

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 6: Leifs

SFX: BUSY DINER.

SONG: SWEETER AS THE YEARS GO BY BY CRITERION QUARTET

GLORIA

More coffee?

AVA

Yes, please.

GLORIA

So, right now we are on the planet Thegrion.

AVA

Yes, I know.

GLORIA

A hundred years ago there was a deadly plague on Thegrion.

AVA

I also know that.

GLORIA

To keep the plague from spreading, they had to shut down travel for years, staying in small communities all over the planet and never interacting with each other. Eventually they found a cure, BUT-

AVA

Gloria.

GLORIA

BUT, they had stayed separated for so many years that the isolation became ingrained in their culture. And now-

AVA

Do I need to be here for this?

GLORIA

AND NOW it's an entire planet full of small towns that are suspicious of outsiders.

AVA

Except for-

GLORIA

EXCEPT FOR one day a year when these communities gather together to remember the millions of people that were killed by the plague.

AVA

And on that day-

GLORIA

AND ON THAT DAY every year, Midnight Burger returns to Thegrion to give some of them a place to sit and talk and drink coffee and remember.

AVA

That was a lovely recitation of things I already know.

GLORIA

This is very exciting for me, Ava.

AVA

Do tell.

GLORIA

Midnight Burger is a chaotic place. I never know what to expect. But NOW I learn that there are things it does on a schedule. Now I know that once a year Midnight Burger comes back to Thegrion. I can plan for that. I can build a whole calendar around it.

AVA

That sounds very comforting.

GLORIA

Right?

AVA

One problem.

GLORIA

Please don't.

AVA

Yes we come back once a year FOR THEM. But guess what WE do all the time?

GLORIA

Travel through time.

AVA

Right. So we do come back every year, but for us a year from now could be tomorrow.

GLORIA

That's disappointing.

AVA

Sorry.

GLORIA

I'm sitting down.

AVA

Don't spill on my notes.

LEIF

Hey guys. Meeting at Ava's booth?

AVA

No.

LEIF

Has the food seemed alright today? It hasn't seemed too festive has it?

GLORIA

What does festive taste like?

LEIF

I don't know. It's a global day of mourning for them and I want the food to be good but not TOO good, like it's a party.

GLORIA

I haven't heard any complaints but I also haven't gotten any compliments.

LEIF

Perfect, that's the sweet spot. Gloria, your tuna fish salad is up.

GLORIA

I'll be right there... I'm going to get used to this, right?

AVA

Nope.

GLORIA

I'm always going to be longing for normalcy?

AVA

Yep.

GLORIA

And then if I returned to normalcy I would get bored and long for this place?

AVA

Yep.

GLORIA

No middle ground?

AVA

Nope.

GLORIA

Great.

AVA

Hey, speaking of normalcy. Something in the diner is not normal today.

GLORIA

What do you mean?

AVA

Well, here we are on the planet Thegrion... someone in the diner is not from Thegrion.

GLORIA

Really? Who?

AVA

Table 12.

GLORIA

Huh. How Can you tell?

AVA

He's trying to pass himself off as a local but I can tell.

GLORIA

Should I go scope him out?

AVA

No.

GLORIA

Why not?

AVA

You have a terrible poker face.

GLORIA

No I don't.

AVA

Yes you do.

CASPAR

Guys, what's going on?

GLORIA

Ava depressed me so I sat down for a second.

CASPAR

Ava depresses me all the time and I remain standing.

GLORIA

Just one more minute.

CASPAR

Look, we actually do a good job for the Thegronian... Thegreons... What did we decided we we're calling them?

AVA

My vote was for Thegronies but I got voted down.

CASPAR

You're still voted down. Whatever we're calling them, this is an important day on this planet and it's one of the few things we do a good job on so let's not rest on our laurels.

GLORIA

Okay, I'm getting up.

CASPAR

This is good. This is usually the point when one of you tell me we have a problem but we're doing okay.

AVA

We have a problem.

CASPAR

Aw, snails... What is it?

AVA

Someone here is not one of the Thegronies.

CASPAR

Not the name. Who is it?

AVA

Table 12.

CASPAR

He looks like he's from Thegrion.

AVA

He's trying to blend in. It's not working.

CASPAR

Alright, I'm going to go check on him. It's probably nothing.

AVA

Thegronies.

CASPAR

Nope.

ZEBULON

Greetings and salutations to all of our friends here on Thegrion.

EFFIE

As ever, we come to you on your day of mourning to help you through your remembrances.

ZEBULON

It is a day to remember those whom we've lost. And though this day of loss may loom long. Remember the psalms. Weeping may last the night, but joy... joy cometh in the morning.

EFFIE

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble.

CASPAR

Guys.

EFFIE

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

CASPAR

Guys, guys. Can you tone it down a little bit? Remember last time there were a few complaints about the sermonizing?

EFFIE

We have been put in this place to speak his truth, Caspar.

CASPAR

I know.

ZEBULON

Also, "sermonizing" is not a word.

CASPAR

I don't know what the word is Zebulon, you know what I mean.

EFFIE

I think what you mean is to silence the gospel.

CASPAR

I'm not trying to silence the gospel.

ZEBULON

The Lord's word transcends the earthly realm.

CASPAR

Yes, okay, sure, but Jesus never made an appearance on Thegrion.

ZEBULON

How do you know?

