

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 2: Planet Straightforward.

SONG: WHITE HOUSE BLUES BY CHARLIE POOLE AND THE NORTH  
CAROLINA RAMBLERS

GLORIA

Hey, Effie, isn't that more secular music? I  
thought you only did that on special occasions?

EFFIE

Funny you should ask that. It stems from a  
fascinating conversation between my husband and I.

ZEBULON

The crux of it being, if The Lord is master of all  
creation from whom all springs, is there any music  
that cannot praise his name?

EFFIE

In the end, there can be no thing not praising him  
and deserving of his love.

GLORIA

Cool, let me tell you about a guy named David Bowie  
some time, then.

CASPAR

Okay, guys, huddle up, what do we think of the new  
girl?

LEIF

I think she's great, she says my name right.

AVA

What are you talking about?

CASPAR

We don't say your name right?

LEIF

She says "Laef".

CASPAR

That's what we're saying.

AVA

That's how we pronounce it.

CASPAR

Leef.

LEIF

Laef.

CASPAR

That's what I'm saying.

AVA

That's what he just said.

LEIF

Laef.

AVA

Leef. I'm saying it right.

CASPAR

We're both saying it right.

LEIF

You're not. Gloria, how do you pronounce my name?

GLORIA

I say Laef but you guys say Leef. Am I saying it wrong?

CASPAR

I heard the same word twice, is that what you heard?

AVA

Yeah, I think they're both having a stroke.

LEIF

Maybe you're both having a stroke.

AVA

I can't have a stroke, I'm too powerful.

CASPAR

Hey, Gloria, what are you doing?

GLORIA

Side work.

CASPAR

What is side work?

GLORIA

Side work. Y'know before a shift starts you fill up the sugars, marry the Ketchup bottles, wipe down the tables.

CASPAR

Oh, well, look at us.

AVA

Fancy.

CASPAR

I don't know about you but I'm going to drape a white linen over my arm.

LEIF

Gonna go back in the kitchen, make some duck a l'orange.

AVA

I'm going to put on some high heels and order some Clams Casino.

ZEBULON

I, for one, enjoy the air of finery that Gloria brings to our humble establishment. Honey, I think I'll put on my good overalls.

EFFIE

And I'll put on my one dress that's been in my family for a generation and has seen more funerals than an undertaker.

GLORIA

Is this hazing? You're making fun of the new girl?

CASPAR

I'm not sure, we've never had a new girl before.

GLORIA

Hey, what am I looking at outside the window? It's incredible.

AVA

It's the curvature of space. We're skirting around the outside of a spatial plane before settling down at a particular location.

CASPAR

Leif and I call that the "Back of the Serpent".

AVA

Because they are apparently Norse and 2000 years old.

ZEBULON

My brothers and sisters, we should prepare. I can feel the fibers of creation beginning to settle into place. Our arrival is imminent.

CASPAR

Alright, well I hope everyone's finished their side work.

GLORIA

Ha ha.

ZEBULON

Effie, what are you feeling in your bones about our new destination?

EFFIE

The lord whispers to me of a dense and wonderous land of forests and streams, teeming with life.

GLORIA

That sounds nice.

EFFIE

Also something about teeth.

GLORIA

That sounds... sharp.

ZEBULON

To hasten our arrival, let's hear from the Smith's Sacred Singers shall we?

SONG: SMITHS SACRED SINGERS, LIFE'S RAILWAY TO HEAVEN

CASPAR

Okay, you ready for you first shift?

GLORIA

Pretty sure there's no way I could be ready for this.

CASPAR

That's the spirit.

GLORIA

How does this usually work?

CASPAR

It's like any diner. We open the door at six. Then, unlike any diner, once we open we'll be in one of two situations: Either A) Somone needs to come in and have a seat or B) Something tries to violently kill us.

GLORIA

There's no third option?

CASPAR

Yes, sometimes it's both.

LEIF

I'm going to heat up the grill.

AVA

I'm going to sit at my booth and do nothing at all.

CASPAR

Okay, here we go.

SFX: THEIR NEW REALITY COMES INTO FOCUS. I PROMISE THAT MAKES SOME SORT OF SOUND.

GLORIA

Wow, Effie was right, it's a forest.

CASPAR

Doesn't look too threatening. Let's open up.

