

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 22: The Maul of America

By

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Midnight Burger

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THE SOUND OF SPACE TIME SPINNING PAST US AS A SONG PLAYS ON THE RADIO. DISTANT SOUND OF PENCIL SCRATCHING ON PAPER.

EFFIE

So, you mean to tell me that there is a television show that portrays stories from the bible...

CASPAR

Yes.

ZEBULON

Issac, Abraham, even Jesus.

CASPAR

Yes.

EFFIE

But all of the biblical characters are portrayed by what now?

CASPAR

Vegetables.

EFFIE

...How..

ZEBULON

Why...

EFFIE

Is there...

CASPAR

I can see you trying to make sense of it, and I wish you luck.

GLORIA

Coffee's ready.

CASPAR

Excellent.

GLORIA

Still nothing?

LEIF

She's been like that for hours, she's almost burned through a whole notebook.

EFFIE

I admire her dedication but does she need a glass of water or some such?

ZEBULON

I have begun to worry that her pencil may ignite.

GLORIA

Maybe I should bring her some food?

LEIF

Honestly, she won't even know you're there.

GLORIA

What if it's really good food though?

LEIF

In any lab or testing field or observatory you're going to see this. There's people filing reports, compiling data, getting coffee, the janitor comes by, maybe a senator visits, and then off in a corner somewhere, surrounded by, what looks like, the notes of a serial killer... will be the theorist. Trapped in their head until they finally come up for air. Watch this. Hey, Ava?... Yeah, nothing.

GLORIA

So we stand here until she decides to talk to us?

LEIF

We can stand anywhere we want, we're not going to exist until she's ready for us to exist.

CASPAR

We may have one thing working in our favor.

GLORIA

What?

AVA

I'm having a cigarette.

CASPAR

There we go.

DOOR CHIME.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

We should probably get our questions in fast, she's going to suck that down like a shopvac, let's go Mucklewains.

DOOR CHIME. THE SOUND OF SPACE TIME GROWS LOUDER.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey there.

GLORIA

Ava, do you need anything? You're looking a little pale.

LEIF

We're probably going to touch down soon, anything we need to know?

AVA

... I am now ready to talk about the disappearing lady.

GLORIA

Great.

LEIF

Let's do it.

CASPAR

Do you need coffee?

AVA

No. Leif?

LEIF

Yeah.

AVA

Her energy signature when she disappeared, that was different than when The Ex would pop into our lives, right?

LEIF

For sure.

GLORIA

Also her voice was different. She sounded human.

AVA

So we're probably not dealing with Caspar's alternate reality Ex-wife throwing ANOTHER bot at us. This isn't a Terminator 2 situation?

LEIF

No, also she didn't smell like anything. Ex had a particular scent when she would teleport.

GLORIA

Really?

LEIF  
Tachyons smell like popcorn.

AVA  
Okay. Good.

GLORIA  
Stop smelling the androids.

LEIF  
I'm not being weird.

CASPAR  
Just want to make sure we've all registered that  
this is not, in any way, my fault.

ZEBULON  
That's a refreshing change of pace isn't it, Dear?

EFFIE  
What will I do with myself?

CASPAR  
You know what?

AVA  
She was disguised as the Ambassador from  
Luxembourg?

CASPAR  
Yes.

AVA  
But what were you saying about her name?

CASPAR  
She picked the name of an actual person but from  
the 15th century, she probably thought no one would  
notice.

AVA  
But she spoke in a fake accent, was putting on a  
whole show.

CASPAR  
Yes.

AVA  
She's been doing this for a while.

GLORIA  
Doing what for a while though?

AVA

Traveling. And we've been on her trail, trying to get her attention. She's the thing we've been trying to track down.

LEIF

Sure seems like it.

AVA

Why Earth?

CASPAR

What do you mean?

AVA

Why is she sticking to Earth? Let's assume she can shift through time and fold space. Why would she stick to Earth?

