

Midnight Burger

Chapter 1: The Transdimensional Haboob

SFX: A DINER. DISTANT SOUND OF FOOD BEING GRILLED AND AN OLD RADIO PLAYING.

MUSIC: "JUST A LITTLE TALK WITH JESUS" BY THE HUMBARF FAMILY.

SFX: CHIME OF THE FRONT DOOR OPENING.

GLORIA:

Um... Hello?

SFX: SEVERAL PANS BEING DROPPED AT THE SAME TIME IN THE KITCHEN.

GLORIA: (CONT'D)

Hello?

CASPAR:

Hello?

GLORIA:

Hi, I'm here for the job interview?

CASPAR:

The what?

GLORIA:

Job interview? There was an ad. Said all applicants be here at 6. I was assuming 6pm. Was it AM? Cause that would be weird.

CASPAR:

An ad?

GLORIA:

Yes... Am I... this is Midnight Burger, right?

CASPAR:

Yes.

GLORIA:

Okay... you're kind of freaking me out right now.

CASPAR:

Why don't you have a seat at a booth? I'll be right with you.

GLORIA:

Sure.

CASPAR:

(Under his breath)
What the fuck?

ZEBULON:

(On radio)
And those were the heavenly sounds of the Humbard Family with their rendition of "Just a little talk with Jesus". I'm Zebulon Mucklewain here with my wife Effie, doing our best to bring the holy to the holler.

EFFIE:

(On radio.)
Hi, y'all.

ZEBULON:

Effie, what was it you were saying to me this morning over coffee?

EFFIE:

Well, darling, as it was with my mother and her mother, I can always sense when a change is coming.

ZEBULON:

That is right.

EFFIE:

As one might sense a storm coming up in their bad knee. One feels a pressure growing. All creation waits.

ZEBULON:

But do not be afeared.

EFFIE:

No, no. Look to the Psalms, y'all. "For God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

ZEBULON:

Where does this season of change find you all?
Perhaps at a beauty salon, considering the expression of a new life through your follicles?
Perhaps at the clouded graveside of a loved one?

SFX: FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING THE BOOTH

ZEBULON: (CONT'D)

Perhaps it finds you lamenting the loss of your taqueria at a lonely diner outside of Phoenix.

GLORIA:

What?

AVA:

Hi. Hi there, sorry to bother you, I'm Ava. That's my booth over there.

GLORIA:

Oh, okay. You're a regular here?

AVA:

HA! Sure. Listen I have an important question.

GLORIA:

Okay.

AVA:

Do you have a cigarette?

GLORIA:

Oh. Uh, yeah do you want to bum one?

AVA:

Seriously? Oh my God... Oh my God I'm going to start crying hang on.

GLORIA:

Are you uh... having a hard time quitting?

AVA:

I'm having a hard time STARTING.

GLORIA:

I don't know-

AVA:

Yes. Yes, please can I bum a cigarette?

GLORIA:

Yeah. Yeah here take my lighter.

AVA:

THANK you. Oh my God.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY. FRONT DOOR SWINGING OPEN AND THE BELL CHIMING.

ZEBULON:

Wherever this time of change may find you, here is The Chuck Wagon Gang to remind you that heaven will always be your home...

MUSIC: "HEAVEN IS MY HOME" BY THE CHUCK WAGON GANG.

CASPAR:

Okay, Hi.

GLORIA:

This place is interesting. What's the radio show,
it's wild.

CASPAR:

That's the Mucklewain's Hour of Power. Sending out
the gospel to the greater Toadsuck region.

GLORIA:

Where is Toadsuck?

CASPAR:

Arkansas.

GLORIA:

Why is it playing here?

CASPAR:

Hm?

GLORIA:

Why is it on the radio in Arizona?

CASPAR:

Right... right because Arizona is where we are
right now.

GLORIA:

Right now?

CASPAR:

Anyway, this is Midnight Burger. I'm Caspar.

AVA:

(Outside)
FUCK. YES.

CASPAR:

That's Ava, she's always here.

AVA:

(Outside)
NICOTINE, GET IN ME.

CASPAR:

And this is a... diner.

GLORIA:

Are you sure?

AVA:

(Opening the door and shouting in)
Hey, we're in Arizona right now.

CASPAR:

Yeah.