SFX: DOOR UNLOCKING. DOOR OPENING. SOUND OF THE DINER FADES INTO THE BACKGROUND. SOUND OF THE FOREST.

GLORIA

It's really beautiful.

CASPAR

This is looing like more of an "A" situation, so that's good.

GLORIA

Ow. Hey I tripped on something, hang on.

SFX: RUMMAGING THROUGH THE DIRT.

CASPAR

What is it?

GLORIA

It's a... whoa. Look at that.

CASPAR

Is that a bone?

GLORIA

Oof. It's heavy. It looks like a jawbone.

CASPAR

Look at the teeth on it.

GLORIA

Effie was right about those too.

SFX: LOW GROWL FROM THE TREE LINE.

CASPAR

Was that your stomach?

GLORIA

I was hoping it was yours.

CASPAR

Any chance we both just imagined that at the same time?

GLORIA

I beginning to feel this is not an "A" situation.

SFX: HUNGRY ROAR

CASPAR

It's B. It's B. Back inside it's B! B B B B B B!

SFX: DOOR OPENING. DOOR LOCKING.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

It's B! B situation.

AVA

Oh great. What is it?

GLORIA

We didn't see it, we heard it.

AVA

Why do you have a huge bone in your hand?

GLORIA

I forgot to drop it!

LEIF

What's up?

CASPAR

There's something out there.

LEIF

What is it? Cool bone.

CASPAR

We heard something.

LEIF

What'd you hear?

SFX: LOUDER ROAR. IT ECHOES THROUGH THE FOREST.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. B situation. Is the door locked?

CASPAR

It's locked.

LEIF

It sounds massive.

AVA

Maybe we're on Planet Irony and the creature is actually quite small.

SFX: HUGE FOOTSTEPS LURKING OUTSIDE

CASPAR

Does that sound like Irony to you?

AVA

Okay, I guess we're on Planet Straightforward, then.

CASPAR

Can anyone see anything?

GLORIA

It's too dark.

CASPAR

Is the sign on?

LEIF

No.

CASPAR

Leif, first of all we had a whole conversation about how we need to turn the sign on when we open, secondly, turn the sign on please.

LEIF

Okay, okay.

CASPAR

Please don't be terrifying, please don't be terrifying.

LEIF

Sign coming on.

SFX: BUZZ OF NEON LIGHTS.

CASPAR

Holy shit.

GLORIA

Really big monster.

AVA

Zero irony.

LEIF

Oh, that's a big boy.

CASPAR

Look at it's teeth.

AVA

Look at Gloria's teeth.

GLORIA

What?

AVA

The huge jaw bone you're holding in your hands?  
Look at the teeth.

GLORIA

Oh my God!

SFX: JAWBONE DROPPING TO THE FLOOR.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

It's the same teeth.

AVA

I sincerely hope that's the bones of one of his  
enemies and not an old pal of his.

LEIF

It's like someone put a shark's head on top of a 12  
foot emaciated corpse.

AVA

Not a darwinian masterpiece for sure.

SFX: HUGE ROAR

LEIF

Oh. It's looking right at me.

GLORIA

Is it going to be able to get in here?

CASPAR

Well there was that one time we were literally  
inside a Red Dwarf so I'm assuming one creature  
HERE IT COMES!



SFX: THE CREATURE RAMS THE DOOR OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay the door's holding.

AVA

Anyone else think it's weird that it's bipedal in a forest biome?

CASPAR

Read the room, Ava.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS

LEIF

It's looking for another way in.

GLORIA

Is there one?

LEIF

I don't think so.

CASPAR

Unless you forgot to lock the back door again.

LEIF

Shit. Hang on.

SFX: BACK DOOR LOCKING.

LEIF (CONT'D)

We're good.

SFX: CREATURE RAMMING THE BACK DOOR.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Whoa! It's back here now.

GLORIA

Any other place we forgot to lock? Is there a sunporch or something?

LEIF

No, we're good.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS OUTSIDE.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Wow, it really wants in here.

CASPAR

It's fine. We're in here, it's out there. We'll wait it out and in the morning we'll be gone and it'll be confused then go on with it's day.

LEIF

Hmm.

AVA

Yeah. Hmm.

CASPAR

Jesus. What?

AVA

Nothing.

LEIF

Nothing.

GLORIA

What?

LEIF

It's just...

AVA

I mean...

