know, Husband, it is almost as if it is a time for honesty. A time to bear one's soul.

ZEBULON

To build bridges from one soul to another.

CASPAR

I'm literally sitting right in front of the radio. And you two are talking like I'm nowhere to be found.

ZEBULON

Oh he's a sharp one, isn't he?

EFFIE

How in the world were we found out?

CASPAR

Very funny.

EFFIE

Caspar, it is time. Step to.

CASPAR

I am eating my tacos right now. I'm enjoying my tacos. Please allow me this taco time.

ZEBULON

Caspar, I'm going to start playing yodeling.

CASPAR

Zebulon, god damn it, don't you fucking dare-

YODELING MUSIC.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Fucking, shut it off. Shut it off! Shut it the fuck off!

YODELING STOPS.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

I fucking hate yodeling.

ZEBULON

I have an extensive collection of yodeling, Caspar.

CASPAR

Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fuck it.

CASPAR CROSSES THE ROOM.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Mind if I sit?

AVA

Okay.

CASPAR

... I uh, I got your notes from the Teds when Ex saved me. But they were on board the Nancy Sinatra.

AVA

Oh well...

CASPAR

... Hey the Teds said they couldn't read them.

AVA

They're written in grôte.

CASPAR

What is that?

AVA

It's a dead form of shorthand.

CASPAR

Why were they written in that?

AVA

To keep people from stealing my shit. Looks like it worked...

CASPAR

...

AVA

...I see you got back together with your Ex, congratulations.

CASPAR

Well, opposites attract. I breathe, she doesn't.

AVA

I'm sure you'll be very happy together.

CASPAR

No, haven't you heard? The invincible android and the plant person are going to stay behind and raise kids together, so, take that, Focus on the Family.

AVA

...

CASPAR

...

CASPAR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... I was a terrible asshole to you and I'm very very sorry. I'd like to-

AVA

No.

CASPAR

... No?

AVA

No.

CASPAR

No... no, what?

AVA

You don't get to stroll back in here with an apology pinned to your shirt like a kindergartner and just make everything okay.

CASPAR

Well what the fuck else am I supposed to do other than apologize-

AVA

I don't know, that's not my problem. I'm having a cigarette.

CASPAR

Ava, come on.

DOOR CHIME.

YODELING MUSIC PLAYS.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Fucking stop it! Okay. Okay fine.

DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Look if you want to fire up the way back machine and argue like I never left that's fine.

AVA

I don't need anything from you.

CASPAR

Well tough shit, here I am anyway.

AVA

That's right, I forgot that everything needs to revolve around your emotional state.

CASPAR

That's rich coming from someone who has no emotional states.

AVA

I've got all kinds of emotional states, this emotional state is called "I don't give a shit about your emotional state".

CASPAR

Oh right, I forgot, because everything is just fermions and bosons right? Nothing matters.

AVA

All kinds of things matter to me, you're mad because YOU'RE thing doesn't matter to me.

CASPAR

I'm just trying to apologize.

AVA

And I don't care.

CASPAR

Oh fuck this.

DOOR CHIME.

YODELING MUSIC BEING PLAYED FROM INSIDE THE DINER.

DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Is this how you treated Gloria and Leif? I recall them being there too.

AVA

I'm sorry, are you referring to when you shoved me off the edge of the parking lot into deep space?

CASPAR

Yes, Ava, that's what I'm referring to. Leif and Gloria agreed to the plan to give you the old heave ho, I don't see them getting dragged out here.

AVA

You can go the fuck back inside any time.

CASPAR

The rules are different for me?

AVA

So it took no convincing from you? You didn't argue with them until they got so exhausted that they just gave up? What's that like? Being surrounded by people you've exhausted into submission?

CASPAR

All I had to do was tell Leif he had to build something. Gloria agreed right on the spot. The rules for me are different?

AVA

Yes they are.

CASPAR

Could I get a list of all the rules that apply only to me pleas?

AVA

I'll make you a list and shove it right up your ass-

CASPAR

You're the one who stranded us in deep space in the first place, but I'm the bad guy, how are you any different?!

AVA

Because I kept us together! And you shoved me away! It's different for you!

CASPAR

... And I'm trying to apologize-

AVA

Fuck your apology.