CASPAR

Zebulon, don't get L. Ron Hubbard on me, no one here knows what you're talking about when you talk about The Lord.

EFFIE

All the more reason-

CASPAR

Guys. Please. I've got bigger fish to fry. Apparently there's someone at table 12 that isn't supposed to be here and I've got to go deal with that-

EFFIE

(Gasping)
Table 12.

CASPAR

Effie?

ZEBULON

What is it, my dear?

EFFIE

Caspar, you mustn't go to table 12.

CASPAR

Why not?

EFFIE

He is here.

CASPAR

Who?

EFFIE

The Devil.

CASPAR

Effie. C'mon.

EFFIE

He is clothed in garments not his own. He comes to tempt us.

CASPAR

You guys are really pouring it on thick today, I don't know what's going on.

ZEBULON

Caspar, my wife has never lead us astray.

CASPAR

Yes, except for the time she called herself Dr. Barbara and led us into a supermassive black hole. Look, I'm going over to table 12 now and the devil is not going to be there.

ZEBULON

And what if he is there?

CASPAR

Well then I'll get out my fiddle or something. Look, just put on some music the devil would hate and I'm going to go talk to table 12.

SONG: SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT BY ROLAND HAYES.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey there, welcome to Midnight Burger, can I get you some coooooooff-

OLD LEIF

Hello, Caspar.

CASPAR

Hello... Leif?

OLD LEIF

Been a while.

CASPAR

Not for me. Because you are currently in the kitchen.

OLD LEIF

And yet here I am at table 12.

CASPAR

And looking about 20 years older.

OLD LEIF

23 years older.

CASPAR

What's happening right now?

OLD LEIF

What's happening right now is me ordering the Monte Cristo.

CASPAR

I don't know who you are, but this is an important day for us.

OLD LEIF

I'm not going to mess up your annual pity party on Thegrion. As long as you don't mess up my sandwich. Salad on the side.

CASPAR

Okay... Coming right up.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS.

EFFIE

Psst. Caspar. What awaited you at table 12?

CASPAR

Not the devil. Unfortunately.

SFX: GRILL AND KITCHEN SOUNDS.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey, Leif.

LEIF

Hey, how's it going out there?

CASPAR

Fine. Just, fine. Monte Cristo for table 12.

LEIF

Sweet, my favorite.

CASPAR

Side salad.

LEIF

See, why do people do that? Getting a salad is not going to erase the fact that you just ordered a deep fried ham sandwich with powdered sugar on it.

CASPAR

Small problem. You ordered it.

LEIF

What?

CASPAR

You ordered it.

LEIF

Is this some sort of brain teaser?

CASPAR

There's an older version of you sitting at table 12, he just ordered your favorite sandwich. Looks like you came around on the efficacy of the side salad.

LEIF

Let me see.

CASPAR

Wait, if you see him won't it make a wormhole or something?

LEIF

Like that's the weirdest thing that's happened in this kitchen?

CASPAR

Good point, okay, just be careful don't make eye contact.

LEIF

Why shouldn't I make eye contact?

CASPAR

I have no idea.

LEIF

Just let me look... Okay... That's me.

CASPAR

Yes.

LEIF

Wow. People should not have to see themselves 20 years in the future.

CASPAR

No they shouldn't.

LEIF

What's he doing here? What do you think he wants?

CASPAR

I don't know. He seems mad about something. Like the years have not been kind.

LEIF

I guess I make a time machine at some point?

CASPAR

Yeah, or at some point in the future they're on sale and you figure "Hey why not?"

LEIF

I guess I've got to go talk to him.

CASPAR

I doubt he's here for the Monte Cristo. But listen, we're on Thegrion, it's a solemn occasion, let's not mess it up for these people.

LEIF

It'll be fine probably. Man the kitchen for a second.

CASPAR

I don't know how it works back here.

LEIF

It's on auto-pilot. I'll be back.

CASPAR

It's on... wait. Auto-pilot?

SFX: KITCHEN SOUNDS FADE. DINER FADES BACK IN.

LEIF

Hey, guys. So have you heard about our table 12 situation?

ZEBULON

We're of a particular opinion about table 12, Leif.

EFFIE

Leif, hear me. Do not trust whomever sits at table 12. They are not to be trusted.

LEIF

It's me sitting at table 12. From the future.

EFFIE

Oh is that right? Why do you think so? Because he says he is? Because he looks like you? Do you know who can change form and speak in many tongues?

LEIF

Okay, I heard you guys were on one today.

EFFIE

The DEVIL, Leif. That's who. The deceiver. Trust no word from his mouth.

ZEBULON

If I may offer an explanation closer to your particular vocabulary, Leif. To many, our establishment looks like a diner but in fact is so much more. So perhaps when we are presented with a entity that both walks and talks like a duck, we should not be so quick to exclaim, "There a duck be."

LEIF

Okay, sure. I get it. Let's get this over with.

EFFIE

Would that I had holy water to splash.

ZEBULON

Let us pray, Dear.

LEIF

Hello.

OLD LEIF

Hello, Leif.

LEIF

Monte Cristo's coming right up. A little surprised by the side salad, I wouldn't have made that call.

OLD LEIF

Yeah, well. Give it time.

LEIF

Mind if I sit?

OLD LEIF

Please.

LEIF

Okay. Let's get right to it. You're me.

OLD LEIF

That's right.

LEIF

Twenty years from now?