CASPAR

I'm going to kill both of you, what is it?

LEIF

I know Ava was joking about it being Planet Straightforward but I mean...

AVA

It's really straightforward.

LEIF

A creature outside trying to get in? That's it?

AVA

No spatial distortion, no dimensional rift?

LEIF

It's very early-oughts horror movie. There's a thing in the woods and it's killing people and no one will believe you. That sort of thing.

AVA

Starring Justin Long.

LEIF

Right, and like, Kate Bosworth.

CASPAR

Who cares?

ZEBULON

I believe what our compatriots are attempting to convey is that our current predicament on it's face is the picture of simplicity.

EFFIE

And perhaps if we sat with that simplicity for a moment, we would begin to observe complexities within complexities.

ZEBULON

The Mona Lisa is simply a picture of a nice lady. But look closer and there is a universe within.

GLORIA

So what? We've got to figure this out or something?

LEIF

Maybe it bears a closer look.

AVA

Yeah, it's too boring.

CASPAR

Guys, I would really like a night off.

AVA

I know but it's too booooooring.

CASPAR

Wouldn't a night off be nice, though?

GLORIA

But it's my first night.

CASPAR

Ok. Let me counter offer. How about we NOT figure it out and instead Leif makes... Night Breakfast.

AVA

Oooh. Night Breakfast.

EFFIE

The temptation is strong. For Night Breakfast is forbidden.

ZEBULON

Truly food that is syrup-ed belongs in the day. And yet, from time to time, one finds oneself presented with a pile of waffles when the moon is high, a scoop of whipped butter melting atop them.

GLORIA

I'm not going to lie that sounds straight-up erotic but maybe Leif's right. Maybe we should figure out what the deal is with this horrific thing outside and THEN have Night Breakfast, as a reward.

CASPAR

Okay. Fine. But then after Night Breakfast we are playing a game of dice in the walk-in.

AVA

You currently owe me 2800 dollars from dice in the walk in.

CASPAR

Yes but what if this time I'm in the zone?

LEIF

You're never in the zone.

GLORIA

Guys, focus. I'm hungry now. Ava, do some science, what the deal with this thing?

AVA

I don't know, I'm not a Zoologist. You know what we called the Zoologists back in school? Poop-lookers. You want to know why?

CASPAR

Because they looked at a lot of poop?

AVA

Because they looked at a lot of poop.

GLORIA

Why is everyone being goofy right now?

CASPAR

Because the situation was supposed to be either A: We have customers or B: Something tries to kill us. A: There are no customers, and B: The thing that's trying to kill us very obviously can't get in here to kill us. It's like a snow day.

LEIF

Here, I'll start it off. There's a thing outside. It's huge and ugly. It wants to get in here to eat us.

AVA

That's an assumption you're making.

LEIF

I am making that assumption because it's mouth is full of teeth and the size of a manhole cover. What else would you use that mouth for?

AVA

We need an option for comparison. There's a huge jawbone on the floor that obviously comes from one of the same species, maybe it wants that.

GLORIA

Why would it want that?

AVA

It would have to be a known unknown, we know that we don't know it but we know there's something to know.

CASPAR

But applying Occam's Razor, what's the most logical reason why a monster whose mouth looks like it's full of can-openers wants to get in here?

AVA

True, but Occam's razor can quite often be a refuge for bedwetters. Are you a bedwetter Caspar? Because I have my suspicions.

CASPAR

Are all Physicists mean?

AVA

Yes.

GLORIA

I don't know who Occam is but I think you're saying that the most likely thing has got to be true, but since we're trying to, y'know, look deeper maybe we shouldn't go with the obvious thing.

AVA

Agreed.

CASPAR

How long are we going to do this for? Can we have a time limit?

SFX: THE CREATURE HOWLING AND SUDDENLY RUNNING OFF INTO THE TREES.

LEIF

Where's it going? You think it lost interest?

CASPAR

Well I know I have.

LEIF

It is kind of hard to find the nuance here. I think it's just a creature and this is Planet Straightforward.

CASPAR

That's what I say. We don't have to do a full investigation into this. It's a big monster. Who cares? Sometimes a monster is just a monster.

EFFIE

So true. You know who else said that, Husband?

ZEBULON

Who was that, Honey?