CASPAR

...

AVA

...

AVA (CONT'D)

Gloria can cook. Leif can build things, Effie and Zebulon can do all sorts of shit and I'm a fucking genius. Then there's you. You do not for one second, give any thanks for being surrounded by the only people in the cosmos who can tolerate your bullshit. All of us, in one way or another, are grateful to be here. We think it's amazing.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

Then there's you. Why are you like this?... Y'know what? Never mind. I don't care.

CASPAR

...

AVA

...

CASPAR

Did anyone named David stop by?

AVA

What?

CASPAR

Did anyone named David stop by?

AVA

David? No, what... what are you talking about? Who's David?

CASPAR

My son...

AVA

...

CASPAR

It was stupid, I should've told you...

AVA

What the fuck.

CASPAR

I'm going to go ahead and set aside the usual bullshit between us and I'm going to go ahead and say that you care about me... and even though you care about me, I'm also going to say that I bet you can imagine me as a pretty terrible father... because I was... I was just angry all the time. So was he. He was allowed to be though... I kept telling myself I was going to start tomorrow. I was going to be a good father tomorrow, I was going to start tomorrow. Today I'll just be pissed off about everything, I'll be a good father tomorrow. And then he was gone. Left a note for his mom. He couldn't take it anymore. I was furious... when you don't hit your kid or set them on fire or whatever, its really easy to convince yourself that you're a great parent. Turns out there's a universe of ways that you can be bad at it.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Really terrible at it... I picked up my keys and I walked out the door and I started looking for him... and I just never came back. Lost my job, lost my marriage... Signed divorce papers in a Super 8 motel in Nevada. And I just kept looking... because I was going to start tomorrow. My car broke down in a part of California that they don't make postcards about... and there it was. I went in to use the phone.

Once I wrapped my mind around what this place was I formed this plan. That if he needs help, eventually the diner would show up, and I'd be able to give him a cup of coffee and tell him I'm sorry...

AVA

Why didn't you say anything?

CASPAR

Because it was a stupid plan. I convinced myself I needed to find him so I could make sure he was okay but that's not true. I was trying to make it never have happened in the first place. Because I was going to start tomorrow.

It's easy to stick to a stupid plan when there's no one else around. And there was no one else around for a very, very long time. Then Leif showed up. Then you, then Gloria showed up and knocked the radio over. It was getting harder and harder to stick to my plan. And my plan, as ridiculous as it was, was all I had. But then I pushed you off the edge of the parking lot and I realized that wasn't true, that wasn't all that I had... I didn't mean to surround myself with people I care about. I meant to do the opposite. I meant to punish myself. But the cosmos, which seem to me to be nothing more than a giant engine of punishment, this one time said "No. This one, we give him friends." And I think that's probably fucked me up more than anything.

AVA

Caspar. He's almost certainly never going to walk through the door.

CASPAR

I know. That's what makes it so stupid. What's more, even if he did show up, which timeline is he from? Is it the timeline where I did everything right? Is it the timeline where I never existed at all? He's better off in both of those. You know, none of us really want to admit it, but the only home that any of us have anymore is each other. Or the home we choose for ourselves. I'm choosing now... I thought I had killed you.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

When I found out I hadn't, I crawled across three galaxies to get here... I already have one apology I'm never going to be able to make. I can't let there be two. I'm so sorry.

DOOR CHIME.

GLORIA

Y'all. It's about time for our passengers to get off... is it safe?

AVA

...We're okay.

GLORIA

Okay. Come on out, everyone.

SHEL

I'm keeping the wine bucket.

BERTBERT

I'm taking extra tacos.

LEIF

You guys sure you have everything you need? I've got a laser saw.

THE EX

I am a laser saw.

GLORIA

Okay, you three get right past the pavement, there.

CASPAR

Give me just a minute, okay? I'll be right back.

DOOR CHIME. CASPAR WALKS THROUGH THE DINER AND OPENS THE WALK-IN.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Ted!

TED

What the fuck am I doing here?

CASPAR

Well, Ted, it's a funny story.

TED

I'm sure it's not.

CASPAR

There was a bit of an explosion, there Ted. I'm sure you saw.

TED
It obliterated my ship.

