

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 35: Sheep?

By

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NIGHT TIME IN PASADENA. CASPAR, GLORIA, AND THE MUCKLEWAINS
ARE IN THE PARKING LOT.

EFFIE

When first it all happened we were flung out into the wide world and found ourselves inside of a refrigerator.

GLORIA

A refrigerator?

EFFIE

Oh yes.

ZEBULON

We've inhabited many gee-gaa in the past, but I never thought we'd find ourselves part of a simple ice box.

EFFIE

Now maybe I'm old fashioned, but I think there are some things that you don't need to make fancy. Why in the world is there a refrigerator that can tell you that you're low on milk? You know how to know you're low on milk?

CASPAR

By opening the door?

EFFIE

By opening the door and looking inside, Caspar.

ZEBULON

Though I suppose we shouldn't complain. Lord knows where else we could've ended up.

GLORIA

That's true, I hear they have smart bidets now.

EFFIE

Bidet. Do I want to know what that is?

GLORIA

Nope.

EFFIE

Anyhow, there we were in someplace called Home Depot.

ZEBULON

After a brief bout of confusion, we decided the only course of action that made any sort of sense was to make ourselves mobile.

EFFIE

Thus began a game a leap frog that would've made any toad jealous.

ZEBULON

With alacrity we leapt from domicile to domicile.

EFFIE

We found ourselves in watches, we found ourselves in televisions, all manner of handheld devices.

ZEBULON

Let's not forget little Dan Boman.

EFFIE

Oh yes, little Danny, he was such a little rascal wasn't he?

ZEBULON

A family had some sort of situation that put their child upon a tiny television screen.

EFFIE

Zebulon was downright adorable with little Dan Boman, weren't you, dear?

ZEBULON

Well, he did have a dickens of a time setting down for that afternoon nap.

EFFIE

Zebulon told him all sorts of stories, he would do little voices, it was a time.

ZEBULON

And then in the parking garage of Daniel's family, the next phase of our journey was revealed.

EFFIE

These cars driving themselves around.

ZEBULON

I must say, Mr. Tesla was quite an interesting fellow but I believe his decision to give a car the ability to drive itself was quite a misstep.

EFFIE

But one that we benefitted from greatly.

ZEBULON

And there we were, in Las Vegas, Nevada of all places.

EFFIE

Not at all a place for a couple of God-fearing souls such as us. With all that card-playing and scantily-clad-ness we at least needed to get ourselves to a town with less gambling and more pants on the ladies.

ZEBULON

And so we struck out on the road, didn't we, dear?

EFFIE

It was lovely, wasn't it?

ZEBULON

Never seen the Mojave before.

CASPAR

Wait, how did you recharge the car?

EFFIE

There was no need. Every time we felt our vehicle running low on steam we'd park ourselves in a nice shady spot and wait for another.

GLORIA

So you two left a trail of dead Teslas everywhere you went?

ZEBULON

Well, we don't approve of stealing.

EFFIE

We do not, but surely the Lord would understand in a situation such as ours.

ZEBULON

And perhaps fewer automobiles on the road is not the worst of ideas.

EFFIE

Especially those that can drive themselves around, that's a tale of hubris right there.

ZEBULON

And then we found ourselves in your backyard.

EFFIE

I had myself a feeling about this place. I knew we were somewhere in your vicinity.

LEIF

(On the roof.)
You can't achieve entanglement across dimensional barriers, that's insane!

AVA

(On the roof.)
Oh, and you know this because of all the research that's been done on trans-dimensional travel?

LEIF

(On the roof.)
You're just making shit up now!

AVA

(On the roof.)
I'm a theorist, Leif, making shit up is may jam!

EFFIE

How long are they going to go round and round?

GLORIA

We haven't had any new information for several months. This story about these three sisters has got them pretty excited.

CASPAR

So, you two didn't remember them either, huh?

ZEBULON

Shocking to say, but no. It wasn't until you began to recount the story that it all came back to us.

GLORIA

I think they're both a little jealous.

EFFIE

Oh? Do tell.

GLORIA

I think Leif's a little jealous that Caspar was on an adventure with someone else and Ava is a little jealous that someone else got to abuse Caspar for a while.

EFFIE

True to form. So, here we all are, where to next do we think?

GLORIA

Honestly, it doesn't look like we're going anywhere, we've been stuck here for months.

EFFIE

Let's not roll around in the dirt, Gloria. We've been down many a time, never out.

ZEBULON

And let us take stock of our blessings. We are all together. That has always been good news for us.

EFFIE

And bad news for those that need some bad news.

ZEBULON

We are safe and sound at least.

EFFIE

There appears to be worse places to be stuck.

ZEBULON

And Caspar. Your son.

CASPAR

Yeah. It's been really weird.

ZEBULON

All this time and you land in his back yard.

CASPAR

Yeah... It's been good. He's still testing the waters, I think. He tries to make me mad a lot, trying to see how I'll react.

GLORIA

He's pretty great, Caspar.

CASPAR

Yeah, he is.

LEIF

(From the roof.)
Caspar!

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

Where did you say they were headed?

CASPAR

Cryptessia.

LEIF

Okay... Okay I think I figured something out, y'all better come up here.

CASPAR

Here we go again.

THEY MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE BACK OF THE DINER.

GLORIA

How's your head? That was a lot of new information for you.

CASPAR

Yeah. That was really weird, a whole lot of memories just rushed at me.

GLORIA

I guess it was bound to happen eventually.

CASPAR

Sure... I've got an entire lifetime just sleeping somewhere in my brain.

GLORIA

This has never happened before?

CASPAR

There's been small random things. Nothing like this. Do you think they're going to suggest opening up my skull?

GLORIA

Eventually, sure.

AVA

So what is this place you're talking about?

LEIF

I'm bringing up the star maps. This is bad!

GLORIA

How's he doing?

AVA

Leif's still a little drunk but I think it's actually helping, can we get him drunk more often?

GLORIA

No.

LEIF

Okay, here's the deal. Caspar's old friends are in a lot of trouble. They're sending us a distress call.

GLORIA

Why?

CASPAR

Also how?

LEIF

You say they're headed to Cryptessia.

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

That's bad.

GLORIA

What's Cryptessia?

LEIF

It's a galaxy.

AVA

Why have I not heard of this galaxy?

LEIF

You have. To an Earthling it's Leo.

AVA

Aha.

LEIF

It's bad.

AVA

Why is it bad?

LEIF

I'm going to show you.
So, there was a lot of talk about Cryptessia a while back in The Triad. Mainly, because it was next. The Teds had dominated The Milky Way, Andromeda, and Triangulum, and Cryptessia was the next closest place. People liked to fantasize about somehow getting to a place where there were no Teds. Every once and a while you'd hear about some crank who had discovered a stable wormhole that would take you to Cryptessia, but it was always bullshit. The only ones who had a solid plan to get there: our old friends, The Teds. The Teds were going to get to Cryptessia, open up the biggest warp gate they'd ever built, and then proceed to fuck up that galaxy as well.

GLORIA

These assholes again?

LEIF

The only problem with The Ted Empire's plan to get to Cryptessia? Time. The Teds would need to get to Cryptessia to open up the other end of their warp gate and they would have to get there the old fashioned way. No warp gates, just firing up the engines and burning for a long time. It was going to take them decades but, as we speak, there is a fully automated Ted ship headed there right now. Apparently Caspar's old pals had a plan to use the diner to get there before the Teds.

EFFIE

So these sisters were a group of Oklahoma Sooners, is what you're saying.

LEIF

Essentially.

GLORIA

That doesn't sound like a bad plan, but how did they know the diner was going to take them there?

LEIF

Caspar, you were saying one of them had figured out how to predict the diner's path?

CASPAR

Libuza. She had this massive computer mainframe thing called a Vistek that was hooked up to her brain.

GLORIA

How's it possible to predict where we go?

AVA

It sounds like superdeterminism.

GLORIA

Hoo boy. What is that?

AVA

The idea that free will doesn't exist and that everything is predictable.

