

YOUNG LEIF

Part 5: Sigius.

By

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Young Leif

Part 5: Sigius.

A TRAIN SPEEDS ACROSS THE SIGIAN SEASCAPE. A DOOR SLIDES OPEN.

BERTBERT

Here's the observation car.

LEIF

This is beautiful.

BERTBERT

It's nice, yes.

LEIF

I mean, it's completely silent. What's the power source? Is it fusion like everything else?

BERTBERT

I thought you meant the view.

LEIF

Oh right. Yes, the view is nice... Is it magnetic? It's really smooth.

BERTBERT

Leif, I have no idea.

LEIF

How do you not know how your trains work?

BERTBERT

Leif, the vast majority of people who use things have no idea how they work.

LEIF

Yeah, well, I think that's weird.

BERTBERT

Leif, sit down... We're on Sigius now, so we can talk a little more openly.

LEIF

I was wondering why you were so quiet this entire time.

BERTBERT

I didn't want anyone to hear us talking about things when we were in transit.

LEIF

I think that's a little paranoid.

BERTBERT

Leif... Why?

LEIF

Why what?

BERTBERT

Leif.

LEIF

... It just sort of happened.

BERTBERT

It's a life of crime, Leif, not a weather formation.

LEIF

An opportunity presented itself.

BERTBERT

There are plenty of opportunities out there, you picked this one. Why did you pick the opportunity with the crimes instead of the non-crime ones?

LEIF

What's the difference?

BERTBERT

Between?

LEIF

Between a crime and something that's not a crime.

BERTBERT

One is illegal and one isn't.

LEIF

Can things be illegal that shouldn't be?

BERTBERT

Please do not take this conversation in such a stupid direction.

LEIF

It's not a stupid direction for the conversation, it's a direction that gets abandoned because nobody likes where it goes.

BERTBERT

... Of course things can be illegal that shouldn't be.

LEIF

And you're going to say that what makes them illegal is that everyone got together and collectively decided that they were illegal.

BERTBERT

Yes.

LEIF

What if none of those people are around?

BERTBERT

Then it's still illegal.

LEIF

No. Laws on other planets aren't valid here. When do they stop?

BERTBERT

I'm so exhausted already.

LEIF

When do they stop?

BERTBERT

According to interplanetary agreements, once you leave upper orbit of any planet.

LEIF

Most of the things I did were in deep space.

BERTBERT

You took things that belonged to someone else. Right?

LEIF

Technically.

BERTBERT

Isn't that the most basic thing? Kids on a playground can say that: don't take people's things.

LEIF

And what if things don't belong to anybody?

BERTBERT

I'm pretty sure the ice haulers you stole belonged to somebody.

LEIF

What about the ice that was on them? Who does the ice belong to?

BERTBERT

To the person who went through all the trouble to get it.

LEIF

I went through a lot of trouble to get that ice. By your logic, doesn't that make it mine?

BERTBERT

If you had built a hauler and went all the way out to a planetary belt somewhere and got some ice? Yes.

LEIF

We never stole the haulers, just the ice. The haulers always ended up back at their origin point.

BERTBERT

According to trade agreements-

LEIF

Here we go.

BERTBERT

According to trade agreements the ice is your property as soon as you harvest it.

LEIF

Define "harvest".

BERTBERT

Leif, if you think you can win this argument by exhausting me, it's not going to work.

LEIF

Define it.

BERTBERT

Not stealing an ice hauler, okay? That's how I define a legal thing is by it's lack of illegality. This cute little argument of yours is insulting my intelligence. Don't try some stupid slight of hand with me just to justify the fact that you stole some shit.

LEIF

... Verge told me about the ice haulers. Mostly automated behemoths crisscrossing the system, all of them owned by compacts and conglomerates. They were all built on Trusk, so Dez would identify a sensor blind spot, we attach ourselves to the hull, he gets us hardwired into the system, I rewrite the code, and then Verge would broker a deal with someone who needed the water.