GLORIA:

Is she like a homeless person? A little nutty?

CASPAR:

She's actually a Physicist with multiple doctorates.

GLORIA:

Sure.

CASPAR:

So you saw an ad telling you to come here at 6?

GLORIA:

Well it said "all applicants" but looks like it's just me. Can I ask? Did you make the ad? Because it seems to me that no one else works here, but you seem surprised that I showed up. Do you own this place?

CASPAR:

Um...

GLORIA:

Okay, look. I don't have time for this. You obviously had no idea I was coming and you seem to have no idea what you're doing. I'm broke. And miserable. And for you to add your irresponsibly unprepared interview to that is the slap in the face I don't have time for.

CASPAR:

Wait wait wait. I'm sorry. You're right. I didn't know you were coming. Management never tells me these things. How about you... tell me about yourself?

GLORIA:

Okay. My name's Gloria. I've been in food service my whole life. I had a taqueria for a while but the pandemic shut it down. Don't have the money to start it back up again so now... Now, I don't know. I don't know what I'm doing. I saw the ad, and for some reason a diner out in the middle of nowhere sounded like a good idea.

CASPAR:

Any family in the picture or...

GLORIA:

No. Mom and Dad passed away, I was an only child so it's just me.

CASPAR:

That's great! That's, I mean, I'm sorry about that, that's... my condolences. Can you tell me about the ad?

GLORIA:

Management doesn't really tell you anything, do they?

CASPAR:

They don't.

GLORIA:

It's weird that you say "management".

CASPAR:

Is it?

GLORIA:

Well it's one diner outside of Phoenix, it's not a Red Robin.

CASPAR:

That is weird. I should stop doing that.

GLORIA:

Anyway. It was an ad in Craigslist. Not a lot of restaurants are hiring right now so it stood out.

CASPAR:

Weird. That's never happened before.

GLORIA:

Well how did you end up working here?

CASPAR:

I don't know. Just sort of walked in, looking for a place to be, but that was a long time ago.

GLORIA:

Have you ever done a job interview before?

CASPAR:

No. How's it going?

GLORIA:

Poorly.

CASPAR:

What usually happens now?

GLORIA:

Now is when you pretend you're a people-focused organization by telling me about yourself.

CASPAR:

Sure. Sure. Sure. I'm Caspar. And I pretty much do everything around here since our cook unexpectedly left a while back. We have one regular customer, whom you've already met and the clientele here can be... challenging?

GLORIA:

Well listen, I know the ad was for a waitress but if your cook left I've got tons of time in the kitchen.

CASPAR:

That's great, do you have any experience with dark matter?

GLORIA:

You mean like Mole sauce?

CASPAR:

Gloria, listen. You seem like a very nice person and I'm sure you'll do well in life but I think you should probably leave.

GLORIA:

Oh, I should?

CASPAR:

It's for the best.

GLORIA:

You've got to be kidding me.

CASPAR:

I'm not. You should really go.

GLORIA:

What the hell is wrong with you?

CASPAR:

That's a whole other conversation.

GLORIA:

Let me explain something to you. This place is an embarrassment to all restaurants and you have no customers. I don't want this job but I'm not leaving until you offer me this job so that I can turn it down.

CASPAR:

You really need to leave before it's too late.

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

AVA:

We've got a problem.

CASPAR:

Shit.

AVA:

Look. On the horizon.

SFX: IMMINENT RUMBLINGS

CASPAR:

Goddamnit.

GLORIA:

What is that? Is that a sand storm?

AVA:

Nope.

GLORIA:

It looks like a sandstorm.

AVA:

It doesn't matter what it looks like.

GLORIA:

What does that mean?

CASPAR:

It's coming towards us?

AVA:

Well what do YOU think?

CASPAR:

Okay.

GLORIA:

Am I going to get stuck here?

CASPAR:

Gloria?

GLORIA:

Yes.

CASPAR:

Just remember that I told you to leave.

EFFIE:

... In times of change we often weep for the life we were promised. A life we promised ourselves, a life we imagined. All those visions of our future can be swept away in the deulges and tempests of creation, and though they may be swept away still we cling to them. We can gaze so deeply into the visions of a promised life that often the life we've been given slips past us and out of our grasp as well.

CASPAR:

Here it comes.