CASPAR

Because it's nearby?

LEIF

Wouldn't matter. If she can fold space without any tech then distance becomes irrelevant, traveling to St. Petersburg is the same as traveling to the other side of the universe.

CASPAR

So she's on Earth on purpose.

AVA

I think so. "Are you trying to stop me?" That's what she said. Stop what?

GLORIA

She's definitely got an agenda. And she was not happy to see us.

EFFIE

And I was not happy to see her. I have dark perturbations about this woman.

AVA

Why though?

EFFIE

It's a thicket of feelings I get from her. It's one thing but also another.

ZEBULON

Perhaps if we wish to know the nature of this new character in our lives we should look to ourselves.

AVA

What do you mean?

ZEBULON

We are ordinary folks in an extraordinary life. Perhaps she's not so different. And why have we found ourselves here? Either running or seeking, all of us. Perhaps it is the same for her.

EFFIE

That's where my feelings point me. But it's both of those things. Seeking and running. And those two mixed together in the wrong way can be...

CASPAR

Dangerous.

EFFIE

Yes.

GLORIA

We're talking about a lot without actually saying anything. We think she's a problem, we don't know why. She thinks we're a problem and doesn't know why. Right now all we know is, there's a disappearing lady that doesn't like us.

LEIF

What's not to like?

CASPAR

Yeah, we're delightful except for Leif who kills people randomly.

LEIF

That's not true.

CASPAR

Oh, you didn't kill a guy?

LEIF

It wasn't random.

GLORIA

How long until we land?

LEIF

Any second now.

AVA

Look, just keep your eyes open, okay? That wasn't the last time we're going to see her. Also, there's something that I want us to start looking for.

CASPAR

We're not getting a cat.

LEIF

Why can't we get a cat?

GLORIA

You can't just say we're not getting a cat.

EFFIE

Where did discussion of a cat come from all of a sudden?

CASPAR

If we get a cat it's going to hate me.

LEIF

And we all benefit from that.

ZEBULON

I think a cat may be nice.

AVA

Oh my God.

CASPAR

... Sorry.

AVA

Damage to the fabric of space time. I want us to keep a look out for damage to the fabric of space time.

GLORIA

What's it look like?

AVA

No idea.

LEIF

Here we go.

THE DINER SNAPS INTO A NEW REALITY. WE HEAR MUSAK.

CASPAR

Are we...

LEIF

Is this what I think it is?

GLORIA

Are we in a mall?



CASPAR

Yeah.

AVA

That music is terrible.

EFFIE

Well this is an unsavory establishment.

ZEBULON

Is this some sort of warehouse?

CASPAR

Oh it's a warehouse alright. For commerce.

EFFIE

What is that smell?

CASPAR

That, Effie, is the food court.

EFFIE

They have put food there to be judged somehow?

CASPAR

No, that's just where all the food places are.

ZEBULON

I have judged it.

CASPAR

Yeah, I't not a great smell.

LEIF

Oh, shit, check it out: B. Dalton.

CASPAR

Oh, we're in an OLD mall.

LEIF

1980's for sure.

CASPAR

The golden age.

LEIF

There's probably a Camelot Music here.

CASPAR

There's probably a Chess King.

GLORIA

Hickory Farms, anyone?

CASPAR

Yeah!

LEIF

Free cheese samples!

CASPAR

There's probably a Jazzercise!

EFFIE

Ava, what in the world are they talking about?

AVA

I don't know, I actually did something with my life.

GLORIA

Where is everyone, though?

LEIF

I guess they haven't opened yet, all the gates are down.

GLORIA

Well at least there'll be one good spot in the food court today.

CASPAR

We're really going to give Mrs. Fields' Cookies a run for it's money.

AVA

Can we spread out and look for things?

GLORIA

Damage to the fabric of space time?

AVA

Yes, I know it's vague but it's important. Damage to the fabric of space time.