OLD LEIF
Twenty three.

LEIF
Where'd you get the time machine?

OLD LEIF
I bought it.

LEIF
Most places I go, time machines are illegal.

OLD LEIF
Most places WE go, Leif. But you'd know where to go
if you needed one, wouldn't you?

LEIF
I suppose I would.

OLD LEIF
And so, here I am.

LEIF
What's so important that you had to break the law
of some planet somewhere?

OLD LEIF
In your experience, why does anyone go back in time
to talk to themselves?

LEIF
You're here to warn me about something.

OLD LEIF
I'm here to knock some sense into you.

LEIF
Look, is this about B'Jolanth? I get it, she's a
great girl, I miss her sometimes too-

OLD LEIF
I'm not talking about B'Jolanth you idiot, I'm
talking about the Gold Mine.

LEIF
What about the Gold Mine?

OLD LEIF
You walked away. You could've been somebody, Leif
but you walked away from everything. I came back
here to tell you you made a mistake. It's time to
get your ass back to Earth right now.

SFX: KITCHEN SOUNDS.

GLORIA

Hey, Leif can you make something called a
"Smörgås"? Oh.

CASPAR

Hi.

GLORIA

What are you doing back here?

CASPAR

Trying to figure out how the kitchen works. Leif
said it was on auto-pilot and I thought that was an
actual thing but NOTHING is happening automatically
so it looks like that was just a fun joke.

GLORIA

Where is Leif?

CASPAR

Leif is trying to discreetly handle our situation
at table 12.

GLORIA

What's happening at table 12... c'mon, lay it on
me.

CASPAR

Take a look.

GLORIA

... No.

CASPAR

Future Leif is at table 12.

GLORIA

That's so weird.

CASPAR

It's bizarre.

GLORIA

I can't look away.

CASPAR

You should though. It's like looking at an arc-
welder, I can't unsee it.

GLORIA

What is Old Leif doing here?

CASPAR

I don't know. What would you say to yourself 20 years ago?

GLORIA

That Keanu Reeves will end up being the Johnny Depp you were expecting.

CASPAR

No, I'm serious, though. What could it be?

GLORIA

I don't know, I don't know anything about Leif.

CASPAR

Neither do I.

GLORIA

How is that possible?

CASPAR

I mean "before" Leif. Leif in the before times. He's always very cagey about his life on Earth.

GLORIA

You both are, by the way.

CASPAR

This isn't a conversation about sharing this is a conversation about the future, being here, at table 12.

GLORIA

It's also a conversation about you burning that chicken, so give me the spatula.

CASPAR

Here.

GLORIA

It's got to be a warning, right? Impending doom?

CASPAR

Is there any way it's not impending doom?

GLORIA

I'm not going back in time to stop anything other than impending doom. Oh! Hey. Ask Effie, you know how she's got that weird woo-woo I-feel-the-spirits-are-talking-to-me thing?

CASPAR

I already talked to her, she thinks the devil is sitting at table 12.

GLORIA

Caspar, Jesus. Way to bury the lede.

CASPAR

It's not actually The Devil.

GLORIA

She's usually in the ballpark though. Whoever he is, he's at least devil-adjacent.

LEIF

Hey guys.

GLORIA

Hey Leif.

CASPAR

Hey, what's going on?

LEIF

Can you guys cover for me? Just for a minute.

CASPAR

Is everything okay?

LEIF

Yeah I just... I need a minute. Gloria, you're good?

GLORIA

Yeah, just a regular kitchen, right?

LEIF

Until it's not. Could you hand me my recipe book?

GLORIA

Yeah, is this it?

LEIF

Yeah.

CASPAR

Leif, what's going on?

LEIF

Nothing just... I need to think about something.

CASPAR

Sure. We'll be fine. Your future self is sitting at table 12.

LEIF

Don't worry about it. He was here to talk to me.

CASPAR

Okay, sure.

SFX: BACK DOOR CLOSING.

GLORIA

What the hell was that?

CASPAR

What?

GLORIA

"Hey Leif, what was the warning from the future?"

CASPAR

He's still processing it.

GLORIA

I would also like to process it because the future, y'know, is coming.

CASPAR

Look I've never seen him like this, I'm going to give him some space.

GLORIA

Oh great. Old Leif could be here to warn us about a asteroid headed for the diner but the important thing is Young Leif's personal space.

CASPAR

If an asteroid was going to destroy the diner, Old Leif wouldn't be alive to warn us.

GLORIA

He would be if he was successful in warning us, which at this point, he doesn't seem to be.

CASPAR

But the very presence of Old Leif would mean that he was successful.

GLORIA

Not if he was the only one to survive the asteroid strike that may or may not be happening.

CASPAR

Hm.

GLORIA

I'm doing the cooking. Can you handle the time travel, please?

CASPAR

Okay. Okay, I'm going to go talk to Leif.

GLORIA

Which one?

CASPAR

Uh. Old Leif. I'm going to talk to Old Leif and see if I can get some sort of asteroid warning out of him.

GLORIA

Okay. Also coffee and water the tables.

CASPAR

Right.

AVA

Guys, the Thegronies are getting restless.

CASPAR

Not the name.

SFX: KITCHEN SOUNDS FADE.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey, Effie? Do you have any additional information for me on table 12 other than "It's the Devil".