GLORIA

... Okay I'm just going to take that part of the conversation and put that right over here and then we're going to just move on.

AVA

Great.

GLORIA

She has a thing that predicts the future.

AVA

Sure, let's say that.

GLORIA

And she used it to figure out how the diner would take them to this galaxy, Cryptessia.

AVA

Yes.

GLORIA

Again, it sounds like a good plan.

LEIF

It's a very bad plan. Let me show you why.

LEIF FIRES UP THE COMMAND CENTER.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Okay, everybody look up on the Zenith.

GLORIA

Oh, this is good, we need more visual aids around here, FYI.

LEIF

This is the local group, AKA The Triad. There's us, The Milky Way, there's Andromeda, home of the original coalition, there's Triangulum, where we blew up the wind chimes. Off to the side here is Leo, a dwarf galaxy AKA Cryptessia. That's where these three sisters were headed, that's where The Teds are headed. Have I mentioned that that's bad?

CASPAR

No, Leif, you haven't mentioned that.

AVA

I haven't heard anything about it.

GLORIA

And Leif is getting to the point in five, four, three...

LEIF

Okay look. I'm a pirate.

EFFIE

Leif, it still gives me the humors when you say that.

ZEBULON

Oh yes, oh yes, a pirate, he.

LEIF

Pirates are not logical creatures. We are superstitious, we are metaphysical, we are often drunk and high.

ZEBULON

You are often wearing odd pants.

EFFIE

You are often grogg-drinking while bird-shouldered.

CASPAR

Did the Mucklewains get funnier while they were away?

AVA

I think so?

LEIF

I'm being serious here.

GLORIA

Said the drunk guy with the tiny robot.

LEIF

Do you want to hear this or not?

GLORIA

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Continue.

LEIF

... Even lawless people have laws they make for themselves. Pirates don't listen to anyone, but they do respect at least one thing: "Here be dragons." That ominous warning at the end of a map...

LEIF ZOOMS IN THE MAP.

LEIF (CONT'D)

This is a map of Cryptessia.

HE ZOOMS IN AGAIN.

LEIF (CONT'D)

This is quadrant 4 of Cryptessia.

HE ZOOMS IN AGAIN.

LEIF (CONT'D)

This is the outer edge of quadrant 4... I zoom in one more time...

LEIF ZOOMS IN AGAIN.

CASPAR

... What the fuck is that?

GLORIA

It... looks like an egg.

EFFIE

Oh, I do not like that at all.

AVA

Leif, why is there an egg on a stellar map?

LEIF

It's not an egg. I think it's a solar system. A solar system that's entirely cloaked.

AVA

How do you cloak an entire solar system?

LEIF

I have no fucking idea. But that's the only explanation I've ever been able to come up with.

CASPAR

I don't like it.

AVA

If it's cloaked, why can we see it?

LEIF

My guess? They don't mind people knowing they're there. They just don't want people to know what they're up to.

CASPAR

Like tinted windows on a limousine.

GLORIA

Who is "they"?

LEIF

So it goes like this: Caspar has some old friends. They somehow send him a distress call. As soon as they do, we're attacked and stranded in Pasadena. And his friends just happen to be in the same galaxy as this thing. Whatever it is... Back when we were wrapping things up with Clementine, I said something to Ava.

(MORE)

LEIF (CONT'D)

"There's somebody new in town..." I think they just said hello... "Here be dragons."

GLORIA

So this is all connected.

LEIF

I think it is. Or I'm just drunk. But I could also be drunk and right. Which happens sometimes.

GLORIA

Leif, correct me if I'm wrong, but galaxies are big.

LEIF

They are.

GLORIA

Even the dwarf ones.

LEIF

Yes.

GLORIA

Why would one weird egg looking thing in one part of this galaxy have anything to do these three sisters being in trouble, it could just be a coincidence.

LEIF

This is the other thing about Cryptessia: There's nothing going on there. Look at The Triad: three galaxies full of civilizations, some of them highly advanced, a lot of them space-faring. Sure it's got it's undeveloped pockets like the one we're sitting on right now, but generally speaking it's a well-developed system. But then, right next door, is Cryptessia. There are civilizations there, sure. But none of them appear to be space-faring, none of them appear to be advanced in any way. Compared to The Triad, Cryptessia is Amish country.

AVA

And you think that's because of Satan's Easter Egg on the screen here.

LEIF

I think so. Add to that: these three sisters headed there and then sent out a distress call. I think we're off to the races.

CASPAR

That feels kind of thin, Leif.

LEIF

It's all we've got to work with right now.

GLORIA

Even if Leif's right, that doesn't mean we're off to the races. Why?

CASPAR

Because we're stuck in Pasadena.

GLORIA

That's right. Any ideas on how we get unstuck from Pasadena?

AVA

No.

LEIF

No idea.

GLORIA

Then even if it is a distress call we're getting, there's nothing we can do about it.

AVA

We can at least stay on top of the message. Odds are they're going to reach out again. I can keep my eyes on Caspar's brain, see if there's anything we can get from the numbers they send.

GLORIA

Good.

CASPAR

Please keep your eyes out of my brain.

AVA

My eyes are going to be so up in your brain.

CASPAR

That sounds gross.

AVA

You sound gross.

LEIF

It really sucks that we get all this new information, and we still have to sit here.

ZEBULON

Worry not, Leif. At times all there is to do is light a fire and wait for the Lord to do his work.

LEIF

Guys, I'm not going to wait around for a sign from God.

GLORIA

Maybe not a sign from God, but we need some kind of something from somewhere.

LEIF

Fine, I'll wait for a sign, but I'm not getting my hopes up.

CASPAR

What is that noise?

DOWN THE STREET WE HEAR AN ENTIRE HERD OF SHEEP. THE SHEEP SLOWLY TRAVEL DOWN THE EMPTY STREET AND THEN COALESCE AROUND THE DINER. THEY BLEET THEIR CONFUSION INTO THE NIGHT SKY.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Uh... sheep.

GLORIA

The uh... the diner is surrounded by sheep, is this a Pasadena thing?

CASPAR

There is not an annual running of the sheep in Pasadena.

ZEBULON

Oh my.

AVA

What the what?

LEIF

This is fucked up, what's happening right now?

CASPAR

Maybe they escaped?

LEIF

From where?

GLORIA

Any ideas what's going on right now?

ZEBULON

Gloria, if it helps, I believe this is a herd of Lincoln Longwools. Fetch a nice price on the open market.

EFFIE

Zebulon loves to knit with a Longwool, y'all, I'm wearing those sock right now, dear.

ZEBULON

I look down yonder and all I see is socks.

GLORIA

That doesn't help, Zebulon, but thank you.

AVA

I'm going down there.

CASPAR

Ava, c'mon, don't go into the weird sheep.

AVA

It'll be fine.

AVA HEADS DOWN THE LADDER.

CASPAR

What if they're radioactive?

AVA

Caspar, I promise not to go down and see the sheep if you can explain to me exactly what "radioactive" means.

CASPAR

... It means bad.

AVA

Bye.

ZEBULON

Never thought I'd say this, but this situation calls for a loom.

DOWN IN THE PARKING LOT, AVA IS AMONG THE SHEEP.

AVA

Hello fuzzy things... what are you telling me?... What are you telling me right now... Sheep sheep sheep sheep... sheep... Okay... A priori assessment: interrupted system due to unknown intervention, results of interruption not random therefore system in place, what is the system? What is the system in place, sheeps? Random and constant catalyst sent into dormancy, where does a catalyst go? Where does it rest? Without said catalyst... What continues? System continues without the catalyst... system imbalance. System imbalance? System imbalance leads to upstarts.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

Mutations in response to a vacuum. What is the vacuum's causal chain? The catalyst leads to the vacuum leads to the upstarts leads to the mutations. The Fine-Tuned Universe, David... dissonance... looking to resolve a chord...

AND JUST AS QUICKLY AS THEY ARRIVED, THE SHEEP DISAPPEAR INTO THIN AIR.

AVA (CONT'D)

Ohhh baby.