CASPAR
And it looks like you wound up back in your old friend The Escape Pod.

TED
I did?

CASPAR
Perfectly bookending our time together.

TED
Then how did I end up here?

CASPAR
Well, your escape pod, in a stinging irony, landed in our parking lot.

TED
That's impossible.

CASPAR
That's what I said, Ted. That's impossible. I mean, space, as I'm sure you've noticed, is huge. And out of all that nothing out there, your escape pod chose the one place where there was something. Dizzying odds.

TED
Any chance of you just putting me back in the escape pod and letting me go?

CASPAR
No, we can't do that, Leif has already scrapped it for parts, he's very excited.

TED
Great.

CASPAR
We're looking less and less like a diner every day. Scrap yard by the dumpster, workshop on the roof, Gloria's making Mexican food, next thing you know, Ava's going to have a chalkboard.

TED
Nothing for you?

CASPAR
I'm hoping for a pinball machine. Fingers crossed.

TED

What's going to happen to me then?

CASPAR

Well, for a while the debate was raging. There are some people out there that, wow, really hate you, Ted. There's a woman out there named BertBert, basically wants to turn you into a loose meat sandwich.

TED

Oh, fuck.

CASPAR

Lot of animosity coming from a four foot plant that's probably never hated anything in their life, Ted.

TED

Well can we just get it over with, please?

CASPAR

I talked them all down. No public executions.

TED

Why?

CASPAR

I think you're a piece of shit, Ted, and you come from a garbage empire, BUT...You interrogated me for hours. Threatened me, tried to reason with me... And in all that time, you never used my son against me. Didn't offer to find him, didn't threaten him. Why is that, Ted?

TED

...I deleted it from your record.

CASPAR

Why?

TED

...Reproductive permits are only given to a few people on my planet... I always thought I would've made a good father. I just... I couldn't do it.

CASPAR

...Damn, and that just drives me crazy, Ted. I just want you to twirl your mustache and be evil and then lose. But you did this one thing. So now... now I have to turn your punishment over to a higher power. Hang on... Effie, Zebulon, meet Ted.

ZEBULON

Theodore.

EFFIE

Would that I had an automaton to inhabit.

CASPAR

We felt that Effie and Zebulon would be the most impartial judges for your sentencing.

ZEBULON

A wise choice, Caspar.

EFFIE

I don't know about that.

ZEBULON

Theodore, we have spoken at length regarding your punishment.

EFFIE

I had all sorts of wonderful ideas.

ZEBULON

The Bible has within it all sorts of punishments.

EFFIE

And some of them are real mean and I got real excited.

ZEBULON

But in the end, God is the final judge of us all.

EFFIE

Even though he is more than welcome to delegate to his most devoted, should he see fit.

ZEBULON

You have served cravenly, Theodore, you have severed an empire of evil and avarice. And we feel that your punishment should be to wander.

TED

Wander?

CASPAR

At our next stop, you get off. I don't know where it's going to be, I don't know when it's going to be, but you're getting off. There's not going to be any Ted Empire, there's not going to be any Tednoughts or chemical ice. It's just going to be you and the cosmos. It's going to be rough. Like it is for all of us. Good luck, Ted.

TED
You know, my name's not Ted.

EFFIE
Your name can now be whatever you want it to be.
Choose wisely.

WALK IN DOOR CLOSSES.

CASPAR
That was fun.

EFFIE
Not nearly as fun as I wanted it to be.

CASPAR
Effie, you have a mean streak in you that has not
faded for 173 years, and I admire that.

EFFIE
Thank you, Caspar.

DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR
Okay, let's launch this firecracker.

LEIF
Guess I've come a long way since that kid you met
on Sirius A, huh?

BERTBERT
No, actually, I finally feel like I'm looking at
him again. Don't fuck it up, Leif.

LEIF
I'll try.

THE EX
Caspar, I know the separation anxiety is going to
be tough for you, but try not to miss me too much.

CASPAR
I think I'll be okay.

THE EX
And just remember, no matter where you go in time
and space, I can always find you.

CASPAR
So disturbing.