EFFIE:

Do not gaze too deeply into lives unlived, my brothers and sisters. Do not fall in love with apparitions...

ZEBULON:

And for those of you out there still missing that life you feel you're owed here's The Norfolk Jubilee Quartet to ease your aching ghosts...

MUSIC: "JONAH IN THE BELLY OF THE WHALE" BY THE NORFOLK JUBILEE QUARTET.

SFX: THE "SANDSTORM" HITS. MASSIVE SOUNDS OF WIND AND RUMBLING OF GLASSES AND PLATES.

GLORIA:

Jesus Christ!

CASPAR:

It'll be fine.

GLORIA:

How often does this happen?!

CASPAR:

It'll pass.

GLORIA:

Is my car going to be okay?!

AVA:

It's probably not there anymore.

GLORIA:

WHAT?!

CASPAR:

This doesn't feel right.

AVA:
I was just about to say that.

GLORIA:
OF COURSE IT DOESNT FEEL RIGHT!

SFX: WIND BEGINS TO DIE DOWN.

CASPAR:
Okay. We're okay.

AVA:
I'm going out there.

GLORIA:
My car is gone!

AVA:
No, it's probably right where you left it. It's probably us that's gone.

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

CASPAR:
Ava, don't go out there.

AVA:
(Outside)
Relax.

GLORIA:
What does she mean "It's us that's gone"?

AVA:
(Outside)
It's weird out here. It's not dusty but I can't see past the parking lot.

GLORIA:
The parking lot my car is supposed to be in?!
What's going on right now?

AVA:
I think I know what this is. Caspar, go to the back door.

CASPAR:
What am I doing?

AVA:
(Outside)
Just go.

CASPAR:

Okay.

GLORIA:

Do YOU see my car out there?

AVA:

(Outside)

Your name's Gloria?

GLORIA:

Yes.

AVA:

(Outside)

Gloria, I'm going to throw a rock away from the diner and it is going to magically hit Caspar, defying all laws of physics. When that happens, tell me how concerned you are about your car.

CASPAR:

Wait, you're going to what?

SFX: THUD.

CASPAR: (CONT'D)

OW!

AVA:

(Outside)

Ha HA!

CASPAR:

You hit me in the eye!

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

AVA:

Pocket dimension!

CASPAR:

How did that curve all the way around to the back?

AVA:

It didn't. We're just in a universe that's only about 6500 feet across.

GLORIA:

What is this place?

LEIF:

(Far off)

Caspar?

CASPAR:
Is that Leif?

GLORIA:
Who is Leif?

CASPAR:
He's our cook. Leif?

LEIF:
(Far off)
Oh, thank God!

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

LEIF: (CONT'D)
Hey, guys.

AVA:
Leif, what the fuck?

CASPAR:
What's going on?

LEIF:
Listen, we don't have a lot of time-

GLORIA:
MOTHERFUCKER EVERYBODY STOP GODDAMNIT.

LEIF:
Who's this?

CASPAR:
This is the new waitress-

GLORIA:
I absolutely am NOT the new waitress! Will someone explain to me what the fuck is happening?!

EFFIE:
Pardon me, Gloria. Might my husband and I have a word?

GLORIA:
The radio is talking to me.

EFFIE:
Gloria, you have entered into a period of wandering. Of searching for meaning and needing shelter. And in that search have found yourself in a place eternal.

GLORIA:

Oh my God, have I died?

EFFIE:

Not at all, my dear. Though that question does imply a finality that has no purchase within our various vernaculars.

GLORIA:

The radio is talking to me and I don't know what it's saying.

CASPAR:

Okay, Gloria, we'll stick a pin in this for now.

GLORIA:

Stick a-

LEIF:

I've got a problem.

CASPAR:

Leif, where have you been?

LEIF:

No time for that.

AVA:

Hang on. Are we in a pocket dimension right now?

LEIF:

Yes.

AVA:

Nailed it.

CASPAR:

Goddamnit, Leif, why are we in a pocket dimension?

LEIF:

Because it owes me a favor, I'm hiding.

CASPAR:

Hiding from what?

LEIF:

Look, I'm sure it'll be fine.

CASPAR:

Hiding from what, Leif?

LEIF:

A Transdimensional Haboob.

AVA:

Dude.

CASPAR:

Holy shit.

EFFIE:

Gloria? How are you doing, darling?