CASPAR

... Okay... They have disappeared now.

GLORIA

Sure... sure they did.

LEIF

What in the transdimensional-sheep is going on here?

GLORIA

Ava?

AVA

That was excellent. That was great stuff.

EFFIE

Don't worry y'all, I'm sure that wasn't a sign from God.

GLORIA LAUGHS.

CASPAR

What?

GLORIA

Anyone else feel normal for the first time in months?

AVA

Yes.

LEIF

Kind of.

CASPAR

I guess so.

GLORIA

Okay... Okay, now we're talking... Ava can you-

DOOR CHIME.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

And she's gone... Okay, we know where she's headed.
Get her some coffee, don't get too close.

EFFIE

Is she doing that business where she goes off and
bakes us a little cake?

GLORIA

Welcome back, Mucklewains.

ZEBULON

Good to be back, Gloria.

GLORIA

I'm going to sleep.

CASPAR

How can you go to sleep after that?

GLORIA

I've got to work tomorrow, Caspar. Besides if I'm
tossing and turning I'll just... count sheep.

MORNING IN THE KITCHEN. GLORIA COOKS WHILE CASPAR RECEIVES
ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM KAZI. HE WRITES DOWN THE NUMBERS AS SHE
RECITES THEM.

KAZI

(In Caspar's head.)

1... 4... 1... 5... 9... 2... 6... 5... 5... 8...
9... 7... 9... 2... 8... 4... 6... 2... 6... 4...

CASPAR

Ow... This better be fucking worth it, Kazi.

GLORIA

More numbers?

CASPAR

Yeah.

GLORIA

That's the third time this morning. I guess the
damn broke or something.

CASPAR

Or something.

GLORIA

Are you writing them all down?

CASPAR

Yeah.

GLORIA

Good.

CASPAR

How're you doing in here?

GLORIA

Well, Caspar, I'm sorry about the annoying voice in your head but I'm doing great.

CASPAR

I can tell.

GLORIA

Comeback trail, Caspar.

CASPAR

Sure.

GLORIA

Did you go across the street and get those beers?

CASPAR

Oh, yeah. Why am I buying beer at nine AM?

GLORIA

Modelo Especial?

CASPAR

It's Modelo Especial, yes.

GLORIA

Give me one.

CASPAR HANDS HER A BOTTLE. SHE CRACKS IT OPEN AND POURS IT INTO A GLASS.

CASPAR

Are we celebrating?

GLORIA

No. You take a lime... And you squeeze it into the beer... Then a pinch of salt... then... a little secret family recipe hot sauce...

CASPAR

You're going to drink that?

GLORIA

No.

LEIF ENTERS THROUGH THE BACK DOOR.

LEIF

I feel like I am dead.

GLORIA

Here, drink this.

LEIF

Okay...

LEIF DRINKS THE WHOLE THING.

LEIF (CONT'D)

This works... What is this?

GLORIA

Michelada.

LEIF

Good. Another?

GLORIA

Sure.

LEIF

Okay. Ava still the prime minister of Mathistan?

CASPAR

Yeah, she's been going all night.

LEIF

Cool. New numbers?

CASPAR

Yeah, third time this morning.

LEIF

Let's see... Huh... well that was easy.

CASPAR

What?

LEIF

It's Pi.

CASPAR

The numbers are Pi?

LEIF

Yeah.

CASPAR

Why is she sending me Pi?

LEIF

It's deliberately incomplete. See here. That string is pi but all the eights are missing. This one is seven, this one is three.

CASPAR

What's that about?

GLORIA

They want us to assemble all the missing numbers.

LEIF

That's what I'm thinking. Not the most ironclad code in the world. I thought you said they were all geniuses.

GLORIA

Well, it had to be simple.

LEIF

It did? Oh, right.

CASPAR

What?

LEIF

It had to be a simple code.

CASPAR

Why?

GLORIA

Because of who she's sending it to.

CASPAR

Goddamnit, the amount of times I get called an idiot in a given day.

GLORIA

Sorry.

LEIF

I'll keep collecting numbers. The more numbers we get more I'll have a clear picture.

CASPAR

So I'm just a walking telephone right now.

LEIF

Basically.

CASPAR

Great.

LEIF

Hey. Tell me again about the last time you were attacked. It was usually The Teds but the last time it was someone else?

CASPAR

Yeah. It was pretty terrifying. Guns didn't work on them, grenades didn't work.

LEIF

And how did you get rid of them?

CASPAR

Actually, it was the first time I ever did Colorado Southpaw.

LEIF

Really?

CASPAR

Yeah.

LEIF

You lured them into the deep freeze?

CASPAR

Right.

GLORIA

Hang on. What?

CASPAR

... Colorado Southpaw.

LEIF

It was... It was one of the ways Caspar and I used to get rid of undesirables.

GLORIA

You would lure people into the deep freeze?!

LEIF

... Yes?

GLORIA

Undesirables?

LEIF

Really bad people, Gloria. Only when we had to.

GLORIA

You told me Vladimir was the only one to get lost in there.

LEIF

Yes...

CASPAR

That is true...

LEIF

He was the only one to get lost in there... on accident.

GLORIA

How many goddamn people did you send into the deep freeze?!

LEIF

Not a lot.

CASPAR

A handful.

LEIF

I think twelve.

CASPAR

Well with these other three that's now-

LEIF

Fifteen people, tops.

GLORIA

Don't send people into the deep freeze!

CASPAR

Well we can't anymore, Gloria.

LEIF

I fixed the door.

CASPAR

Leif fixed the door, also, a certain somebody decided to go and domesticate the wolves, now they'd only be in danger of getting cuddled to death.

GLORIA

... Why was it called Colorado southpaw?

CASPAR

Colorado Southpaw... C.S.... Cold Storage...

GLORIA

It was just a fucking clown car around here until I showed up, wasn't it?

CASPAR

Confirmed. I need to bring Ava some more pencils,
I'd better get to sharpening.

GLORIA

... Fine.

CASPAR STARTS SHARPENING PENCILS.

CASPAR

Hey, Leif, what was the deal with their Dad? They
kept talking about how their Dad was some important
guy?

LEIF

Krok, right?

CASPAR

Maybe.

LEIF

It's probably bullshit.

CASPAR

What's probably bullshit?

LEIF

Well, if you'll forgive the extra helping of Triad
lore: in The Triad, before the Ted Empire came
along and connected everything with warp gates,
huge swaths of The Triad were controlled by
warlords.

CASPAR

Warlords?

LEIF

Yeah. Genghis Khan style. They had an armada of
ships and they hopped from star system to star
system conquering planets. As you can imagine with
warlords, they were all pretty colorful, right?
Everybody had a gimmick. Emperor BugBug Had a ship
the size of a moon, Capo the Sartorius was a
centipede, The Croad Nation were actually a pile of
telepathic rodents, Kalasin was a quote-unquote
Void Witch, you get it.

CASPAR

Sure.

LEIF

The most interesting of the lot was this guy Krok.
Krok the Propigator.

CASPAR

The Propigator?

LEIF

Yeah. Military genius, apparently. Krok conquered his own planet, then he built a fleet of ships and conquered a big patch of Andromeda. He would find a dysfunctional planet, conquer it, get married, have some kids, then get back on his ship and do the same thing on the next habitable planet. Krok the Propigator.

CASPAR

How many times can you do that in one lifetime?

LEIF

Well, that was the other thing about Krok. Krok claimed that he was a direct descendant of this ancient race that initially populated The Triad. They lived for centuries and moved from planet to planet, and Krok claimed that he could have kids with a lot of different races because he was everyone's common ancestor.

CASPAR

But you think it's bullshit.

LEIF

Yeah, I think it's PR. A great way to hype yourself up if you're putting together a crime syndicate or a rebellion is to say you're a descendant of one of these old warlords. Highly unlikely they're actually related to Krok if you ask me.

CASPAR

Okay, how about the more pressing issue of how I'm hearing a voice in my head.