EFFIE

Oh, I'm sorry, exactly how detailed do my omens need to be other than "It is the Dark Lord, Defiler of Paradise?"

CASPAR

Fine. Fine. Any other portents of doom, like say and asteroid falling out of the sky?

EFFIE

Yes, an Asteroid named Satan who fell from the sky when he was cast from heaven-

CASPAR

Okay okay okay. Never mind... I'm going to table 12.

ZEBULON

And The Lord goes with you, Caspar.

CASPAR

Hey, Old Leif.

OLD LEIF

Caspar.

CASPAR

Mind if I sit?

OLD LEIF

Be my guest.

CASPAR

So, let me ask you this, is there an asteroid headed for the diner right now?

OLD LEIF

Why would I go somewhere that's about to be hit by an asteroid?

CASPAR

To warn us.

OLD LEIF

Let's see, an asteroid hitting the ground. That will be a several-hundred kiloton explosion, I'm guessing.

CASPAR

Okay.

OLD LEIF

If I wanted to warn you I imagine I'd just call you on the telephone under the counter rather than risk getting obliterated with everyone else.

CASPAR

Okay. I'll strike that off the list. Why are you here, then?

OLD LEIF

Look. We get to know each other pretty well, you and I. I know how you feel about staying here forever if you have to. But Leif? Leif walked away from a gold mine back on Earth and wound up here. I've lived through the consequences of that and I'm not going to let him do it. It's time for Leif to go home.

CASPAR

Like... a LITERAL gold mine?

OLD LEIF

That's right.

CASPAR

Leif was a... gold miner?

OLD LEIF

I've said enough. I didn't come here to talk to you, I came here to talk to him. Now I'm going to sit here and wait for two things. For Leif to get his head right, and for a Monte Cristo sandwich. I know this is a big day for you Caspar, why don't you get back to taking care of the Thegronies.

CASPAR

God damn. We really went with "Thegronies"?

SFX: KITCHEN SOUNDS.

AVA

So 20 years from now Leif gets his hands on a time machine and comes back here to warn himself about something?

GLORIA

Looks like it, yeah.

AVA

But we don't know what it is.

GLORIA

No.

AVA

Well... that's lame.

GLORIA

It's lame?

AVA

Yes, time travel is lame.

CASPAR

Okay. I talked to him. No impending doom.

GLORIA

At all?

CASPAR

No. Apparently he's here to get Leif to go back to Earth.

GLORIA

Why?

CASPAR

I don't know. It was weird. Something about walking away from a gold mine.

GLORIA

A gold mine? A literal gold mine or a figurative gold mine?

CASPAR

I think it's a literal gold mine.

GLORIA

Oh come on. That's ridiculous. Leif is a gold miner?

CASPAR

I know it sounds ridiculous, but would you put it past him?

AVA

No I can totally see him with the little hat with the light on it.

GLORIA

Is he going to go?

CASPAR

I don't know. Have you seen him?

GLORIA

He's not back yet.

CASPAR

He's probably in the office.

GLORIA

There's an office!?

AVA

It's just lawn chairs on the roof, they call it the office.

GLORIA

What the hell, guys? I am sick of not knowing things. We've got a yearly gig on Thegrion, didn't know that! Leif's a gold miner, THERE'S AN OFFICE?!

CASPAR

It's not really an office.

GLORIA

Oh really? Is it not REALLY an office, Caspar? You know I work very hard here.

CASPAR

You really do, things are way better because you're here.

GLORIA

Well as a way of thanking me can you please figure some shit out! Figure out what's going on with Leif, because something's not right. I had a look inside his "recipe book" when I handed it to him. That's not a recipe book. There's math in there, and drawings!

AVA

What kind of math?

GLORIA

I don't know what the kinds of math are!

AVA

Like mostly letters or mostly numbers?

GLORIA

Letters, I guess.

AVA

Any symbols you didn't recognize?

GLORIA

Yes. What?

AVA

What did the drawings look like?

GLORIA

I don't know, um... One looked like a monster face but with one whisker that was like a curly pig's tail.

AVA

Ha! Goddamn.

CASPAR

What's happening?

AVA

I'm going up to the office. Shit just got real hilarious which means I am now fully invested!

SFX: BACK DOOR CLOSES.

GLORIA

What's that about?

CASPAR

I have no idea. I'll be right back.

SFX: DINER SOUNDS FADE BACK IN.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey, Effie, Zebulon. I know you can only tell me what "The Lord" tells you but do you think "The Lord" could've given me a heads up about Leif possibly going back home to Earth?... Guys?

ZEBULON

Caspar, I believe my wife is currently feeling a certain way about you right now.

CASPAR

Really, how's that?

ZEBULON

The most appropriate word I could use to describe it would be... Miffed.

CASPAR

Miffed. Great. I'm sorry, Effie... Effie?

ZEBULON

I believe she would like you to craft an apology more appropriate to the moment, Caspar.

CASPAR

Oh for God's.... Effie I want you to know that I'm sorry and that I greatly appreciate the predictions of the future you give us that are so incredibly vague that they are impossible to act on in the moment-

ZEBULON

So when I said "Appropriate to the moment"...

CASPAR

Fine. Fine. Fine. Effie, I should've listened to you. Though it is not actually The Devil sitting at table 12 there is definitely a Satan-like quality to him in that he is trying to tempt Leif away from the diner. I promise I will do better in the future to be more respectful of all that you do for us.