EFFIE

The Trojans. "Oh, look, a beautiful wooden horse they have given us as a gift. Let's not look into it too much."

ZEBULON

"What could possibly go wrong?"

AVA

You see that, you're getting sassed by an old-timey radio now.

CASPAR

Do you want Night breakfast or not?

AVA

You looking like a dummy is the real Night Breakfast.

SFX: ANOTHER CREATURE NOISE FROM THE TREELINE. THIS ONE IS VERY DIFFERENT.

GLORIA

What is that now?

LEIF

That doesn't sound like our friend.

AVA  
A challenger appears.

CASPAR  
Something's coming through the trees.

SFX: SOMETHING CRASHING THROUGH THE TREES AND INTO THE CLEARING.

GLORIA  
Oh my God, he's adorable.

LEIF  
Look at that little guy.

CASPAR  
Aww.

AVA  
Does it look more like a pig or more like a panda?

GLORIA  
Look at his little belly.

EFFIE  
That does warm the heart, doesn't it?

ZEBULON  
Well he reminds me of my first sow, Pansy. Do you remember Pansy, Honey?

EFFIE  
Yes, I remember Pansy, dear.

ZEBULON  
You remember Pansy used to do that little dance for me in the morning?

EFFIE  
Yes, dear.

ZEBULON  
What more proof of the Lord's countenance does one need when you set eyes on such creatures?

GLORIA  
Aw, look at him, he's rooting around for truffels or something.

AVA  
Um. Isn't this bad?

SFX: THE ROAR OF THE FIRST CREATURE.

GLORIA

Oh, no.

AVA

Yeah, it's bad.

SFX: THE FIRST CREATURE APPROACHING.

LEIF

Oh man, this is going to suck.

CASPAR

Why isn't it running?

AVA

Here it comes.

CASPAR

Why are cute things so dumb?!

GLORIA

Oh God, nobody look!

SFX: FOOTSTEPS STOP. SECOND CREATURE MAKING MORE CUTE SOUNDS.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Why isn't anything happening? Who's still looking?

AVA

I'm still looking.

CASPAR

Of course you are.

AVA

So the Murder-Creature is completely ignoring the Pig-Panda.

LEIF

What? What the hell?

AVA

So this is either NOT the bloodthirsty creature that we think it is or it's just incredibly bad at being a bloodthirsty creature.

ZEBULON

What a curious and fortuitous turn of events.

CASPAR

They're both just standing there like they're waiting for a bus or something.



GLORIA

Really glad I didn't have to hear something get eaten.

LEIF

This puts a snag in our "Planet Straightforward" theory, doesn't it?

CASPAR

Night Breakfast keeps getting further and further away.

GLORIA

So we've been saying that the ugly thing just wants to kill things and it's now standing right next to a very easy to kill thing without any killing happening.

AVA

To sum up.

GLORIA

Well... what the fuck?

LEIF

Right?

GLORIA

What do we do now?

LEIF

Maybe the Pig-Panda tastes bad? Like an evolutionary defense is that it's just really bad to eat?

AVA

Maybe. Maybe it smells?

LEIF

There we go. A defensive musk.

GLORIA

Wouldn't we smell that though? If it's that bad?

LEIF

What if we can't smell it? What if it can only be smelled by the Murder Thing?

CASPAR

AND WHAT IF THEY GREW UP TOGETHER BY A LAKE AND SWORE A VOW THAT THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE FREINDS NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED?!? WHO CARES?!? NIGHT. BREAKFAST. Can we be done now?

GLORIA

(Sighing)  
Okay. Fine.

AVA

Fine.

LEIF

Okay.

CASPAR

Excellent. Before Night Breakfast, a quick game of dice in the walk-in.

LEIF

You're literally the worst gambler in the Multiverse.

CASPAR

That may have been true in the past but NOW, I hope you two are rubbed in spices because I'm about to SMOKE Y'ALL. Here we go!

SFX: CASPAR, LEIF AND AVA PLAYING DICE IN THE WALK-IN

EFFIE

Gloria? You're lingering, Honey.

GLORIA

Yeah.

ZEBULON

What purturbs you?

GLORIA

I was thinking... One time, when I ran a restaurant, I buried a whole pig in the ground with hot coals for 36 hours and then used it to cater a wedding. It was delicious. And the pig that I used did not look half as delicious as the Panda Pig outside. And it's not getting eaten.