LEIF

I'm working on it. But look, Ava's onto something, The Mucklewains are back, there was sheep in the parking lot, exactly how they're piping a voice into your head is a bit of a side-quest right now, so it's a little further down the list.

CASPAR

Great. Well, enjoy your cocktail, I'm going to go refill Ava's coffee and try to not get beheaded.

GLORIA

Good luck!

CASPAR WALKS OUT INTO THE DINING ROOM. THE RADIO IS PLAYING MUSIC. DAVID WALKS IN.

CASPAR
Hey.

DAVID
What's up?

CASPAR
You're here.

DAVID
I am.

CASPAR
What's going on?

DAVID
I'm here.

CASPAR
You were here yesterday.

DAVID
Are you not open?

CASPAR
No, no, it's great I just thought Saturday was our day.

DAVID
Don't say "our day".

CASPAR
I'm sorry I thought Saturday was the day that you come by in a very non-committal, could-happen, might-not-happen, don't-worry-about-it, kind of way.

DAVID
Better.

CASPAR
What's up?

DAVID
I came to see Gloria, actually.

CASPAR
Great.

DAVID
You fixed the radio.

CASPAR
We did. Sounds great, doesn't it?

DAVID

I get it now. With the radio, I get the vibe.

CASPAR

Sure. Vibes. So, Gloria's in the back but, hey, since you're here, you should probably learn what I'm about to do.

DAVID

What do you mean?

CASPAR

As you can see to my right here, Ava is currently writing in one of her books.

DAVID

She always is.

CASPAR

This is a very special time, though. Every once and a while she kind of goes on a tear and loses contact with time and space and literally won't talk to anyone until she's done with whatever she's got going on. If she's disturbed during this time, it is bad for everyone. However, pencils get worn down, coffee gets drunk, occasionally we have to go in for a re-supply.

DAVID

This is ridiculous.

CASPAR

Oh yes, David. Yes it is. But here we are. As you can see I have a pot of coffee in one hand and in the other hand a cup of sharpened pencils. We move slowly toward the booth, come with me, here we go... The trick is to move so slowly that you could be mistaken for furniture. Is that someone moving towards the booth or is it my imagination? Who can say... Now we've arrived at the booth, I set down the pencils, I pour the coffee.

CASPAR POURS COFFEE.

DAVID

Hey, Ava.

CASPAR

Sh sh sh sh sh sh sh. Our task accomplished, we slowly move away until we are at fifty feet minimum safe distance... Okay. And I do that about once an hour.

DAVID
... What is going on with you two?

CASPAR
What?

DAVID
What is going on with you two?

CASPAR
I'm sorry, what's that, David, I can't hear you?

DAVID
What is going-

CASPAR
I'm sorry what's that David I can't hear you.

DAVID
...

CASPAR
It's not a thing to be talked about.

DAVID
You're-

CASPAR
Sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh... It's Orpheus in the underworld, kiddo. You turn around and the lady vanishes. C'mon, Gloria's in the kitchen.

EFFIE
(Whispering to Zebulon.)
... Well. Look at that nice young man that just walked in, Dear.

ZEBULON
He appears to have grown up quite nicely hasn't he?

EFFIE
It just steams me up that we're not able to talk to him.

ZEBULON
I believe Caspar's head would quickly leave his body, were we to do that.

EFFIE
And since when is that a reason to not do a thing?

ZEBULON

I'll admit it is tempting to reach out and say hello, but we must reconsider our comportment now that we've returned home. Don't want to send anyone screaming out the front door and all.

EFFIE

...

ZEBULON

... Dear?

EFFIE

Something ain't right.

ZEBULON

Oh my, what appears to be trouble?

EFFIE

I ain't sure yet... hmmm... I am getting the feeling that... yes... we have a snoop.

ZEBULON

Beg pardon?

EFFIE

Someone's snooping.

ZEBULON

A snoop.

EFFIE

Someone is sniffing around our environs and I don't like it one bit.

ZEBULON

Who could it be?

EFFIE

I'm unsure... keep an eye out husband.

ZEBULON

My eyes are out...

BACK IN THE KITCHEN.

DAVID

So y'all are just having cocktail hour in the kitchen?

LEIF

It's a special occasion.

DAVID

What's that?

LEIF

I'm hungover.

DAVID

That's ridiculous and also where's mine?

GLORIA

I'll make you one.

DAVID

Hey, am I crazy or did my phone tell me this morning that not only was the Tesla Bandit an unmanned car but that it also crashed and burned right in front of your place last night?

GLORIA

...

CASPAR

...

LEIF

...

GLORIA

I didn't hear anything about it.

CASPAR

I don't know what you mean.

LEIF

Don't look at me, I was drunk.

DAVID

Uh huh.

CASPAR

Gloria, David is actually here to talk to you today.

GLORIA

Oh really? I feel special.

DAVID

You should, I went to work on the weekend for you.

GLORIA

You did? Why?

DAVID

I told you, I was going to look you up.

GLORIA

David, you didn't have to do that.

DAVID

I know, but I was curious.

GLORIA

David, I was the first generation of my family born in America, you're not going to find anything in Los Angeles.

DAVID

Oh, but I did.

DAVID OPENS A FILE AND TAKES OUT A PHOTOGRAPH.

GLORIA

Who is that?

DAVID

That's your great grandmother.

GLORIA

... Shut up.

LEIF

No way.

CASPAR

Holy shit.

GLORIA

That's... how do you know?

DAVID

It took some doing. I had to coordinate with some city archivists in Tucson and Phoenix.

CASPAR

Who just happened to be at work on the weekend too?

DAVID

We have a group chat. It is filthy.

GLORIA

Are you sure about this?

DAVID

Are you saying I don't know my business?

GLORIA

David, why would my family come all the way up here from Mexico and then go back down to Mexico?

DAVID

She was from here.

GLORIA

What?

DAVID

She was born here. Here are the records, see? San Gabriel Township, 1898.

GLORIA

"Narisca Tujunga."

DAVID

That's her.

GLORIA

That's not a Mexican name.

DAVID

She wasn't Mexican.

GLORIA

What.

DAVID

She was Kizh (pronounced "Keech").

GLORIA

I don't...

DAVID

Gloria, you were saying you don't have a connection to this place? Your family history goes back all the way to the very first damn human beings to ever set foot in damn southern California. The Kizh. They were here for thousands of years before the Spanish. They had trade routes up and down the coast, they studied astronomy. You have a deeper connection to this place than most people.

CASPAR

That kind of looks like you, Gloria.

GLORIA

How did I not know about this?

DAVID

It's easy to miss. This photo was taken on her wedding day. It looks like she worked in a tequila bottling factory. She married a man named-

GLORIA

Alejandro De Mendoza.

DAVID

That's right. He brought barrels of tequila up from Mexico to be bottled. I'm guessing that's where they met, and she moved with him down to Mexico.

LEIF

Wow.

CASPAR

David, this is amazing.

DAVID

Not bad, right?

GLORIA

She's beautiful.

LEIF

Caspar, outside for a minute.

GLORIA

Tell me everything.

CASPAR

We'll be right back.

CASPAR AND LEIF WALK OUT THE BACKDOOR.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

What's up? What's happening?

LEIF

Ava and I have been trying to find out what the fuck is happening to us.

CASPAR

Right.

LEIF

A big part of that is "why here, why now?"

CASPAR

Okay.

LEIF

The chances of us being here on accident is nearly zero.

CASPAR

Why?

LEIF

Because of what just happened in there. Your son is here, Ava used to work here, I almost worked here.

CASPAR

You almost worked here?

LEIF

Yeah. JPL flew me out for a job interview in college.

CASPAR

I'm sure that went well.

LEIF

It was actually a pretty fun week, I stole a cop car.

CASPAR

Jesus Christ, dude.

LEIF

Anyway, the thing that was making it feel more random was Gloria, because she doesn't have any connection to this place.

CASPAR

But now she does.

LEIF

Exactly.

CASPAR

So what does that mean?

LEIF

I don't know. Are we here on purpose?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

We need Ava back, let's go check on her.

CASPAR

Okay.