EFFIE

I'm not sure if I should accept this apology, husband.

ZEBULON

Well it's the Christian thing to do.

EFFIE

Agreed, agreed. I shall prepare myself to forgive you, Caspar.

CASPAR

Thanks so much.

ZEBULON

And how are you feeling, Caspar?

CASPAR

What?

ZEBULON

By your account Leif is considering a return to his home. It may cause YOU to feel a certain way.

CASPAR

It's not a prison planet, people can leave anytime they want.

ZEBULON

Yes, they can, my friend.

SFX: DINER SOUNDS FADE. SOUNDS OF A TRANQUIL NIGHT ON AN ALIEN WORLD. SOUNDS OF A RICKETY ALUMINUM LADDER.

AVA

This fucking. Piece of shit. Ladder.

LEIF

Ava? What are you doing?

AVA

Contracting tetanus probably. This ladder is a death trap.

LEIF

Be careful.

AVA

I'm being careful. Goddamn it. There. Hello, Leif.

LEIF

What are you doing up here?

AVA

Give me your recipe book.

LEIF

Why?

AVA

Because it's not a recipe book.

LEIF

How do you know?

AVA

Because there's calculations in it. Gloria said she saw a drawing of a monster's face with a single whisker like a curly pig's tail. But that's not a drawing of a monster's face, Leif. That's a Feynman Diagram. To chart the collision of particles. So you either take your chili recipe VERY seriously or that's not a recipe book, that's an engineering notebook.

LEIF

Here. Take it.

AVA

Thank you.

SFX: PAGES TURNING.

AVA (CONT'D)

Well... This is like the Sears catalog, isn't it?

LEIF

It's just some ideas.

AVA

Cold fusion... c'mon, perpetual motion machine?

LEIF

I've almost got that one.

SFX: BOOK CLOSING.

AVA

Where'd you go to school, Leif.

LEIF

Berkeley.

AVA

Oh, YUCK. Dr. Brooks?

LEIF

He's brilliant.

AVA

He smells like celery.

LEIF

Look, I used to work at this place. It was called-

AVA

The Large Underground Xenon experiment. Or "LUX" for short?

LEIF
Shit. How did you know?

AVA
What do you mean, how did I know? I'm a genius, idiot. Have I not told you lately?

LEIF
You've actually told me way more times than an average person should.

AVA
The other Leif down there kept saying you walked away from a gold mine. The Large Underground Xenon experiment. Conducted at the bottom of an abandoned GOLD MINE in South Dakota... What'd you find down there, Leif?

LEIF
We found what we were looking for.

AVA
Dark matter.

LEIF
Yeah.

AVA
Wow. That's huge, Leif.

LEIF
We found it in week three. It was a two year experiment. So we just kept going. At month six I had captured it. At month eighteen I had made a battery and was powering a halogen bulb with it.

AVA
You discovered an unlimited source of clean energy on Earth.

LEIF
Yes.

AVA
And now you're making brunch for the Thegronies one galaxy over, what happened?

LEIF
No good deed goes unpunished, right? We were getting ready to show the world what we had discovered down at the bottom of that gold mine. We fantasized about a world full of free energy. No pollution, no rolling blackouts.

(MORE)

LEIF (CONT'D)

And then one night, we came up from the mine and someone was waiting for us.

AVA

The government.

LEIF

Yes. But not of Earth.

AVA

What? You're saying an alien race came and took your toys away?

LEIF

They were a concerned neighbor.

AVA

What are you talking about?

LEIF

You know at Christmas time when a neighbor comes over and lets you know that your Christmas lights could possibly burn your house down? Imagine that but on a planetary scale.

AVA

An alien race said that your experiment was going to destroy everything?

LEIF

They're called the Teds. They're like the hall monitors of the Milky Way. They see an emerging civilization about to destroy itself and they politely step in and say "Hey, you're about to destroy everything, guys."

AVA

Seriously, "The Teds"?

LEIF

I don't know what to tell you, their planet is called Ted. They're the Teds, it's a stupid name.

AVA

How did you take them seriously with a name like The Teds?

LEIF

I took them seriously because they came down in a big glowing space ship, they could've been called the Abe Vigodas.

AVA

Fine. Can you explain to me how in the world an unlimited source of clean energy could destroy anything?

LEIF

You know the end of that thought. Someone was going to turn it into a weapon. Somehow.

AVA

I find that hard to believe, Leif.

LEIF

Somebody always does. You know Taoist Monks invented gunpowder. They used it for medicine. Look what happened.

AVA

And this friendly alien neighbor named Ted, you just took their word for it?

LEIF

They made a very convincing argument. What I made down there was going to change the world. But the world has to be ready for change. You know, I've got this meat cleaver down in the kitchen. I use it for everything, it's great. Chopping meat, breaking down a chicken, I can't live without it. But if I took this incredibly useful tool and put it in the hands of a three-year-old it would just be dangerous. They convinced me that I had invented a meat cleaver on a planet full of three-year-olds. Anyway... they were going to take our research. Leave us with nothing. So I made some demands. One demand. I said if they were going to take away my life's work, then they had to give me a ride.

AVA

A ride?

LEIF

They dropped me off at Sirius A. There's a massive station there. Ships going to every part of the galaxy. I got a job as a cook on a ship. And then another and another. And then...

AVA

And then suddenly there was a diner.

LEIF

Yeah.