GLORIA:

Well, how do you think I'm doing, talking radio person?

ZEBULON:

They say you can't explain fire to a fish, but I imagine if they could, that fish would feel about like how you're feelin' right now.

GLORIA:

What?

LEIF:

I want to be clear: this is not my fault. I was in a card game in Andromeda, which we all know is a shithole, how could I have expected that the big loser at the table that night was the son of a-

GLORIA:

What's a Transdimensional Haboob?

LEIF:

It's hard to explain-

AVA:

It's like a large dust storm, but instead of dust it's anti-matter, and instead of being a few miles long it's the size of a nebula, and instead of being a weather occurrence it's a sentient super-being.

GLORIA:

Sure.

CASPAR:

And Leif has lead it right here where it's going to kill us all.

LEIF:

Which I will apologize for many times over, I'm sure. Look if there's any place I'm going to be able to shake this thing, it's here.

CASPAR:

How?

LEIF:
I don't know. I've been hiding in this pocket dimension but it's going to move on any minute and when it does this Transdimensional Super-Being is going to rush right at us.

CASPAR:
What are we supposed to do when it rushes us?

LEIF:
Uhh...

GLORIA:
Jump out of the way?

GLORIA: (CONT'D)
(Laughing)
Sorry. I've decided I'm having a psychotic break, so everything's funny now.

LEIF:
Wait. Wait, actually she's right.

GLORIA:
Good! That makes it funnier.

AVA:
You want to jump out of the way?

LEIF:
Time slip. If we slide backwards through a particulalr timeline that could throw it off the scent. Where were you before I showed up?

GLORIA:
Normalcy.

CASPAR:
Arizona.

LEIF:
That'll work. Is my recipe book still in the kitchen?

GLORIA:
(Laughing)
Wait what? He's going to cook something and make us go back in time? C'mon. Jen Claude Van Damme is: Timecook.

LEIF:
I like her. I'll be in the kitchen.

AVA:

Are you having a good time over there while we're all about to die, Gloria?

GLORIA:

I don't know. I mean I opened up my fridge this morning and all I had was Tapatio and a carrot so at least this is less depressing.

CASPAR:

Okay. Let's do this. Gloria, how about you have a seat at the booth there and we'll explain everything to you as long as we are all still alive in a few minutes.

GLORIA:

Booth... okay.

AVA:

We're losing the pocket dimension... There it is.

SFX: THE BIZARRE AND ANGRY SOUNDS OF THE SENTIENT SUPER-BEING: THE TRANSDIMENSIONAL HABOOB.

CASPAR:

Jesus, that's huge.

GLORIA:

What am I looking at?

CASPAR:

Zebulon, hit Gloria with some narration, would you?

ZEBULON:

And lo, Gloria looked upon a sight nary a member of her race had ever seen. Suddenly she sat in a booth, in a diner, floating in the tumultuous starways, her limited knowledge of exsistence as her only guide.

EFFIE:

The vastness of this new heavenly plane broken only by a distant malevolence. A dark spirit who now eyed her countenance with hunger. It was the size of any sky she'd seen tenfold. And it now moved upon them like a stalking beast.

CASPAR:

Uhhh. Leif, it's coming.

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)
Almost there.

CASPAR:

It looks very angry.

AVA:

And it's moving very fast.

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)
Almost there!

AVA:

If he kills us I'm going to kill him.

GLORIA:

Oh my God.

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)
EVERYBODY HANG ON TO SOMETHING!

SFX: A DEAFENING POP, THEN SILENCE.

EFFIE:

"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

CASPAR:

Everybody okay?

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)
Good back here.

AVA:

I'm fine.

CASPAR:

Gloria?

SFX: GLORIA THROWING UP ON THE FLOOR.

CASPAR: (CONT'D)

I'll take that as a yes. Leif did it work?

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)
I don't know, look outside.

CASPAR:

Okay. Well, we're back in Arizona.

GLORIA:

Hey, that's my car. That's me... getting into my car... backwards. That's me driving away backwards.

CASPAR:

We're going backwards in the timeline. We may be here a while. Leif, it looks like it worked.

LEIF:

(From the kitchen)

Okay, I'm going to pick up speed, things are going to go by pretty fast.