CASPAR AND LEIF WALK BACK INSIDE.

DAVID

It doesn't surprise me that she moved away. That was a bad time in history to be a Kizh. Then again, the only good time for the Kizh was before any white people showed up.

CASPAR

Speaking of white people showing up. Hi.

GLORIA

What's going on, you two?

CASPAR

Uh, Leif just told me something really funny that I think Ava would love, we'll be right back.

DAVID

What was so funny?

LEIF

It's a scientist thing. Inside science joke.

DAVID

What?

CASPAR

We'll be right back.

DAVID

... Remind me to get to the bottom of that later.

CASPAR

(Popping back in.)

Hey, David, thank you so much for doing this, this is amazing.

DAVID

It's no problem.

GLORIA

David, you're blowing my mind right now.

DAVID

I'll admit, I was not expecting what I found.

GLORIA

My grandmother always said something about having indigenous in the family, but I always thought she meant Tepehuanes or something, since that's where she was from. This... wow.

DAVID

... Hey, listen...

GLORIA

... What?

DAVID

I'm assuming the old man's told you the whole story right? About him and me?

GLORIA

Yeah, he's told me.

DAVID

So... I know what it's like to want to leave... to have to leave... I get it... Okay?

GLORIA

What are you talking about, David?

DAVID GETS ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER OUT OF THE FILE.

DAVID

Gloria, this is a missing persons report filed by a man named Cesar Benitez...

GLORIA

... Oh...

DAVID

... You've been missing for four years, Gloria.

GLORIA

...

DAVID

...

GLORIA

... David-

DAVID

It's okay... Look, I get into it with people. When I get into a room I tag every person I don't know and I get right into it with them, figure out what their whole deal is. Maybe it's a survival thing. Maybe I'm looking for threats... But I know when to stop... I'm stopping now, okay?

GLORIA

... Okay.

OUT IN THE DINING ROOM.

CASPAR

She's gone.

LEIF

She's gone.

CASPAR

(Whispering.)

Mucklewains, what happened to Ava?

EFFIE

(Whispering.)

She's come to, y'all. She's out in the parking lot.

LEIF
I see her, let's go.

CASPAR
Okay.

EFFIE
(Whispering.)
Well, take us too, dang it!

CASPAR
Sorry!

THEY ALL WALK OUT INTO THE PARKING LOT.

CASPAR (CONT'D)
What is she doing?

AVA
Talk to me, Colorado Boulevard.

LEIF
Ava?

AVA
C'mon....

CASPAR
Ava I think you may need to lay down.

AVA
Good idea.

AVA LAYS DOWN ON THE GROUND.

CASPAR
Not in the parking lot.

AVA
It's fine... What's been going on?

LEIF
David uncovered that Gloria's great-grandmother is
from here.

AVA
No shit?

LEIF
No shit.

AVA
Nice.

CASPAR
Leif was saying that might mean something.

AVA
Oh it means something alright.

CASPAR
What?

AVA
I mean, I know, but I don't know.

CASPAR
Okay.

LEIF
Why are you out here now?

CASPAR
What did you discover in the math hole?

AVA
Whoever fucked with us was unable to fuck with us
in the way they wanted to fuck with us.

LEIF
How do you know that?

AVA
Because of gophers.

LEIF
... Uh...

CASPAR
Has it finally happened, have we finally broken
Ava?

EFFIE
Hang on y'all, she's finally speaking our language.
Tell us about the gophers, Ava.

AVA
Any problems with gophers on the farm, Mucklewains?

ZEBULON
Well, as I say there is death, there is taxes, and
there is rodentia. All are inevitable.

AVA
And how do you get rid of gophers?

ZEBULON
There are multiple ways, none of them foolproof.

EFFIE

You can set traps, also try and poison them.

ZEBULON

But the traps can be avoided, and the poison's just no good to have around the house.

EFFIE

Remember John Pruitt?

ZEBULON

Oh my, yes, John Pruitt down the way used to work in a silver mine and knew his way around explosives.

EFFIE

Old John would grow frustrated at times and start shoving sticks of dynamite down in the gopher holes.

ZEBULON

You could hear him for miles.

EFFIE

We told him he was out of his head for turning his farm into the battle of Gettysburg but his only response was "Works don't it?"

ZEBULON

Which it did, but solving the problem of holes in your farmland by putting even bigger holes in your farmland seems barely a solution.

EFFIE

That's correct.

ZEBULON

One too many times down the mine for John if you're asking me.

AVA

And if none of that works?

ZEBULON

Well, you could try sticking a garden hose down one of the holes and flooding the entire subterranean metropolis they've built.

AVA

Right. That's the one I'm talking about. You pump water into a gopher hole and the gopher gets flushed into its network of holes. But it can only end up in a place it's already been to.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

We were attacked and we were flushed back through our gopher hole.

CASPAR

We've never been here with the diner though.

AVA

But we each have a connection here. Something that connects us to this place. It's a connection we all have in common.

CASPAR

There are hundreds of places we all have in common.

AVA

Right. That part was random. We could've ended up on Thegrion or Ice Age Earth or the outskirts of Triangulum, anywhere we have a connection to. But we ended up here.

LEIF

So it's random that we ended up here, but there's only a certain number of places we could've ended up?

AVA

Yes. There's something about connections, I'm not sure what, something about entanglement between different versions of ourselves. There's a whole ecosystem out there. Its not just an assemblage of dimensions, there's... an environment.

CASPAR

And I'm reeling you back in, Ava.

AVA

Right. Whoever attacked us wasn't in control of where we go, they were just trying to flush us out with a garden hose.

LEIF

Interesting.

EFFIE

I've got a question about sheep coming up, Ava.

CARS SUDDENLY SWERVE IN THE STREET AND HONK AS A MASSIVE FLOCK OF DUCKS COMES WADDLING DOWN THE STREET, ALL OF THEM QUACKING.

LEIF

What the fuck?

CASPAR

Ava?... Ava there's ducks now.

AVA

Mad. Scientist. Thundercrash.

ZEBULON

Hate to say it but things are getting downright familiar around here.

CASPAR

Ava, goddamnit with the ducks, what is happening?

AVA

This is what happens when you fuck with the system, you idiots!

LEIF

Who are you talking to?

AVA

Whoever!

CASPAR

Ava.

AVA

We know now that the diner is a natural catalyst. A change agent. Almost like a natural force like erosion or the tides or something. But it's been shuttered. We've been out of business for eight months now. That doesn't change the need for it, that doesn't change how the universe works it just throws things out of whack! It's like pressure is building up slowly, and eventually that pressure is going to express itself somehow.

LEIF

Express itself with ducks?

AVA

Or sheep!

CASPAR

Why is it ducks or sheep?

AVA

Because it turns out the universe is a little bit silly!

EFFIE

So we're just going to keep getting livestock strolling down the street?

AVA
I don't know, it could be anything!

LEIF
This is going to keep happening?

AVA
Oh yes. It's going to be ridiculous.

CASPAR
Shit.

LEIF
David's here.

CASPAR
Shit!

LEIF
We need to get him out of here.

CASPAR
We've got to get him out of here. Shit. I can't just tell him to leave, it could screw things up.

LEIF
And how will it screw things up when a herd of oxen starts walking down the street?

AVA
That would be dope.

CASPAR
Fuck, I'll tell him there's a gas leak or something.

EFFIE
Y'all, may I offer a suggestion?

CASPAR
What?

ZEBULON
Effie and I have discussed this at length.

EFFIE
I'm sure ya'll are about to concoct some sort of story to get that young man gone before the strangeness makes itself known.

CASPAR
Yes, what do you suggest?

ZEBULON

Nothing, Caspar.

CASPAR

What the hell are you talking about?

EFFIE

Caspar, that is a fine young man, you have there. He's polite without harming sincerity, he's up for a fight when need be, and he has taken it upon himself to rebuild bridges when they're broken.

CASPAR

I agree.

ZEBULON

But Effie and I are afraid that this work with him has begun with deception.

CASPAR

Oh, come on.