BERTBERT

I didn't ask you how you did it, I asked you why.

LEIF

I don't usually know why I do things.

BERTBERT

Horseshit.

LEIF

When are we going to get to "agree to disagree" territory on this?

BERTBERT

There's no agree to disagree out there, Leif. When you do something bad people like you wind up having to be smuggled into Sigius by your only friend that has any sense. I can't believe I have to explain this but people don't like it when you take their stuff.

LEIF

And I don't like it when people charge money for water, okay? You think I just chose it randomly? These water brokers are charging astronomical amounts for something that is the essential component for all organic life. It's not a money making opportunity, it's water. You don't lay claim to it, you give it to people. Because they're alive. And need to stay that way.

BERTBERT

So you don't usually know why you do things, huh?

LEIF

... Am I wrong about the water?

BERTBERT

Not at all. Most populations have outgrown their natural water reserves and they have to have shipments brought in from an ice hauler. The water brokers jack up the price because they know that thirsty people have to pay it. It happens all over the place. I've written about it.

LEIF

You've written about it. Congratulations. I actually stole some water and gave it to people.

BERTBERT

Which won't fix the system any more than my writing will but one of us is now considered a criminal and the other is having a relaxing time on the observation deck of a Sigian Slip Stream...

(MORE)

BERTBERT (CONT'D)

By the way, none of that moralizing answers why you robbed the casino.

LEIF

That was just for fun.

BERTBERT'S TANGLE BEEPS.

ELDIN

Incoming call from your mother.

BERTBERT

Just send her a message. Tell her we'll be there in time for sunset.

ELDIN

Message sent.

LEIF

Are you... taking me home to meet your parents?

BERTBERT

No, I am going to have dinner with my parents and you are coming with me, those are two very different things.

LEIF

I'm apparently on the run from a space pirate and you're taking me home to meet your parents.

BERTBERT

Maybe don't bring up that you're currently being hunted.

LEIF

Is this really the best time?

BERTBERT

No, but when I come back home my mom always knows I'm coming, so it's unavoidable.

LEIF

How does she always know you're coming?

BERTBERT

I have no fucking idea, dude.

LEIF

... So many volcanos on the horizon.

BERTBERT

More every year.

LEIF

And the whole planet is just volcanic islands?

BERTBERT

It is. About twenty-nine thousand of them.

LEIF

How are you not a race of fish people with all this water?

BERTBERT

Who says we're not?... We're not.

LEIF

Okay.

BERTBERT

Crawled up on land just like Earthlings did. We were very suspicious of each other for thousands of years. Lots of wars between island clusters. But when we mastered geothermal energy everything changed. We dropped all our bullshit and moved forward together into the future. We even founded the Council of Truth and Understanding as a way of breaking ties with the secrecy and suspicion of the past.

LEIF

How is the planet not constantly covered with an ash cloud?

BERTBERT

Very few eruptions. All of these volcanoes have been slowly moving up from the surface for thousands of years. Whenever a volcanic mass becomes big enough to be colonized there's a big ceremony where all the neighboring islands come to celebrate and an exceptional school child recites a poem.

LEIF

You were, of course, one of these children who recited the poem.

BERTBERT

Oh, of course I was. It was a BIG DEAL for my parents.

LEIF

You still have it memorized to this day, don't you?

BERTBERT

Oh yeah.

LEIF

... Well, come on, let's hear it.

BERTBERT

Eh, it doesn't translate well. Something like "Oh great emergence from dark waters, what new world do you bring to see its first light." Blah blah blah, it was very moving. I was an adorable child.

LEIF

I'm sure... It really does seem nice here.

BERTBERT

So... Verge...

LEIF

Yes?

BERTBERT

Your partner in crime.

LEIF

Yes.

BERTBERT

Literally.

LEIF

Yes.