SHEL

Everyone, before we go, I just want to leave you with a thought. Thousands of your years from now a race of creatures that look like trees will tell the story of their founder. Their name was Shel, and they escaped certain doom on their planet by hitching a ride on a strange comet called Midnight Burger. There they met Gloria The Empire Slayer, Leif the Builder, Ava who communed with mysterious beings, a Wooden Box that spoke of an old God, and some guy named Caspar. They carried them across the stars to a place they now call home. And they will be remembered forever. Goodbye everyone.

GLORIA

Goodbye, Shel. We'll remember you forever too.

IN AN INSTANT, THEY ARE GONE. SPACE AND TIME RUSHES PAST THE DINER.

LEIF

And we're off.

GLORIA

Damn.

AVA

No offense, Leif, but The Triad sucks.

LEIF

Where do you think we're headed now?

CASPAR

Well, as long as it's not Newark airport during a holiday, I think I'll be fine... Why is everybody looking at me?

GLORIA

Ava?

AVA

Hang on...

CASPAR

Okay, huge fans of Newark Airport, didn't realize. No offense guys but it's basically like a bus station except the busses are flying... What is the problem?

EFFIE

I'm unsure, Caspar, but perhaps the remedy is not you talking.

CASPAR

Okay, fine.

AVA

Everybody inside.

CASPAR

I feel like the party vibe is gone, where's the party vibe?

DOOR CHIME.

AVA

Sit here.

CASPAR

Okay. What's going on? Is that Vladimir's tape recorder?

AVA

Stop talking... When you shoved me into deep space I made contact with an entity. It's a friend, I think. Then, later on, right before we got sent into the battle with the Teds it tried to make contact again. I need you to say exactly what you just said outside.

CASPAR

Why?

AVA

Just do it.

CASPAR

Fine... as long as it's not Newark airport during a holiday, I think I'll be fine.

AVA PRESSES PLAY ON THE TAPE RECORDER.

THE VOICE

It may be Newark Airport.

CASPAR

Why did the tape recorder just respond to me?

AVA

It's a 4th dimensional being. It doesn't move through time like we do so it's hard to communicate, it doesn't understand time. It reached out to us but I didn't understand what it was saying. I think that's because it wasn't talking to me THEN, it was actually talking to you right now. Luckily we recorded it.

CASPAR

Okay... I have several questions but it feels like I should just jump into this conversation with the tape recorder.

AVA

Good boy.

CASPAR

Who are you?

THE VOICE

A friend. Like you I found this place.

CASPAR

What's your name?

THE VOICE

I don't have identity like you do. Call me what you like.

CASPAR

Okay, do we want to crowdsource the name of the transdimensional being right now?

LEIF

Chuck.

CASPAR

What?

LEIF

Does it matter? Chuck.

GLORIA

Just go with Chuck!

CASPAR

Fine! I guess we'll go with Chuck.

CHUCK

Names are strange. They don't mean anything.

CASPAR

Chuck, what are we doing here? Why are you contacting us?

CHUCK

I see myself finding this place. Like all of you, through chance and circumstance. I see you. Alone. The tables covered in dust. I see myself not wanting you to be alone. Somewhere else I see a man and a woman.

(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

She talks of her grandmother and grandfather. I make them for you. Put their voices in a wooden box. I thought you shouldn't be alone.

CASPAR

Yeah. You're right. So you can just make people?

CHUCK

You too can make people.

CASPAR

I guess that's technically true. Why are you contacting us, Chuck?

CHUCK

I see Ava in a field. She tells a story of dogs and humans. She is right. We need each other.

CASPAR

Why do we need each other?

CHUCK

Things need each other. You can see it in the stars. Gravity is not a mindless force, it is an intention. A prayer. Things drawn together.

CASPAR

That's beautiful, Chuck, but I get the sense that something else is going on.

CHUCK

Something is wrong.

AVA

That's where it ended for us.

CASPAR

Okay, well that wasn't much, was it.

AVA

But that's not where it ended for you. Ask another question.

CASPAR

What's wrong, Chuck?

CHUCK

I don't know. Existence. You say "cosmos". It is fragile. Irresistible and fragile. I see Ava. She is in a place called Bruges. Violent waves across spacetime. I see a friend of Ava's. She speaks of a universe where a curtain rises and falls. I see you. A place of null entropy. It is all connected.