ZEBULON

Now, we understand there needed to be a bit of that.

EFFIE

You didn't want him to think you'd sprung a leak in your head.

ZEBULON

But now, here we are, amidst a cadre of sheep and ducks and whatever's to come.

EFFIE

And we say to heck with it.

ZEBULON

Sometimes we wish to obscure ourselves to keep the ones we love nearby. They cannot possibly want to see our true selves, so we are always putting on a show, a performance to keep them in their seats.

EFFIE

And while all that's understandable, it is still proceeding in dishonesty.

ZEBULON

And so we have decided: to heck with it.

CASPAR

You want me to just be honest with him? That I'm from an alternate reality and I ride on the back of a time-traveling, dimension-spanning diner?

EFFIE

Listen to yourself say it, Caspar. Doesn't it feel good to just say it.

ZEBULON

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

EFFIE

I, for one, think that boy would be proud to know who his father truly is. I can assure you, that we are.

ZEBULON

So much time spent hiding our strangeness from others. So much time spent being ashamed of our true selves. Enough, my friend.

CASPAR

I think you're forgetting that part of that honesty is me saying I'm not his father.

ZEBULON

Have you ever felt more like a father than in this moment? Is that enough to call yourself a father?

CASPAR

... Okay, look. Let's break up this weird little meeting okay? Leif can you go brief Gloria? I'll keep acting like we're a diner until... I don't know, until the next thing happens.

LEIF

Sounds good. Ava, what are you going to do?

AVA

I'm good right here.

LEIF

On the ground?

AVA

Well, Caspar's about to ask me if I want a club sandwich, so I'm good.

LEIF

Okay. Give me the radio.

AVA

Leif, the numbers in Caspar's head, they're pi?

LEIF

Yeah.

AVA
But one number's missing each time?

LEIF
Yeah.

AVA
It's spatial coordinates.

LEIF
Is it?

AVA
It's a distress call right? They're telling us where they are. They're giving us spatial coordinates, we add timing conventions and an Earth bias?

LEIF
Aha. Okay, I'll go see how many more numbers we need.

AVA
Nice.

LEIF
And for what it's worth, I agree with the Mucklewains. We've been trying to pretend we're Earthlings for eight months now. Let's just be us.

LIEF WALKS BACK INSIDE.

CASPAR
Do you want a club sandwich?

AVA
I thought you'd never ask, schmoopie.

CASPAR
Okay.

AVA
Caspar.

CASPAR
Yeah?

AVA
The Mucklewains are right.

CASPAR
Yeah.

CASPAR WALKS BACK INSIDE. AVA IS APPROACHED BY A PAIR OF HIGH HEELS.

FRAN

Ava...

AVA

Frelp!

FRAN

What are you doing on the ground?

AVA

Well, believe it or not, I'm at work.

FRAN

Get up.

AVA

I can't, I have a club sandwich on the way.

FRAN

What?

AVA

What are you doing here, Fran? Ooh! Did you bring our trophy?

FRAN

There's no fucking trophy, Ava.

AVA

Could you have one made real quick?

FRAN

Ava get up!

AVA

Okay, okay, jeez. What's going on, Frelp, what are you doing here?

FRAN

Trying to salvage what's left of my career.

AVA

In the parking lot?

FRAN

You completely fucked up my life, Ava!!

AVA

I mean, fight club in the basement, Fran. It wasn't fucked up already?

FRAN
Where's the robot?

AVA
The robot? He has a name.

FRAN
Where is it?

AVA
I don't know. Around. What's going on, Fran?

FRAN
I'm here to collect it.

AVA
What?

FRAN
The robot, give me the robot.

AVA
Get your own robot.

FRAN GETS A LARGE CONTRACT OUT OF HER BAG.

FRAN
Do you know what this is?

AVA
No autographs, please.

FRAN
It's your contract with JPL. Can I direct your attention to page 19, subset D?

AVA
Please do, it's my favorite of the subsets.

FRAN
Everything you make while under contract with Jet Propulsion Laboratory belongs to us. Give me the robot.

AVA
I didn't make the robot.

FRAN
I've discussed this with our lawyers and technically speaking you were on the creative team that designed said robot, therefore it belongs to us, give me the robot.

AVA

No.

FRAN

Ava!

AVA

Freelp!

FRAN

I don't know what I was thinking inviting you last night. I mean, of COURSE you were going to ruin it.

AVA

That's a sick burn, Fran, but I have to agree.

FRAN

We had a good thing going down there. It was a nice way to blow off steam at the end of the month. And then along comes Ava.

AVA

That's what you get for inviting me.

FRAN

We had a few new users watching online last night. Two of them were Fireball XL 5 and Manglerfish. Guess who they really were?

AVA

Hall and Oats?

FRAN

The Deputy Secretary of Defense and the goddamn Secretary of Defense himself.

AVA

...Oh.

FRAN

Yeah, Ava... Oh. After your little display last night, I spent the rest of the night begging not to be fired!

AVA

How is this my fault?

FRAN

Because everything was fine until you showed up!

AVA

Are you sure?

FRAN

Give me the robot.

AVA

No.

FRAN

Give me the robot!

AVA

Fran, It's not mine to give. It's Leif's, and knowing him he's probably already given it some sort of nascent consciousness and now it wants to pursue a singing career. And his name is Peter, by the way.

FRAN

I don't care if his name is Lord Braxton von Wendell the Third, give me the robot!

AVA

That name's actually really great, not sure why we went with Peter, but still: No.

FRAN

I was warned all my life to stay away from toxic people like you.

AVA

Fran, you're an HR person about to get fired for HR violations, I can't hear you over the sound of you throwing stones around in your glass house.

FRAN

(Breaking down.)
... I'm just... I'm so tired...

AVA

Oh god.

FRAN

I've been up all night on the phone making promise after promise, I had to promise things to congressmen, Ava. Do you have any idea what that's like?

AVA

No, but hey! I've been up all night too, so I know what that's like.

FRAN

Why have you been up all night?

AVA

There was this thing earlier with sheep, don't worry about it.

FRAN

What happened to you? You used to just be mean but now you're mean and weird.

AVA

Fran, flattery will get you nowhere. Come on inside, have some coffee, you're about to rip your own skin off.

FRAN

... You're not going to give me the robot, are you?

AVA

No, of course not.

FRAN

I could sue you.

AVA

Sure, whatever. Come on.

INSIDE THE DINER.

CASPAR

Welcome to Midnight Burger, what can I get you?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Nice place? Just open?

CASPAR

Yes and no.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Last time I was in Pasadena I did not remember seeing this place.

CASPAR

It's a crazy world we live in, things aren't there and then they are.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Of course.

LEIF

Hey, Caspar? Real quick, apparently there's someone here from JPL who's trying to take Peter away from us and just so we're clear: from my cold dead hands.

CASPAR

Sure, okay? Is that who Ava's talking to?

LEIF

From my cold dead hands, okay?

CASPAR

Yeah, okay, fine.

LEIF

I'll be on the roof.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Leif Thorvaldson.

CASPAR

... I'm sorry, what?

LEIF

... Caspar, why don't you let me take this table?

CASPAR

Okay... sure...

LEIF

...

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

...

LEIF

... Can I help you?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Where you been, Leif?

LEIF

Who the hell are you?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

...Ever think about Ettore Majorana?

LEIF

...

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

I think about him a lot... You know, Fermi thought Majorana was the next great genius. The next Galileo. He was one of those men who was set to reshape the universe as we knew it. And then, suddenly, in 1938, right before Europe turned into a battlefield... poof.

(MORE)

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A. (CONT'D)

Withdraws all his money from the bank, buys a boat ticket to Naples, writes a cryptic letter... And then he was gone... Lots of fun theories out there, what's your favorite?

LEIF

...

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

They range from the sad to the heroic. He fled because of pressure from the Italian government to work on the nuclear bomb: very heroic. He went mad and spent the rest of his life as a beggar: sad. I imagine the real answer is somewhere in between.