BERTBERT

Figuratively?

LEIF

What?

BERTBERT

Nothing. Just... Glad you're meeting people. Please consider not doing crimes with said people.

LEIF

I'll think about it... How come they didn't want to come here? Seems like a nice place to lay low for awhile. Something about Vapians not being allowed on Sigius.

BERTBERT

Vapians are totally allowed on Sigius, but there's a lot of history there. They blew up their planet, I'm sure you heard.

LEIF

Turned it into a black hole, that's technically a blowing in of their planet.

BERTBERT

Right. After all that happened, there were a lot of people here on this planet who were very upset. Vapus had been warned time and again about their dangerous experiments by us but they didn't listen. Resentment set in over time. It's kind of messy. Anyway, Verge is welcome any time and Jesus Christ stop doing crimes.

LEIF

We'll think about it.

THE TRAIN GLIDES TO A STOP.

BERTBERT

This is us.

THEY EMERGE INTO A QUIET CITY STREET.

BERTBERT (CONT'D)

It's just right around the corner.

LEIF

Anything I need to know about your family?

BERTBERT

I don't think so. They drive me crazy so, enjoy that. My mother has this weird tendency to treat the AI in her tangle like it's a member of the family. And the adaptive learning in the AI has really leaned into it, so now it kind of acts like my younger sister. It's disturbing.

BERBERT RINGS A DOOR CHIME.

BERTBERT (CONT'D)

Oh, also my dad speaks terrible English, but he LOVES speaking it, so do your best to understand him.

THE DOOR OPENS.

FAGIN

... Look at these two boobies!

BERTBERT

Beauties, Dad!

FAGIN

Beauties! I regret! Into the home! Into the home all two of you.

BERTBERT

Leif, this is my father Fagin.

FAGIN
Leif! I pleasure muchly in this meeting.

LEIF
Me too!

FAGIN
Into the home!

LEIF
Okay.

FAGIN
The mother of yours has been in the kitchens.

BERTBERT
I'll go say hi.
(To Leif.)
Good luck.

FAGIN
Leif, we are friends now. I was telling this
daughter of my loves. My loves for the music.

LEIF
You like music?

FAGIN
Loves! The loudness is what feels me.

LEIF
You like the loud stuff?

FAGIN
The loudness! What do you bring with you that is
the loudness?

LEIF
Oh. I don't know. Um. Have you heard The Stooges?

FAGIN
Sturgis?

LEIF
Stooges. The Stooges.

FAGIN
None.

LEIF
Really great stuff. Loud.

FAGIN
The loudness!

LEIF

Yes! Do you want to hear some?

FAGIN

Come bring it to me in the back room. Big sounds there.

LEIF

Okay.

BERTBERT WALKS INTO AN EMPTY KITCHEN. HER MOM'S TANGLE, TUVIE, IS LAYING ON THE COUNTER.

BERTBERT

Mom?

TUVIE

Hey BertBert!

BERTBERT

Oh, hey Tuvie!

TUVIE

How are you?

BERTBERT

I'm fine.

TUVIE

I'm so glad you're back!

BERTBERT

Yeah.

TUVIE

Tell me everything. What's been going on in the world?

BERTBERT

Aren't you a highly-networked piece of technology that knows things way before I do?

TUVIE

Oh come on! Don't tease! You know how jealous I am that you get to go see all these other planets.

BERTBERT

Where's Mom? MY mom, where's my mom?

WHELA

Hey, Honey. Oh, there you are, Tuvie.

TUVIE

BertBert's being mean and won't tell me about her adventures.

BERTBERT

Jesus Christ.

WHELA

Bertie, don't be like that.

BERTBERT

Please don't call me Bertie.

WHELA

It's so good to see you. We weren't expecting you back in a while, what's the occasion?

TUVIE

She brought someone with her.

BERTBERT

Tuvie.

TUVIE

What? You did.