AVA

Well, origin stories are fun. So what about the Leif downstairs? He says you made a mistake?

LEIF

He says that in twenty years Earth manages to mess itself up anyway. And if that's the case, why not at least have the fame? Why not at least be one of those guys, Nobel Prize, shapers of the world or whatever.

AVA

Why not?

LEIF

I can't stay out here forever can I?

AVA

You can.

LEIF

Should I?

AVA

Leif, I don't know.

LEIF

How long are you going to stay out here?

AVA

As long as it takes.

LEIF

As long as it takes to do what?

AVA

Figure it out.

LEIF

Figure what out?

AVA

Everything.

LEIF

Everything?

AVA

Yes.

LEIF

Literally all the things, you're going to figure them out?

AVA

Correct.

LEIF

That's a tall order.

AVA

Yes. But we have a ladder. Look... I didn't come up here to help you decide, I mainly came up here to brag that I figured out your secret. And now I'm done bragging so I think you should come down from the treehouse and face yourself.

SFX: SOUNDS OF THE DINER.

CASPAR

Okay, one Monte Cristo sandwich for the temporal anomaly.

OLD LEIF

Thanks.

CASPAR

Anything else?

OLD LEIF

Yeah. I've got a cruiser in orbit to take us back to Earth. They're not going to wait forever, can you tell Leif to speed it up back there?

CASPAR

We happen to be in the middle of a brunch service here.

OLD LEIF

Brunch service for a planet full of people still crying over something that happened 100 years ago? I can see why that's important to someone like you, Caspar, but there's bigger issues at play here.

CASPAR

Okay, it's becoming clear that I share WAY too much with you in the years to come.

LEIF

Hey, I'm back. Caspar give us a minute, okay?

CASPAR

Sure, sure. Let me know if you need anything.

LEIF

You know, it's pretty hard for me to look at that side salad.

OLD LEIF

Yeah, you're hilarious. Have you worked out all your little feelings yet? Can we get out of here?

LEIF

What's the plan exactly?

OLD LEIF

The plan is, we get on the ship I booked and go back to Earth. You revive your research and line up investors.

LEIF

What about the Teds?

OLD LEIF

I'll handle the Teds, I know how to deal with them. You focus on erasing your screw ups.

LEIF

You feel this comfortable being an asshole to yourself?

OLD LEIF

I feel just fine. Oh, I'm sorry Lief, do you not like me?

LEIF

No. Not at all.

OLD LEIF

Then how about you devote the rest of your life to not ending up like me? How's that sound?

LEIF

Okay. Okay, fine. If that's what it takes.

EFFIE

Caspar, what transpires at table 12?

CASPAR

I don't know, Leif's having a conversation with himself.

ZEBULON

We are very concerned about said conversation, Caspar.

CASPAR

Really? I hadn't noticed.

EFFIE

I don't see how you can let him sit down with such a master of lies.

CASPAR

Effie, it's not the devil. It's just Leif. Again.
It's Leif twice.

AVA

What's going on down here?

CASPAR

Leif is sitting down with himself and Effie is
trying to convince me that it's not actually
another Leif, that's it's actually someone else.

AVA

It is actually someone else.

EFFIE

HA!

CASPAR

What?!

AVA

It is.

EFFIE

(Gasps)
Dearest!

ZEBULON

What is it, darling?

EFFIE

There is another.

SFX: DOOR CHIME. FOOTSTEPS.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

What's popping, Thegronies? I'm looking for a
couple of Leifs!

SFX: DINER NOISES STOP.

ZEBULON

Even older Leif?

AVA

Oh, this is getting real dumb.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

There they are! Aloha, dickheads!

OLD LEIF

What the hell is this?!

LEIF

Is that me again?!

EVEN OLDER LEIF

That's right, Leif. It's you. FORTY years in the future!

CASPAR

Are you fucking kidding me?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Leif, this older version of you has come from the future to convince you that you've made a terrible mistake. Guess what grand-dad's here to do?

AVA

Is he going to sing? I hope he sings.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Leif, as I'm sure you've noticed, the second version of you has turned out to be an intolerable fuck-face. And he is now using that fuck-facery to try and convince you to go back to Earth so that you won't become him.

CASPAR

I'm going to need a flow-chart for this.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

But I'm here to tell you that the next 20 years are different. You spent years wasting your time being as bitter as baker's chocolate when you could've spent all that time making sweet love to all kinds of alien ladies, am I right, Thegronies? Who's with me?

CASPAR

(On the overhead speaker)
Ahem. Attention everyone named Leif, please report to the cash register at this time, thank you. Thegronies, please resume mourning and we are sorry for the disturbance.

AVA

(Whispering)
Ha! Thegronies!

CASPAR

Oh Shut up.

LEIF

Caspar, I'm so sorry about this, I don't know what's going on.

OLD LEIF

What the hell are you doing here? You really want to fuck up your life again?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

One man's fucked up life is another man's life of bliss, youngster.

OLD LEIF

I can't believe this. Do you ever learn? Ever!

EVEN OLDER LEIF

You know, usually when a person is angry at someone, they're actually just mad at themselves. But this time it's literally true!

OLD LEIF

We have a notebook full of ideas that can change the world but you just want to stay out here?! Floating in the cosmos like a cork in the ocean?!

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Funny thing about changing the world. It just goes and changes again. And again. And again. And at a certain point you say to yourself "Am I changing the world? Or is the world just changing on it's own and I keep convincing myself it was me that did it?"