CASPAR:

Gloria, try and keep it together, okay? Just keep your eyes outside. Watch the highway in the distance. See how it disappears? Now the road that you drove here on becomes a dirt road. Then there's no road at all. Keep your eye on the view outside and I'll be right back.

LEIF:

I think that went very well.

AVA:

I'm not going to thank you for solving a problem that you created.

LEIF:

Hey.

CASPAR:

Okay guys, huddle up. We need to explain to Gloria what's going on.

LEIF:

She seems fine.

CASPAR:

She's looking out a window and watching Arizona go backwards in time. She's not fine. We need to explain things to her and by "We" I mean "Ava".

AVA:

Oh, I'M explaining it? Fine. Pussies.

CASPAR:

Hey Zebulon, could we get some, y'know, explaining what the hell is going on music.

ZEBULON:

That's a wonderful idea, Caspar. Here's the Hayden Quartet with "Will There be Any Stars in my Crown".

MUSIC: THE HAYDEN QUARTET, "WILL THERE BE ANY STARS IN MY CROWN".

SFX: THE STACK OF AVA'S NOTES THUDDING ONTO THE TABLE.

GLORIA:
What are those?

AVA:
My notes.

GLORIA:
On what?

AVA:
This place. Before we start I'm going to need another one of your cigarettes.

GLORIA:
O...kay.

SFX: PURSE NOISES. LIGHTER. LONG DRAG OF A CIGARETTE.

AVA:
(Sighing)
Would that the second one was just as good as the first, am I right?

GLORIA:
Please start talking.

AVA:
So... When I was young my mother always dreamed of me being a nightclub singer. But all I ever dreamed of was going to college. So she disowned me, and off I went to college. And then I went back to college again and again and again, I had a real knack for it. I got this big stack of doctorates. And like most people with a stack of doctorates I spent a lot of time in front of a great big chalkboard. I had a great one, it slid back and forth, I miss that thing. I would write big long equations, publish, write more big long equations, publish again, etcetera...

When you're a scientist and you spend your time zooming out on the universe you discover that the universe is, inherently, a HUGE bummer. Because everything is dying. Constantly matter and anti-matter is breaking down, forming into something else and breaking down again. Look out the window, we're going backwards in time at an alarming rate, do you see anything staying put? Even the rocks are changing shape over time.

(MORE)

AVA: (CONT'D)

Myself and my colleauges all accepted that. We accepted that the universe was in a constant state of decay. We had become cororners, really, studying celestial death.

But I had a problem. Because on MY chalkboard and my chalkboard alone, all those equations I was writing were slowly pointing toward something. There was a point, somewhere deep in existence, that wasn't dying. It was a constant. And the universe doesn't do constants. The universe does death. So this one strange spot in endless space and time, was an anomaly. I tried to tell people about my theory but everybody said I was crazy, which, as a scientist, is when you know you're awesome.

So what's a girl to do? Be called crazy her whole life? No. I decided, that I would leave my lovely chalkboard behind and go out and find this thing. I would go to the singular point in all of existence that somehow wasn't dying.

Turns out it's a diner. Thanks for the cigarette.

GLORIA:

Whoa, hang on, why is it a diner?

AVA:

Oh, I have no idea.

CASPAR:

Ava, tell her the rest.

AVA:

What? Everything after that is theoretical. Oh! By the way, that's my booth over there. No one touches my booth.

CASPAR:

Okay, that was 0% helpful Ava, thank you.

GLORIA:

No, no. That helped.

AVA:

Suck it.

GLORIA:

Tell me the rest.

CASPAR:

Well, I mean, Ava's right it is all theoretical after that.

AVA:

(From her booth)
Suck it, again.

CASPAR:

The old saying is that "the only constant is change". This place appears to be the acception to that rule.

GLORIA:

And it's outside of Phoenix?

CASPAR:

No. There's no fixed spot. Every night at 6pm when I unlock those doors, we're somewhere else. Sometimes a different time, sometimes a different timeline, sometimes a different universe, a different dimension, and sometimes an hour and half outside of Phoenix.

GLORIA:

So you just float through the universe and what? Serve burgers to people?

CASPAR:

It's a little more complicated than that. In an ever changing cosmos, this place is a constant. And I think the cosmos kind of hates that. So the cosmos quite often tries to kill us, as you just saw with the Transdimensional Haboob.

GLORIA:

Oh, good.