CASPAR

Chuck is so high right now you guys.

AVA

It's talking about a speech I made in Bruges. About gravity waves.

CASPAR

What's a gravity wave?

AVA

If something big happens in the universe it sends out a wave of gravity. I proved that a gravity wave, if it's big enough can permanently damage the fabric of spacetime. Maybe that's what it's talking about. Ask it what we do next.

CASPAR

What are we supposed to do with all that information, Chuck?

CHUCK

I propose an experiment.

CASPAR

Oh boy. Y'all how do we feel about a transdimensional being conducting an experiment on us?

GLORIA

Put me in the "No" column.

LEIF

Ambiguous at best.

AVA

It's not an experiment ON us it's an experiment WITH us.

CASPAR

I think I'd like some clarification on that from the tape recorder person.

AVA

Go ahead.

CASPAR

What kind of experiment?

CHUCK

You are chasing something.

CASPAR

Chasing something, what are we chasing?

CHUCK

Unknown. A strange attractor. You are always one step behind.

CASPAR

Help me out here.

LEIF

It's chaos theory.

AVA

Right, a strange attractor is a point in a chaotic system that everything seems to magically coalesce around.

CASPAR

It's saying the diner is magically coalescing around something?

GLORIA

Why can't it be buried treasure? Can it just be we have a treasure map and we're looking for buried treasure?

ZEBULON

Agreed, Gloria.

LEIF

It kind of is. I think what it's saying is that the diner is searching for something. It's kind of on a treasure hunt. If the treasure was a mysterious and unknowable cosmic anomaly.

EFFIE

Leif, We don't know that it's any of those things.

LEIF

Well it's not looking for it's car keys.

CASPAR

I'm going back to Chuck. Chuck, what kind of experiment?

CHUCK

You must be the Strange Attractor. You must be the center of chaos so that it becomes drawn to you.

CASPAR

Translation, please?

LEIF

There's something really big out there and we need to get it's attention.

GLORIA

I don't want to get the attention of a big thing.

CASPAR

I don't want to get the attention of a small thing.

GLORIA

Zero things would be my choice.

CASPAR

Zero things sounds ideal. Chuck why do we need to find this thing?

CHUCK

It should not exist. There are cracks in the cosmos, Caspar. Things I cannot explain. And you have been traveling to the broken places. We can only find out together.

GLORIA

I want to talk to it.

CASPAR

Go for it.

GLORIA

"Cracks." Things you can't explain. Is there something... something broken?

CHUCK

Do you not feel that way, Gloria? Walking through a world of shattered glass? Of disconnected roads? Gaps too far to jump? Lives wasted? I see a woman. She stands in your diner. "Look around you. Do you see a thing done right or a thing done wrong?" Are you not, every day, living a tragedy?

CASPAR

Boy, Chuck is terrible at parties.

GLORIA

I did feel that way once. It's different now.

CHUCK

Precisely. A field was applied. The unchangeable changed. There is a trail of these moments behind you. Now you chase another.

GLORIA

Something that needs to be changed.

CHUCK

Perhaps. But it is... formidable. Powerful. I do not know what will happen. I cannot find the outcome.

ZEBULON

My friends, I spoke before of how I feel we had been drawn together for a purpose.

EFFIE

I believe we've all felt the wind blowing us in this direction for some time.

LEIF

What direction is that, exactly? What exactly are we talking about here?

GLORIA

We're talking about Chuck's plan.

LEIF

Chuck doesn't have a plan.

AVA

You said it yourself. There's something big out there, we need to find it.

LEIF

How?

AVA

Let's ask Chuck.

CASPAR

Chuck, what's the plan?

CASPAR (CONT'D)

...

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Chuck?

CASPAR (CONT'D)

...

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Chuck? Of course.

GLORIA

That's it?

LEIF

What are supposed to do?

AVA
That's hilarious.

AVA STARTS WRITING NOTES.

LEIF
Chuck takes us all this way and then vaporizes?

CASPAR
Now that he's gone, are we sure about the name
Chuck?

LEIF
I feel like we just slipped on an unknowable banana
peel into a ball pit of ambiguities.

CASPAR
You're forgetting how fun ball pits are.