OLD LEIF

You're a senile old man, you know that?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

I'm not going to lie to you, you could be right. The years have not been kind to this gray matter, but let me ask you this. If you're in a argument with a senile old man and you're LOSING, well what does that say about you?

CASPAR

Leifs, this is not the time or the place for this, can we wrap this up somehow?

OLD LEIF

Good idea. Leif, pack your shit, let's get out of here and forgot about this old idiot.

LEIF

I don't know, he's making some valid points.

OLD LEIF

Oh, for fuck's sake.

AVA
You know what Leifs? This has been a hoot, but I think I can put an end to this nonsense. Give me a sec.

CASPAR
Where are you going?

AVA
Relax.

OLD LEIF
This is really what you want? Making eggs for a bunch of sad saps on the far end of some galaxy when you can finally be respected for who you are?

LEIF
Who am I?

GLORIA
Ava, what are you doing? I've got poached eggs happening-

AVA
Old Leif, Older Leif, meet Gloria.

OLD LEIF/EVEN OLDER LEIF
Who is that? You don't know? Stop copying me!

GLORIA
There's three of them now?

OLD LEIF/EVEN OLDER LEIF
How does she know us? Seriously, stop it!

AVA
Oh, I'm sorry, don't you know Gloria our new waitress? You should since you're two know-it-alls from the future.

EVEN OLDER LEIF
Did I know her and then forget I know her?

OLD LEIF
I don't understand, how is this possible?

LEIF
Why don't they know Gloria?

AVA
They don't know her, because time-travel is what Gloria?

GLORIA

Lame?

AVA

Because time travel is lame.

CASPAR

Can you maybe expand on that-

AVA

I am going to make a fist. And I am going to punch Caspar in the arm.

CASPAR

Great.

AVA

And when my fist hits his arm it will spawn infinite timelines within infinite timelines as every action does. In one timeline it somehow kills him, in one timeline I miss his arm completely-

CASPAR

Can I pick, or-

AVA

In one timeline, I'm somehow Margot Kidder.

CASPAR

Bad dates, Indy.

AVA

And with infinite timelines upon infinite timelines, you three allegedly smart men still have a simplistic Michael J. Fox-ass concept of time travel.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Well, shit.

AVA

You didn't go back in time to talk to Leif. You went back in time to talk to A Leif, of infinite Leifs. So there's no way to tell how he's going to end up. Will he be bitter old Leif? Will he be even older zen-like Leif? Could be both, could be none. There's no way of knowing. So all your attempts to influence Leif are just making more and more infinite timelines that are completely out of your control.

CASPAR

Is there a timeline where I murder you for not mentioning this earlier?

AVA

No there isn't, because in every timeline you are a big wuss.

GLORIA

So in their timeline, I don't work here?

AVA

Correct.

GLORIA

How did you know that?

AVA

I didn't. It was just a hunch.

OLD LEIF

How did I not see this?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

I mean, I've got an excuse because I'm super old and forget things, not sure how you missed it.

OLD LEIF

So what am I supposed to do now? Just go back to my old crappy timeline and deal with it's crappiness?

CASPAR

It's what all of us do every day, isn't it?

OLD LEIF

This sucks.

ZEBULON

Well this is certainly an astounding turn of events. I must confess, I don't really understand much of what's happening but I do know that Old Leif seems to suffer the pains of regret.

OLD LEIF

Please not a bible verse.

EFFIE

I recall Phillippians-

OLD LEIF

For fuck's sake.

EFFIE

Forgetting those things which are behind me, reaching forth unto those that are before me, I press toward the high calling of God.

OLD LEIF

Wow! Look at that! Everything's better now!

LEIF

You know, Old Leif, in a way your plan worked. By just meeting you there is no way I'm going to end up being you, because being you looks really miserable, man. I don't even have to go back to Earth to do that, I could just, y'know, NOT be you.

OLD LEIF

Well that's great for you but guess what? I'm still me and I'm still miserable.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Look, youngster, I know how you feel. I know how you feel because twenty years ago I was feeling the exact same way you're feeling right now. So I'll tell you what? I'm going to offer you what I wished older me would have offered me back when I was you.

CASPAR

I'm so confused right now.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

I know for a fact that if there's anything you excel at it's beating yourself up. So let's do this thing for real.

OLD LEIF

What are you saying?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

I'm saying you and me, out in the parking lot. Just our hatred for ourselves and our own bare knuckles. Fist fight in the parking lot!

CASPAR

Shhhhhhhhhh! No no no no no Tyler Durden! Thegronies. Solemn occasion.

OLD LEIF

No. No, I think that's a good idea. That feels good. I think I would like that.

AVA

My hand is up, I would like that as well.

OLD LEIF

I think I've got some pent up aggression. I think that would be good for me.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Now we're talking.

GLORIA

Oh whatever, I'm going back in the kitchen.

CASPAR

There is not going to be a fist fight in the parking lot while people are mourning, this isn't Boston!

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Caspar, Caspar, chill chill, man. Look, I may be out of my timeline here but I think I know the Thegronies. Watch this... Attention Thegronies.

SFX: DINER QUIETS DOWN.