EFFIE

You don't have to explain to a couple of Arkasawyers the importantce of a roasted pig, Gloria.

ZEBULON

Ahh. Sweet Pansy.

GLORIA

Whoa, you ATE Pansy.

ZEBULON

Well, I grew up on a pig farm outside of Bald Knob  
and on a pig farm the pigs are your friends  
until... until their solemn duty calls.

GLORIA

Yikes.

ZEBULON

Gloria, I'm afraid we have a confession to make.

EFFIE

We can tell you the story of the ravenous creature  
outside.

GLORIA

You knew this whole time?

EFFIE

The Lord had told us its story.

GLORIA

Why didn't you say anything?

EFFIE

Well, Caspar was running around in his pissy-pants.

ZEBULON

And we do so enjoy watching his knickers get very  
tightly twisted.

EFFIE

We had every intention of telling you during Night  
Breakfast.

GLORIA

Okay. So what's the story?

ZEBULON

The creature outside is not one of God's creations.  
The creature has it's own maker.

GLORIA

Someone made that thing?

EFFIE

We know not who. It's creator has long since passed  
into the beyond leaving behind an entire race of  
creatures such as this.

GLORIA

Why were they made?

ZEBULON

You'd think to create creatures such as this one would have to have a sharpened purpose.

EFFIE

And yet these creatures were only made because they could be made. A flight of fancy.

GLORIA

It doesn't look happy.

EFFIE

No. It is not. For this terrible creature has an even more terrible curse.

ZEBULON

The reason why our delightful Pig Panda visitor has not been eaten, is because this creature only craves the flesh of it's own kind.

GLORIA

Oh my God. They're cannibals?

EFFIE

Well, now a cannibal has a choice doesn't he? This creature can eat nothing else.

GLORIA

It spends it's life hunting down it's own kind?

EFFIE

Or being hunted, yes.

ZEBULON

To turn your own kind into your enemy. It is truly a sin.

GLORIA

The jawbone I found. It probably smelled it or something, that's why it was trying to get in.

EFFIE

That's right, my dear.

GLORIA

What a horrible life it must have.

ZEBULON

It is a life without brotherhood or solidarity. A life of enmity. I would imagine, a life where one prays for an ending, but with no creator to pray to.

GLORIA

This is a type A situation.

EFFIE

It is.

GLORIA

What can we possibly do? It must be in Hell.

EFFIE

You cannot cure this creature's ailments, Gloria.

ZEBULON

And the question that remains: What can you do?

GLORIA

"In the end, there can be no thing not praising him  
and deserving of his love."

EFFIE

That's right, Dear.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS TO THE DOOR. DOOR UNLOCKING. DOOR OPENING.

SFX: CREATURE'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING. CREATURE'S HEAVY  
BREATHING.

GLORIA

(Whispering)  
Can it maybe understand me?

EFFIE

(Whispering)  
We think so.

GLORIA

It's just a bone. That's what you smelled. I'm  
sorry.

SFX: CREATURE GRUNTS.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Can you... can you sit over there?

SFX: CREATURE GRUNTS. CREATURE'S FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

(Whispering)  
Are you sure it's not going to eat me?

EFFIE

(Whispering)  
Yes, Sweetie.

GLORIA  
Okay, then.

SFX: COFFEE POURING. SLOW FOOTSTEPS. COFFEE BEING PLACED ON TABLE.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
So this is coffee. I know it seems strange but...  
it's nice. And it's warm. And you can hold it in  
your hands for a while and pretend that the world  
is not a swirling mess.

SFX: CREATURE GRUNTS.

CASPAR  
Okay, that went poorly for me it isn't it great  
that there are dependable things in this world?

AVA  
Holy shit.

LEIF  
Oh, damn.

CASPAR  
What the fuck?

GLORIA  
The three of you, shush.

CASPAR  
The huge murder beast is having a coffee break.

LEIF  
I wanted to mention that earlier, Gloria makes  
really good coffee.

AVA  
It's true, she does.

GLORIA  
Zebulon?

ZEBULON  
Yes?

GLORIA  
Maybe a nice song?

ZEBULON  
That's a wonderful sentiment, Gloria. Something to  
soothe the savage beast.

SONG: DEEP RIVER BY PAUL ROBESON

GLORIA  
This is a good job.

**THE END**