CASPAR:

Today it was a giant malevolent super-being chasing Leif across the galaxy. Tomorrow it'll be who knows what? What was it last week?

AVA:

(From her booth)
Four Dimensional Ice Harpies.

CASPAR:

Right, Four Dimensional Ice Harpies, it could be anything. This place is like a virus constantly under attack by antibodies.

GLORIA:

Okay but... Let me try and approach this in a way I can understand. It's a restaurant. I used to run a restaurant. And the three things you have to ask yourself when you're opening a restaurant is: Why this place? Why here? Why now?

CASPAR:

Well, today, it was because of you. That's the theoretical part, the part that Ava doesn't want to talk about. What I'm convinced of, is that no matter where this place sets down from day to day, when I open the doors to start the day's business, someone is going to need us. Because how could they not? Like Ava said, it's all death out there, all the time. Everything's breaking down. And sometimes people need a place, even if it's for an hour, or just a few minutes, they need a place to feel like they're not dying. Because it's all just too terrifying.

LEIF:

Hey, guys. Brought you some coffees. It's been a day.

SFX: COFFEE CUPS ON TABLE.

GLORIA:

So what's your deal, Leif?

LEIF:

Me? You know, I'm just one of those guys. I wander around a lot, odd jobs, stuff like that. I usually end up back here, though.

GLORIA:

You wander around the universe?

LEIF:

I mean, "universe" is a little reductive. You're kind of describing a sandbox in a play ground in a densely populated city when you say things like "universe".

GLORIA:

Are you... human?

LEIF:

Oh yeah, sure. Ten fingers, ten toes, facial hair, the whole deal.

GLORIA:

You just went into the kitchen and made us go backward in time, you're just some normal dude?

LEIF:

Well, what a lot of cooks won't tell you is that it's really about the ingredients. They like to convince you they have some sort of magical powers but it's really about getting out of the way of what you've got in your kitchen, am I right?

GLORIA:

What did you have in your kitchen that made time travel happen?

LEIF:

Tachyons. You guys need cream?

GLORIA:

I'm good.

ZEBULON:

My dear, I am getting the distinct feeling that it's our turn.

EFFIE:

I'm feeling the same way, darling.

GLORIA:

Okay. So what's up with you guys inside the radio?

EFFIE:

Well, I'm Effie Mucklewain and this is my husband Zebulon.

ZEBULON:

And we're broadcasting to the greater Toadsuck area, bringing the Holy to the Holler.

GLORIA:

Okay, but really though.

ZEBULON:

Effie, I'm getting the distinct sense that our new friend Gloria would like to understand the innerworkings of our presence in her life.

EFFIE:

It's understandable dear. But as Job asked "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?"

ZEBULON:

Leif, might I ask you to put a pause in our rush through this river of time we are currently in? We would like to show something to our new friend.

LEIF:

Yeah, sure. We can't stop for long though. Hang on.

SFX: POWERING DOWN.

LEIF: (CONT'D)

Okay, we're stopped. Moving forward in the timeline at normal speed.

ZEBULON:

Gloria, if you would please direct your attention outside our windows. If I have listened to the Lord's whispers correctly, we have travelled far into the American past and we are currently placed on a vast and open plain, in an America before history began. When it was a land of magic and enchantment. A land of peace.

GLORIA:

There's a village. I can see people.

EFFIE:

Those are the Pima people. They inhabited your home of Arizona for generations before the arrival of the Spanish. The Pima believed in the power of names. And that to speak the name of your ancestors is to conjure them from the spirit world.

GLORIA:

They can see us. They're waving.

EFFIE:

Feel free and wave back. There is no fear in them. No pain in unknowing. They are witnessing a mystery, and all they need do is wave. During your time with us, do embrace that feeling.

ZEBULON:

For how much of our lives are spent building spires to reach the unknown? How much time do we spend convincing ourselves that such constructs may one day be complete? And perhaps all that time we've spent demanding answers from the mysteries should have been spent waving at them, admiring them from afar, being thankful for their magnificent scope.

EFFIE:

We can keep going now, Leif. Thank you, kindly.

LEIF:

Powering up.

SFX: POWERING UP.

CASPAR:

He's going to take us pretty fast now... There goes the village... and then here comes the...

GLORIA:

Oh, wow.

CASPAR:

...Ice age.