EVEN OLDER LEIF (CONT'D)

One-hundred years ago something terrible happened on this planet. Millions of people died in a terrible plague. And as I have just learned today, there are no true time machines in life. Even the things we literally call time machines are not actually time machines, it's complicated I won't get into it here, but look, you can't turn back the clock. What's done is done. For too long the people of this planet have hung their heads in pain and loss. And to what end? How long must the mourning persist. Would those who have passed on want us to say goodbye forever? And if it is forever, is it even a goodbye? Maybe it's time for a change. Maybe it's time to cast aside our mourning garments, lift up our heads, go out into that parking lot, and watch two grown-ass men beat the crap out of each other, what do you say?

SFX: AFFIRMATIONS FROM THE CROWD.

EVEN OLDER LEIF (CONT'D)

Yeah? Are you with me? Let's shake the dust off Thegrion! Alright, everybody out in the parking lot, the fight starts in 5 minutes!

SFX: THE ENTIRE CROWD MOVING OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

EVEN OLDER LEIF (CONT'D)

Everybody get a good spot!

OLD LEIF

I've been looking forward to this my whole life and I didn't even realize it. I'm going out there.

CASPAR

Ava, what are you doing?

AVA

I'm getting this jug of moonshine and going out in the parking lot to watch a fist fight. Suck on that, Steven Hawking.

CASPAR

This is ridiculous.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Leif, Caspar, listen, I know this whole thing seems a little bananas but Old Leif really needs this right now. He's got a lot of issues to work out.

CASPAR

Issues? Are you kidding me? He's going to kill you out there, what are you eighty?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Eighty-three. But listen, just between us, at this point in my life I'm, like, thirty percent cybernetic. He will not be expecting my left hook because it is made of high tensile chromite. Right? You guys coming? It's going to be a barn burner.

CASPAR

Nope.

LEIF

No thank you.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Fair enough, fair enough.

CASPAR

Leif, why don't we go back in the kitchen and avoid the psychologically scarring vision of you being the shit out of you.

LEIF

Good call.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Later, boys!

LEIF

Hey, Even Older Leif... are you happy?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Happy? What's that mean? I am, Leif. I am.

LEIF

Yeah, okay.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Effie, Zebulon, it's been a treat seeing you two again.

ZEBULON

Even Older Leif, it has been heartening to know that Leif has found some peace in his later years. Though, we must say, we find physical violence to be abhorrent, isn't that right, my dear?

EFFIE

I... yes. It's, we... Yes. It's bad.

ZEBULON

Dear?

EFFIE

Yes, yes, of course. Our Lord is a God of peace.

ZEBULON

Indeed.

EFFIE

Unless you're a merchant outside the temple, then look out for the chokehold of Jesus.

ZEBULON

Honey!

EFFIE

Oh, I'm sorry dear. You know I have a special affinity for fisticuffs ever since-

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Ever since your wedding. I remember the story. Your cousin Bobby said something to insult your honor and Zebulon knocked two of his teeth out, isn't that right, Zeb?

ZEBULON

Well, I was young and impetuous.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

I love that story. You know, you two are a couple of the best friends I ever had.

EFFIE

That's heartening to hear, Leif.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

In light of that, I should probably tell you why I really came here today.

EFFIE

Why you... really came here?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

You asked me to, Effie. Many years from now.

ZEBULON

Oh my. Why did she do that?

EVEN OLDER LEIF

Well, it's a little hard to explain to a couple of Arkansawyers in 1925. Let's put it this way, I'm going to attach a small device to the back of the radio.

SFX: DEVICE ACTIVATING.

EVEN OLDER LEIF (CONT'D)

It's going to make the voice of The Lord a lot easier to hear. Don't worry, you won't feel a thing.

ZEBULON

Take my hand, dear.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

There we go. No harm done. Now, when things get weird in the days to come, just remember it's all part of the plan.

EFFIE

But, I am scared of the plan.

EVEN OLDER LEIF

No need, Effie. You know exactly what you're doing. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to head out to the parking lot and kick my ass. It was good to see you again, guys.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS. DOOR CHIME.

ZEBULON

Let's pray, my dear.

SFX: KITCHEN SOUNDS.

SONG: CUBANAKAN BY LECUONA CUBAN BOYS.

CASPAR

Just so you know, if future me ever shows up, I quit.

LEIF

Thanks for taking over, Gloria. Everything go okay?

GLORIA

It did, it was nice to be back in a kitchen. I kept losing the parmesan, though.

LEIF

Yeah, the parmesan doesn't have spatial permanence, you're going to have to look for it every time.

GLORIA

Sure.

CASPAR

You doing okay, Leif?

LEIF

Yeah, I'm alright. Weird day.

CASPAR

A bit odd, yeah.

LEIF

Is it weird that I feel normal right now?

CASPAR

Yes.

GLORIA

No.

LEIF

It's not?

GLORIA

No.

CASPAR

We had visitors from the future, Gloria.

GLORIA

I know. But right now, out in the parking lot there is a fist fight going on between the person Leif could've become and the person Leif wound up being. You don't know who's winning and you don't know who to root for. And they'll fight out there forever if you let them. And that is the most human thing that has happened since I got here.

CASPAR

Look at Gloria. Working the grill, delivering truisms.

LEIF

What is that music?

GLORIA
Is that Latin music?

CASPAR
Are Zeb and Effie playing latin music?

GLORIA
I think they are.

LEIF
Huh.

GLORIA
Huh.

CASPAR
Hmmm.

THE END