EFFIE
What is a ball pit exactly?

CASPAR
It's like it sounds, its a pit full of fun
multicolored balls.

EFFIE
Oh, that does sound fun.

GLORIA
Ava, what are you writing?

AVA
(As she writes.)
After a while – not long – you will no longer
exist... and the woods and rocks and sky will
continue, unchanged, for thousands of years after
you... What is it that has called you so suddenly
out of nothingness to enjoy for a brief while... a
spectacle which remains quite indifferent to you?

GLORIA
What is that?

AVA
Something I say to myself before I start a new
project. Listen... we're doing Chuck's plan. I
don't know what it is but that just means that the
first step of the plan is to figure out the plan. I
just learned more in the past few minutes than I
have in my entire life. I'm not stopping here.
We're doing Chuck's plan.

ZEBULON

We are being called toward the mysteries. I believe we are on a path in a way we never have been before. We have been disparate. Desperate. Had our vision clouded by many distractions. But I feel our purpose sharpened now. I feel we are on our way.

EFFIE

As do I. And for our thoughts to be well inline with Ava's is either a sign of the end times, or proof of God's calling.

GLORIA

Okay. Okay I'm in.

LEIF

I'm sorry, I guess it's the engineer in me but I need something more than "3,2,1, TEAM!"

AVA

Leif, the gravity wave detector I asked you to build, is it done?

LEIF

Yeah.

AVA

Okay. I want to be able to do a sky scan, the way the Planck does?

LEIF

Okay... Okay I'm going to need a few more parts but I can make that happen.

AVA

Okay. So you're in.

LEIF

Yeah, yeah I guess I am. You know what? Let me go look at the scrap. I need to do some inventory.

AVA

Good.

GLORIA

What else do you need, Ava?

AVA

I have a glass of wine, a pencil and a notebook. That's all I need right now.

GLORIA

It starts like that?

AVA
It's how everything starts.

GLORIA
Okay. I'm going to go clean up the kitchen. Let me know when the mysteries of the universe have been unraveled.

AVA
I will.

GLORIA
How about some music, Zeb?

ZEBULON
Wonderful idea.

CASPAR
...What are you doing?

AVA
Making notes.

CASPAR
...Are You writing in Grote?

AVA
No, I'm writing in math.

CASPAR
...What was that thing you were saying?

AVA
It's Schrodinger.

CASPAR
Is that the cat guy?

AVA
Yes, Caspar. He's one of the most brilliant physicists in history but let's call him "the cat guy".

CASPAR
I'm just saying, if you want to be known for your physics, don't put a cat in one of your things, cause then you'll just be the cat guy.

AVA
...You are the only one who has not agreed to the plan.

CASPAR
Did I not?

AVA
No.

CASPAR
...We can do whatever you want.

AVA
...I may not like this new agreeable version of
you.

CASPAR
It'll fade.

AVA
Good.

THE SOUND OF THE RUSHING OF SPACE TIME SWELLS.

BERTBERT
(Being recorded.)
I'm trying to wrap my head around this. You climb
aboard this diner, you see these amazing things, go
to amazing places but, in doing so you have to
leave your entire life behind, perhaps never to see
it again. A lot of people wouldn't do that, it
would be too much to bear. Why do you?

AVA
(Being recorded.)
Because I was born in St. Louis.

BERTBERT
I don't understand.

AVA
Against my will, I was born in St. Louis. Against
my will, I was born to my mother. I did not choose
the atoms of my body, I did not choose the neurons
in my brain, I did not choose the year I was born,
I did not choose the world I was born into.
In this life there is such a narrow valley of
things that are my own choosing, and it makes me
furious. It means the things I can choose are the
most important things. So I choose this.
In an act of rebellion against an existence that
chooses so much for me against my will, I choose to
pull up the skirt of the cosmos and give everybody
a free show.
We will know the secrets of existence. We will know
the code of the cosmos. People will look up into
the stars and will feel wonder without fear. We
will know the nature of all things, and we will be
at peace.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

And on that day, and that day alone... I will
finally have had my revenge...

MIDNIGHT BURGER SHOOTS OFF INTO THE COSMOS AND THE MUSIC
SWELLS.

END OF SEASON 2.