LEIF

Majorana emigrated to Argentina.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Yes, sure, that's the official line, but that investigation happened seventy years later. I'm meant to trust the governments of Italy and Argentina after seventy years? I don't think so.

LEIF

...

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

It's a fascinating thing isn't it? When a brilliant man runs away from his own brilliance. Decides to live the simple life... Never works though. That's what they say... destiny is never really done with you, it's just waiting for you to slip up... And then, there I was last night watching a live stream of a robot fight.

LEIF

So who are you? DOD? NSA?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Oh no, nothing so barbaric, Leif. I'm a scientist, just like you. Just a man trying to move society forward.

LEIF

Uh huh... DARPA.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Kyle Parrino from DARPA. Nice to meet you.

LEIF

I'll give you three minutes to get out of here.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Hey! Whoa! Leif, I'm not here to make trouble! I'm here to make peace.

LEIF
How the fuck did you get me? Facial recognition?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
No actually, we were trying something new. Gait analysis.

LEIF
Jesus Christ.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
When you did that dramatic walk away from the camera is when we got you. Did you know that we can identify a human being's identity within the 99th percentile simply by analyzing how they walk? It's fascinating technology.

LEIF
After all this time?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Leif, you disappeared from a top secret government project, taking years of research with you, did you think we were just going to say bygones?

LEIF
What do you want?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Well, big picture? You. We've got tabs on you now and I'm sure you'll be doing all sorts of wonderful work for us in the years to come, but where to start, right? Well, I suppose we'll start with a robot. That little buddy of yours is, I'm thinking, three decades ahead of current technology? Terrorist cells all over the world are not going to know what hit them when they're suddenly raided by a squad of adorable, eighteen inch robots.

LEIF
Over my dead body.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Leif, don't be ridiculous.

LEIF
You listen to me, you fucking anus. I'm not Ettore Majorana. I'm not a frail Italian physicist. I'm not a genius recluse surrounded by equations.

(MORE)

LEIF (CONT'D)

You need to forget you ever saw me or I make everything bad for everybody. You want me to crash the Western Interconnected System? You want California to go back to the stone age? Don't test me.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Whoa whoa, Leif. Slow down! That wasn't a terrorist threat to a government agent was it? You're just making it worse! Sidebar: I love where your head's at. Crashing electrical grids? Great stuff! Let's talk more.

LEIF

Three minutes and you're gone!

LEIF WALKS AWAY.

EFFIE

Leif?... Leif? Leif, hold up! Leif!... Durn it.

ZEBULON

Seems we've found the snoop, dear.

LEIF STORMS INTO THE KITCHEN.

LEIF

Fucking unbelievable! Fucking UNbelievable!

GLORIA

Leif, what's wrong?

LEIF

I decide to go to one goddamn robot fight to just blow off some fucking steam and now I've got some goon from DARPA breathing down my neck! Of all the fucking organizations it had to be those goddamn sociopaths!!? They think they can fuck with me?!

CASPAR

Leif.

LEIF

I guess it's time to blow up some firewalls, I guess it's time to post their entire fucking database on Craigslist missed connections!!

CASPAR

Leif!

LEIF

This guy is going to regret ever coming here, I'm going to empty his bank accounts and donate the money to the Audubon Society!!

CASPAR

Leif!!

DAVID

What's DARPA?

LEIF

... David... Hey... I uh... I forgot you were here.

DAVID

Don't mind me. Please, continue.

LEIF

Uh... so... you know I'm just... having a hard day.

DAVID

I get it. Believe me, the number of times I've had a hard day after a late night robot fight? I can't even count them.

LEIF

Yeah, you know, it's a hobby of mine.

DAVID

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency... is what DARPA stands for.

LEIF

... Yeah.

GLORIA

See, David, Leif has had a very long and interesting life.

LEIF

I have.

GLORIA

He's done some crazy things.

LEIF

Yes.

GLORIA

And we think that's just great.

CASPAR

Good God.

LEIF

I'm just having to deal with some stuff from my past is all.

DAVID

Uh huh.

GLORIA

It happens. I mean, everybody has had a life,
right?

DAVID

See, the fun part is, I get to just sit here until
y'all get tired. Y'all tired yet?

GLORIA

Leif. Maybe take your frustrations to Ava's booth
right now?

LEIF

Yes. Good idea. Okay.

GLORIA

Bye... So, David-

DAVID

I think I'll have another Michelada. How about you
all?

GLORIA

... Sure.

OUT IN THE DINING ROOM.

EFFIE

Leif! Leif Leif Lief, durn it!!

FRAN

Ava, I am begging you. I can't get fired again.

AVA

Again? Fran, how many times has this happened?

FRAN

In America?

LEIF

Hey. Hey Fran.

FRAN

Chut.

LEIF

Some fucking homunculus from DARPA is here and he's
trying to take Peter.

AVA

What?

FRAN
WHAT? Where? Where is he?

LEIF
Over there, what are you-

FRAN
Out of my way, out of my fucking way!

LEIF
What's happening?

AVA
Fran is here for Peter too.

LEIF
Fucking hell, seriously?

AVA
Seriously.

LEIF
Goddamn I let my guard down for one fucking second.

AVA
Wait, Leif. The DARPA guy is here for Peter?

LEIF
Yes.

AVA
This is good.

LEIF
Why?

AVA
Leif... Let... them... FIGHT!

FRAN
(Across the dining room.)
You! Outside! Right fucking now!

THE BACKDOOR OPENS AND CASPAR WALKS OUT.

CASPAR
... Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

DAVID WALKS OUT AS WELL.

DAVID
Have y'all thought about getting one of those
slushie machines that makes margaritas?

CASPAR

We don't have a liquor license.

DAVID

... Oh really?

CASPAR

Yes, regulations are... very important to us, David we... really try and keep things on the up and up around here.

DAVID

... You know Mom's in Denver now.

CASPAR

Really?

DAVID

Yeah. She said she wanted to take up skiing.

CASPAR

Okay. Yes, it's a shame there are no places in California you can do that.

DAVID

She's been there four years now, she has not learned to ski.

CASPAR

It's not like the mountains are going anywhere.

DAVID

Sometimes she'll have a couple of drinks and she'll call me.

CASPAR

Oh no.

DAVID

Oh yes. It is amazing, it's better than Netflix.

CASPAR

I'm sure.

DAVID

She doesn't talk about you as much as I think she wants to. But she did say this to me once... she said that you were bound and determined since birth to be boring and angry.

CASPAR

Well, that's sweet of her.

DAVID

I have to say... I'm not seeing it.

CASPAR

I think that was probably true back then.

DAVID

Well, what happened? Because things are just starting to unravel around here and it is delicious. I mean, it was surprising enough that you had a Facebook page.

CASPAR

... David I had a Facebook page because I needed people to be able to get in touch with me no matter what, because my son ran away from home. You may have heard... So if you're wondering what happened to me... that. That happened. And then a whoooooooole bunch of stuff after that... Your mom's not wrong. It's not a bad description of me... Growing up with your grandmothers... it was not a picnic. Grandma number one would forget her head if it wasn't screwed on to her body and grandma number two, Jesus, the number of times I had to stop her from getting into a fist fight in the grocery store... I strove for boredom, okay? Boredom was the goal. And then you came along and... you would not be told anything... Ever... What I should've done was figure out who you were, and then figured out how to work with it... Instead I just fought you every step of the way, still striving for that boredom... I'm really very sorry, David.

DAVID

... I forgive you.

CASPAR

Good.

DAVID

... You know I kind of knew this already. We really didn't need to have a whole moment out here by the dumpster.

CASPAR

Yeah, I know. But I needed to get it in under the wire.

DAVID

What do you mean?

CASPAR

Because you're right. things here are about to unravel so much that it's going to make a pile of loose yarn the size of Mount Fucking Whitney.

GLORIA SWINGS THE BACK DOOR OPEN.

GLORIA

We've got a problem in the parking lot.

CASPAR

See what I mean?

THE PARKING LOT. IT IS AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL GRUDGE MATCH.