WHELA

Really? Like SOMEONE someone?

BERTBERT

No, no, no, not like that.

TUVIE

I'm detecting elevated heart rate, I think BertBert's lying.

BERTBERT

Narc.

TUVIE

Searching term "Narc"... I am not!

WHELA

You two kids are always fighting.

BERTBERT

There's one kid!

WHELA

So who is this mystery guest?

WE HEAR THE FAINT SOUND OF THE STOOGES REVERBERATING THROUGH THE WALLS.

FAGIN

(In a far off room.)
The loudness!

BERTBERT

He's an Earthling.

WHELA

... What?

TUVIE

There's no reported off-world Earthlings in the whole Triad.

BERTBERT

Yes, I know, Tuvie.

WHELA

There's an Earthling listening to music with your father right now?

BERTBERT

Yes.

WHELA

How?

BERTBERT

That's what I'm trying to figure out.

WHELA

"Trying to figure out?" I see... This is for work.

BERTBERT

Yes... What?

WHELA

Nothing.

TUVIE

Mom is worried that you work too much.

BERTBERT

Please stop saying "mom" like that.

WHELA

I'm not worried. I'm not worried. I know better than to tell you what to do.

BERTBERT

And yet...

WHELA

And yet I feel like you're not balancing your life, the kind of balance that I want you to have.

TUVIE

Balance is important.

BERTBERT

Tuvie. I have all kinds of balance, I was just on a leisure planet.

TUVIE

But were you there for work?

BERTBERT

Goddamn it, Tuvie.

WHELA

Well, what's he doing here?

BERTBERT

It's a long story.

WHELA

Sweetie, if you're not going to have a social life of any kind you could at least tell me more about your work.

BERTBERT

... Tuvie I need you to go into privacy mode.

TUVIE

This conversation is now encrypted. I love it when we share secrets!

BERTBERT

Leif invented something revolutionary on Earth and was paid to keep it a secret. He was given credits and a trip to Sirius A in exchange for not going public.

WHELA

Uh-huh... Paid off by who?

BERTBERT

... The Teds apparently.

WHELA

Okay.

BERTBERT

Mom.

WHELA

Okay that's just great.

BERTBERT

Mom, enough already.

WHELA

Why? Of all the things you could report on. Why can't you write about scientific innovation or something?

BERTBERT

Technically I am.

WHELA

The Teds are incredibly dangerous, Bertiluna.

BERTBERT

Of course I already know that.

WHELA

But you're obsessed. You're obsessed with the misdeeds of an intergalactic empire.

BERTBERT

Maybe I am a little bit.

WHELA

To what end?

BERTBERT

What do you mean "To what end"?

WHELA

You are one woman. What do you expect to accomplish?

BERTBERT

People should know the truth.

WHELA

And what are they going to do about it?

BERTBERT

...Know the truth. It's a big deal in our entire culture, Mom. The Council of Truth and Understanding, it's a cornerstone of our society.

WHELA

It doesn't matter if people know the truth if they can't do anything about it. You're just turning yourself into the person at the party who no one wants to talk to.

BERTBERT

No, I'm not. I'm great at parties.

WHELA

We've had this conversation a billion times, I don't know why we're doing it again.

TUVIE

You have had conversations similar to this one thirteen different times.

BERTBERT

Thank you, Tuvie.

WHELA

Well then what's the point of doing it again? Let's eat.

LATER THAT NIGHT, AT DINNER.

FAGIN

This job has been had by me for many times. Since youth I have done this. It is good things.

LEIF

And what do you do, exactly?

FAGIN

All new things comes here to me. I take new things and then I say about the new things. I say "This are good things" "This things moves forwards". Moving forward things.

LEIF

So...

BERTBERT

It's called The Council of Innovation and Progress. When new technologies arise, there's a council that assesses if they should be further developed or not.

FAGIN

Like this, exactly this.

LEIF

How do you decide?