GLORIA:

This is amazing. Ava, you're a scientist, are you in heaven right now? This is amazing, right?

AVA:

History's boring.

GLORIA:

Why?

AVA:

Because it already happened.

GLORIA:

Oh, come on.

AVA:

I've seen some pretty amazing nonsense sitting at this booth, you know? Time slippage is pretty kindergaten for me at this point.

GLORIA:

Can you humor me, please? I'm having a moment. Be amazed with me.

AVA:

Give me another cigarette and I'll promise to get interested in something.

GLORIA:

You really like cigarettes.

AVA:

This place is the most amazing place in existence but nobody thought to put in a cigarette machine.

GLORIA:

Okay fine, I'll make that deal.

AVA:

Excellent. Hey, Leif.

LEIF:

Yeah.

AVA:

We're going to make a stop at the Devonian era.

LEIF:

We can't keep doing this.

AVA:
Or I could remind you that you almost got us killed today.

LEIF:
Fine. Coming up on it. I'm going to stop around 415,000,000 BC.

AVA:
That'll do. Get your purse, we're going outside.

GLORIA:
Isn't that bad? Isn't there some thing where we could change the present by messing with the past?

AVA:
No, the Butterfly Effect is sexist.

GLORIA:
Oh, it's sexist?

AVA:
Only a man could think himself so important that even his slightest action could influence the time-stream.

LEIF:
Okay, we're here.

AVA:
Let's go.

SFX: DOOR OPENING. SOUNDS OF THE DEVONIAN ERA (WHATEVER THAT IS). LIGHTER AND CIGARETTE DRAG.

AVA: (CONT'D)
Welcome to the Devonian Era.

GLORIA:
It's dark.

AVA:
It was cloudy a lot.

GLORIA:
It's quiet.

AVA:
The only animal life is in the ocean at this point.

GLORIA:
The trees are so weird.

AVA:
That's why we're here. Those aren't trees, those
are twenty foot tall mushrooms.

GLORIA:
Whoa.

AVA:
Trees could only grow about four feet at this point
but the Prototaxites could just keep growing.

GLORIA:
So, you like mushrooms.

AVA:
The only thing even remotley as interesting as
theoretical physics is the mushroom.

GLORIA:
Okay. I just want to put that tree in an omlette
now.

AVA:
I see you've moved past the freak-out stage.

GLORIA:
I'm having a cigarette in 415 million BC and I feel
alright.

AVA:
You should stay.

GLORIA:
Stay?

AVA:
Sure. You're looking for a job, right?

GLORIA:
Why would I do that?

AVA:
Because you're having a cigarette in 415 million
BC. You seriously want to go back to one carrot and
a bottle of Tapatio after this?

SFX: DOOR OPENING.

LEIF:
We've got to go.

CASPAR:
Mucklewains, we're going to have to pick up the
pace, how about some travelling music?

EFFIE:

Might I take this one, Husband?

ZEBULON:

Well of course, my dear.

EFFIE:

If no one's too offended I might play a little secular music.

ZEBULON:

Goodness me, Honey! That's awfully risque.

EFFIE:

Well I wouldn't do it if you didn't love it so much, Heart of Mine.

AVA:

Get a room!

EFFIE:

How about a little "Roll Along Prairie Moon" by the Prairie Ramblers?

AVA:

I'd really kill for some Linda Rondstat sometimes.

MUSIC: "ROLL ALONG PRAIRIE MOON" BY THE PRAIRIE RAMBLERS

LEIF:

Okay, this could get weird. We're going to go full speed all the way back to the big bang and that should toss us back to where we started. Hang on.

SFX: POWERING UP.

CASPAR:

How are you feeling?

GLORIA:

One hell of a job interview.

SFX: SPEEDING UP. RUMBLING OF DISHES AND PLATES. THE BIG BANG. SILENCE.

LEIF:

Okay. Welcome back to Arizona everybody.

GLORIA:

There's my car.

CASPAR:

See? Right where you left it.

AVA:

No sign of the Transdimensional Haboob.

CASPAR:

Good work everybody. Leif, never do that again.

LEIF:

Sorry.

CASPAR:

Gloria, listen. I can never tell when we're going to get swept off somewhere else, so now's the time to make it for your car.

GLORIA:

Right... Right...

End of Chapter 1