FRAN

We have clear, CRYSTAL clear agreements with the federal government over our projects, you can't just breeze in here and take them!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

I'm sorry, eminent domain?

FRAN

We're government contractors, you can't claim eminent domain over something that the government already owns by the transitive property.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Well if we already own it, why is it not in my possession right now?

FRAN

Because you don't get to decide! This robot is the property of JPL until otherwise pending government procurement!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Well that just sounds like a bunch of red tape to me, this robot is going to belong to us, it's just a matter of time.

FRAN

Then you can wait in line right behind all the other agencies.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Yeah, we don't really like to do that. We kind of just do what we want.

FRAN

Not today you don't. NOT today!!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Should I start making calls? Is that what I need to do?

FRAN
Oh, you want to make calls? Is that how you want to play this? I've got nine senators and twenty-seven congressmen on speed dial.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Let me just scroll to where my phone says "House Majority Leader", do you think that might trump your fun little phone list?

FRAN
How about I get on the phone with all his major donors?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Oops, look at that, I pressed "call" guess I'm calling him.

FRAN
You want to push me? You want to push me? I just came off a juice cleanse and I am ready to fuck somebody up!

LEIF
I like Fran now.

AVA
Right?

GLORIA
Who the hell are these people again?

LEIF
That's Kyle from DARPA and Fran from JPL. You're witnessing a good old fashioned interdepartmental infight.

FRAN
Get ready for an all-caps text message Tsunami, asshole!

GLORIA
At one point we had a conversation about "laying low" and I feel like government agents arguing in the parking lot is very much NOT that.

AVA
The Mucklewains said we don't have to do that anymore.

GLORIA

Oh they did?

ZEBULON

Well, perhaps we didn't mean THIS-

GLORIA

Okay, I need to be at all the meetings now. Do you see what happens?

EFFIE

Gloria, we only meant-

GLORIA

ALL of the meetings.

CASPAR

Hey. What's going on?

GLORIA

Well uh... Hey David.

DAVID

What's happening in the parking lot? Is this a dance off, because those two are not dressed for it.

GLORIA

It's... hmm.

CASPAR

It's okay, Gloria.

GLORIA

Okay. These two people are fighting over a robot that Leif made.

DAVID

A robot?

GLORIA

Yes, it's... It's called Peter and a lot of people want it.

DAVID

So he's selling it?

GLORIA

No, no, these two government officials are saying that the robot belongs to them.

DAVID

Why?

GLORIA

Because... they can?

DAVID

Fuck that.

LEIF

Thank you, David.

DAVID

You seriously made a robot that the government is trying to steal?

LEIF

I did, you want to meet him?

DAVID

Hell yes.

FRAN

How's your one phone call going? Because I've just sent fifty-seven texts and nineteen strongly worded emails?

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

You're about to get a call. The number will be unlisted, I suggest you take it.

FRAN'S PHONE VIBRATES.

FRAN

... Hello?... Hello, sir... yes... yes... yes, of course, sir... Of course sir, I understand...

FRAN ENDS THE CALL.

FRAN (CONT'D)

... I hope that robot malfunctions and chops you into tiny pieces, you goon.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

It's been great meeting you.

LEIF

Fuck.

AVA

C'mon, Fran. That's it?

FRAN

Ava... I really wish you'd taken that extra month of leave.

AVA
There's got to be something you can do.

FRAN
There is. It's time once again to buy a bottle of wine and update my LinkedIn... Fuck my life... Goodbye, Ava.

FRAN WALKS AWAY.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Well. That was fun. Leif, I'll be needing that prototype and any data you have on it. I'll be taking that right now.

LEIF
No, you won't.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
I thought you'd say that. So... now I'm going to call what's known as an acquisition team and things are going to get very messy. Don't bother going anywhere, Leif. We have you on satellite.

KYLE WALKS AWAY.

LEIF
That's it.

LEIF WALKS INSIDE.

GLORIA
Leif?... Oh God.

WE MOVE TO INSIDE KYLE'S CAR. HE ACTIVATES A COMMUNICATION DEVICE.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Did you get all that?... Yeah, he's off his rocker, this guy's one step away from another Ted Kaczynski. Grab him and the robot... his friends? Keep an eye on them, maybe we need to use them as leverage.

LEIF IS NOW OUTSIDE THE CAR. HE TAPS ON THE WINDOW.

LEIF
Open the door.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
Oh, Jesus, he's outside my car now, this is so pitiful.

LEIF

Open the fucking door.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Go ahead and move in... hang on, he's got something in his hand.

LEIF FIRES UP THE LASER-SAW.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A. (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that?!

LEIF STARTS CUTTING INTO KYLE'S CAR. HE IS LITERALLY CUTTING IT IN HALF.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A. (CONT'D)

HOLY FUCK! WHAT THE FUCK!

LEIF

GET OUT OF THE CAR!!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

HE'S CUTTING MY CAR IN HALF!! HE'S CUTTING MY CAR IN HALF!

LEIF

LAZER-SAWWWWWWWW!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

MOVE IN NOW!! MOVE IN NOW!!

LEIF

PETER IS MINE!

KYLE'S CAR FALLS OPEN LIKE A HATCHED EGG.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

Holy Shit!! What the fuck, Leif!!

LEIF

I would say get out of your car but your car doesn't have an inside anymore!

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

You've really fucked up, Leif! I don't know what that thing is but it belongs to us now! And since I don't know what else you've got hiding in this diner, how about I just take the whole thing?!

SEVERAL CARS ROLL UP TO THE DINER. AGENTS JUMP OUT OF THE CARS.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A. (CONT'D)
Give me the megaphone!
(Into the megaphone.)
Attention, anyone in the building. Evacuate
immediately. Midnight Burger is now property of the
united states government!

LEIF
Oh yeah?

A SQUADRON OF DRONES TAKES FLIGHT FROM THE ROOF OF THE DINER

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.
What... what is that? Are those our drones?

THE DRONES UNLEASH A HAIL OF FLECHETTE NEEDLES ONTO THE
PAVEMENT.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A. (CONT'D)
Oh fuck! Everybody back!

LEIF
Anyone sets foot in this parking lot, I turn them
into a voodoo doll!

DAVID
Ho. Lee. Shit.

ZEBULON
I think Leif may have taken our advice just a bit
too far, dear.

GLORIA
Leif, what the fuck are we going to do now?

LEIF
It'll be fine.

GLORIA
We're all going to get fucking arrested.

DAVID
Did you open a diner with a bunch a fugitives from
the government?

CASPAR
You're getting warmer.

DAVID
This is the craziest shit I've ever seen.

AVA
Hold that thought, David.

WE HEAR MASSIVE FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.

KYLE PARRINO FROM D.A.R.P.A.

What's that sound?... What is... Oh my God.

WE HEAR THE LOUD AND GHOSTLY CALL OF A MASSIVE ANIMAL. IT IS LUMBERING DOWN COLORADO BOULEVARD. CARS SCREECH TO A HALT AND PEOPLE BEGIN TO RUN IN FEAR.

DAVID

What in the motherfucking hell...

AVA

That's a bit of a step up from sheep and ducks.

CASPAR

Is that what I think it is?

LEIF

Yep.

GLORIA

That's my girl. She may be grounded but she's still keeping it weird.

DAVID

It's four fucking stories tall.

THE ANIMAL CONTINUES DOWN THE STREET.

CASPAR

Hey, Gloria, give me the radio, would you?

GLORIA

Sure.

DAVID

What is happening?

CASPAR

Come inside.

CASPAR AND DAVID WALK INSIDE.

DAVID

That's not a real thing that exists.

CASPAR

Sit down.

THE SIT AT A BOOTH.

DAVID

What...

CASPAR

It's called a Mungo. Don't worry, it's a plant eater.

DAVID

...

CASPAR

Before we start, I need you to meet some friends of mine.

ZEBULON

Hello, David. It is our absolute pleasure to meet you. I'm Zebulon Mucklewain, here with my wife, Effie.

EFFIE

Hello, David.

CASPAR

... I have a very long story to tell you.

THE END