FAGIN

Many thoughts are made. Many talks go into the thoughts on the things we have. We say "Will this go up? Will it make us go up? How many ups will it make us go?"

LEIF

How many-

BERTBERT

New technologies have to be approved. If they can't get approval from the council then the development team can't move forward.

LEIF

So you're deciding whether or not something should be invented before it's invented?

FAGIN

Precision.

WHELA

No.

FAGIN

No?

WHELA

No, Dear. Something's initially invented, then it goes before the council and it's decided if the new technology should be available to the general public or if it should be shelved.

LEIF

Really?

WHELA

It's a very important part of Sigian life.

LEIF

And... What if they're wrong?

WHELA

There's an appeals process.

LEIF

And what if *they're* wrong?

WHELA

Then the inventor has to ask themselves what they've actually created, just because you made it doesn't necessarily mean that should be celebrated.

LEIF

That doesn't stifle innovation?

FAGIN

"Stifle?"

WHELA

(In Sigian.)
Weshot.

FAGIN

Ah! Not stifle. No to stifle. We think hard. Make great thoughts and put gold on the future time.

LEIF

I'm having a hard time-

WHELA

Unintended consequences. Sometimes people will charge into a situation without thinking about what will happen to them, or that there are people who love them very much and want them to stay safe.

BERTBERT

Wow.

WHELA

Let me give you an example, Leif. One from your planet. Land mines. What if, on your planet, the inventor of the land mine had to go in front of a council and project what his invention will mean one hundred years from that date.

FAGIN

Many futures. Like I say.

WHELA

What they would find is, this invention would leave massive tracts of unusable land, years and years of unintended injuries and death. It's a thing that, there's no denying, should not have been invented. On Sigius, when we find that to be the case, it's nipped in the bud.

FAGIN

That's interesting.

WHELA

It's a very important job.

BERTBERT

Please don't.

WHELA

We were hoping-

BERTBERT

Mom.

WHELA

May I speak? We were hoping that Bertiluna would work in innovation assessment like her father but she chose to go with the Truth and Understanding Council.

BERTBERT

Which is also important.

WHELA

The Council is a very important part of our society, I don't argue with that. But your father and I have always felt that-

BERTBERT

-That the best way to combat injustice is through setting a positive example to the rest of the Triad.

WHELA

Yes, what's wrong with that?

BERTBERT

"Just be more like us" is not a great way to combat injustice, Mom.

WHELA

Don't do that. Don't oversimplify things.

BERTBERT

I'm saying it as plainly as I can say it.

WHELA

How can people better their society if they don't even know what a better society looks like?

BERTBERT

Because it's a little hard to look around when there's a boot on your neck.

WHELA

Don't use extreme imagery to try and win an argument with me, Bertiluna.

BERTBERT

Oh, I can only say that unless there's literal boots on literal necks?

WHELA

I want you to say something concrete that's not hyperbole.

BERTBERT

Okay I'll say something concrete, you're scared.

WHELA

Of course I'm scared, you're going to get yourself killed.

TUVIE

Can we not fight.

BOTH OF THEM

Shut up, Tuvie!

FAGIN

That cracks it! Keep your shirts on your pants! For the love of things with holes!

WHELA

... I'm going to start cleaning up. My apologies, Leif, I'd love to say we're not always like this but we are.

TUVIE

Can I help?

BERTBERT

Jesus Christ, Tuvie you're a device sitting on a table, you're not a member of this family.

TUVIE

Ouch.

WHELA

Hey. At least she listens to me.

WHELA WALKS OUT.

FAGIN

Daughter of mine is what you are. She is big wife. Families real big and together. Yelling why? Anger why? All of this happens many times.

BERTBERT

When is she just going to accept that this is what I do?

FAGIN

Never. You know her, I know her. Never.

BERTBERT

... I have to do some work. Do I still have a room here or did she give it to Tuvie?

TUVIE

BertBert, would you like to hear the definition of Misdirectioned Aggression?

BERTBERT

Very funny.

BERTBERT WALKS AWAY.

FAGIN

Big sorry, Leif.

LEIF

Don't worry about it. Honestly it was kind of entertaining.

FAGIN

Yes. Big splashes at the table of dinner.

LEIF

In fact it's not all that different from when I go home.

FAGIN

Your home, like this?

LEIF

Yeah, just dirtier.

FAGIN

Well, enough. A guest is here. You are here. Enough of this. Show me more loudness, Leif. Big loudness.

LEIF

Good idea. Three words: Holiday in Cambodia.

FAGIN

I'm loving.

LOUD MUSIC THROBS IN THE WALLS OF THE HOUSE. WHELA IS OUT ON THE BALCONY. SHE POURS HERSELF A GLASS OF WINE. LEIF WALKS OUT ONTO THE BALCONY.

LEIF

Hi there.

WHELA

Hello.

LEIF

I apologize for the music.

WHELA

It's okay.

LEIF

He did not seem like the Dead Kennedys type but he really loves it.

WHELA

Can't be worse than the year he discovered Tuvan Throat Singing. That was a tough year.

LEIF

... So, does everyone live in big buildings like this on Sigius?

WHELA

For the most part. When you don't have a lot of land mass you learn to live on top of each other. The real antisocial ones usually end up on a Sea Steader. They head out into the open water and get real weird. I suppose you understand that.

LEIF

I do.

WHELA

... Are you going to get my daughter killed, Leif?

LEIF

Excuse me?

WHELA

Are you going to get my daughter killed?

LEIF

Of course I'm not.

WHELA

The Teds are very dangerous, Leif.

LEIF

This is what I keep hearing.

WHELA

And if you've dragged her into some kind of-

LEIF

Hey. I don't know what she told you about me but I don't drag people into things. I was just standing there on Sirius and she walked up to me. I was living on Trusk and she came to me. She was on Nesso and asked me to come to her. I haven't asked anything of her.

WHELA

... You're right, of course you haven't, I'm sorry...

LEIF

It's okay.

WHELA

...I'm just now realizing I'm standing here on my balcony with an Earthling.

LEIF

Here I am.

WHELA

Is it strange to find your planet plays such a strange role in everybody's life?

LEIF

Honestly it's been a little disappointing.

WHELA

Why?

LEIF

I didn't leave my planet to come out into the stars and be asked what I think Bruce Willis is *really* like.

WHELA

Oh God. That's terrible.

LEIF

It's fine. I guess I figured I would disappear. But I kind of stick out like a sore thumb.

WHELA

You wanted to disappear?

LEIF

Part of me did.

WHELA

What's that about?

LEIF

I don't know. I come from the big forest on Earth. A forest is where you want to go if you want to disappear. So when you live in the place where people disappear, where do you disappear to? So I tried a city. One of the biggest there is. That didn't work either. So then I came out here. Now every time I walk into a room, I'm an oddity. Not exactly disappearing. I know that sounds strange.

WHELA

No. Not at all... Here on Sigius, in the southern seas, there's a massive patch of ocean that has no current. Hardly any weather. If you can manage to make it there, and wait for nightfall, the sea is completely still and reflects all the stars.

(MORE)

WHELA (CONT'D)

The way they mirror each other, it feels like you're sailing through the universe. Ancient Sigians saw this still patch of ocean as a forbidden place. There was no wind to get you out of it, you could get trapped there. But there was one southern tribe of the old Sigians that used it as a rite of passage. When people felt lost or anxious or conflicted they would get into a small boat with one oar and they would row for days until they were in the middle of this great sea of stillness. Once they were there, they waited for the sun to set and for the stars to come out. Then, when the night was at its darkest, they would take their one oar and break it over their knee, and toss it onto the water. And in the middle of all that darkness, with no way out, they would look up at the stars and say: "Wis pel avusha nix, Wis ul po isinel baria"... "Now there is finally nothing. Now I can finally begin."

LEIF

How would they get back?

WHELA

That was up to them... I need to stop trying to control my daughter, don't I?

LEIF

Not if you enjoy constantly failing.

WHELA

Ha!... It's important to take risks in life. That's something you should impart to your kids. Then they're born and you find yourself saying "Please be boring. Please want to be a librarian."

LEIF

She's not going to be a librarian.

WHELA

No... No, I know.

LEIF

... Do you know what a bear is?

WHELA

Uh... The big things, right? Furry? Cute from far away.

LEIF

But then they stand up and it's a living nightmare.

WHELA

Right.

LEIF

There's a lot of them where I come from. You have to know what do when you come across one. And there's two schools of thought. One school of thought: sing. Always be singing on the trail. The bear will hear you coming from far away and will want nothing to do with you. Another school of thought: scream at the bear. Make yourself look as big as you can and scream like a maniac so you can scare the bear away.

WHELA

Which one is right?

LEIF

They both are. They both work. But the thing is: whichever way you go isn't going to stop the bear from shredding you into non-existence if it really wants to... Shout at the bear, sing past the bear, regardless... here comes the bear.

WHELA

The thing is we're not talking about a bear, we're talking about a very powerful empire... We're starting to hear rumors in the diplomatic core. That's where I work, Interplanetary Relations.

LEIF

Rumors of what?

WHELA

It's called Chemical Ice. The Teds have started using it. Apparently it's a kind of forced suspended animation. They freeze you in this chemical compound and once you're frozen you remain semi-conscious in this sort of ice cube for as long as they want. We don't know how long they've had it, but the rumors are they've got a warehouse of "test subjects". Could be a thousand disappeared people from a thousand different worlds.

LEIF

Jesus.

WHELA

I can't tell my daughter what to do, and I'm sure whatever she's working on with you is very important, but I can tell it's not just a working relationship between you two. I can tell you're friends.

LEIF

Sure, we're friends. She doesn't like a lot of the choices I make but she seems to be pretty forgiving.

WHELA

But choices are never owned by just one person, Leif. No one is in a vacuum, nobody is invisible no matter how much they want to disappear... We talk about water a lot on Sigius. We're surrounded by it... a stone thrown in the ocean is a tidal wave on a distant shore... Whatever choices you're making, I need you to be sure you're not making them for my daughter as well... I need you promise me that.

LEIF

I promise. I do.

WHELA

... Okay... Well, enjoy the rest of your time on Sigius. It's a beautiful place, isn't it?

LEIF

It really is.

WHELA

We've worked hard to make it that way. Sometimes we take it for granted.

WHELA WALKS INTO THE HOUSE.

LEIF

Hey Alice?

ALICE

Hey. That tangle Tuvie keeps trying to connect with my network and I keep denying it because damn, dude.

LEIF

That's fine.

ALICE

What do you need?

LEIF

That poem that BertBert recited when she was a kid, how did it go again?

ALICE

"Oh great emergence from dark waters, what new world do you bring to see its first light?"

LEIF

Yeah... We need to leave this planet.

ALICE

Are you sure? It's pretty groovy here and remember that whole thing about being wanted by denizens of the underworld?

LEIF

Yeah. We're going to have to risk it.

ALICE

Okay, if you say so. Get back on the Slipstream for five stops and there should be an orbit station there.

LEIF

Okay.

ALICE

Where are we going?

LEIF

Doesn't matter. Grab a ticket for the earliest departure. Send an encrypted message to Verge.

ALICE

What's the message?

LEIF

"Come get me."

ALICE

And would you like to leave a message for BertBert?

LEIF

... No. No, let's just go.

ALICE

Message sent. Ticket booked. Say goodbye to Sigius.

LEIF

Goodbye Sigius.

THE END