CASPAR

Should be easy to spot. Pardon me, sir, is that damage to the fabric of space time you've got there?

LEIF

We should head over to Spencer's Gifts that place is definitely a disturbance in the fabric of space time.

GLORIA

Split up for a little while, everyone. You guys take the bottom floor, Ava let's go upstairs.

CASPAR

Who's taking the Mucklewains?

EFFIE

(Suddenly in the loud speaker system for the Mall.)  
I think we'll be just- oh my!

ZEBULON

(In the loud speaker system as well.)  
Goodness. We appear to be in the Public Address  
system for this establishment.

EFFIE

Can y'all hear us?

GLORIA

Yeah.

AVA

Cool.

ZEBULON

I feel very large.

EFFIE

Yes, I feel as though my spirit wraps around this  
whole construction.

GLORIA

I guess you're going with all of us then.

CASPAR

Anything we can grab you while we're looking?

GLORIA

From a 1980s mall? All of this stuff's garbage.

LEIF

How about a sharper image foot massager?

GLORIA

...Okay, yeah, get me the foot massager.

CASPAR

Anything else?

AVA

Do they have pencils here?

CASPAR

...Pencils?

AVA

What?

CASPAR

At the mall?

AVA

Yeah.

GLORIA

They don't have useful things here, just the things you can't live without.

AVA

Never mind.

CASPAR

Good luck on your space/time anomaly hunt!... We're going to hit the Orange Julius before we start looking around right?

LEIF

Absolutely.

GLORIA AND AVA RIDE AN ESCALATOR.

GLORIA

So, damage to the fabric of space time?

AVA

It can look like anything. Also nothing.

GLORIA

Right. On it. Why are we doing this?

AVA

Well... Okay, I'm working with four separate things right now.

GLORIA

Good. Bullet points are good.

AVA

Thing 1: Imagine a string of pearls, but not in a loop. Imagine a string of pearls continuing out into infinity.

GLORIA

Okay, infinite pearls.

AVA

Imagine each pearl as a universe. All matter and energy that exists is in each pearl.

GLORIA

That's a lot of universes.

AVA

Every day when we open our doors, we're in one of those pearls. A new universe. One of these infinite pearls is where we started, and we are constantly zipping back and forth through different pearls. Each one of them have a beginning, middle and end that runs for billions of years.

GLORIA

That sounds way more organized than what we actually do.

AVA

They're not actually in a string they're actually all overlapping each other and occurring simultaneously but it's better to imagine them on a string.

GLORIA

Agreed.

AVA

Thing 2: Chuck said something about massive gravity waves. Inside each pearl are massive destructive events that happen. Sometimes they're so powerful that they can damage the pearl they take place in. The effects can be cataclysmic.

GLORIA

Is this like a supernova, a whole star exploding?

AVA

No, it goes beyond that. When something is so powerful that it can damage the fabric of space-time... Imagine a house on a beach, and a tidal wave is coming toward it. Imagine this wave being so powerful that it doesn't just damage the house, it... damages the very idea of what a house is.

GLORIA

The idea of what a house is?

AVA

A gravity wave can be so powerful that it can damage not just matter, but damage how matter works.

GLORIA

... I don't like that.

AVA

I don't either.

AVA (CONT'D)

The third thing is us. A time-traveling dimension-spanning diner. And the fourth thing:

GLORIA

The disappearing lady.

AVA

Yeah.

GLORIA

How did Chuck describer her? "Powerful? Formidable?"

AVA

It looks like she's able to travel through space and time like we do but she can do it at will, so yeah that's pretty powerful and formidable.

GLORIA

... She's scared.

AVA

How do you know?

GLORIA

You can see it. She was scared of us for some reason.

AVA

I can't imagine why that would be.

GLORIA

(Laughing.)  
Shit.

AVA

What?

GLORIA

Wicks and Sticks. Did you ever go here?

AVA

I wasn't a mall person.

GLORIA

I used to look at this place and be like "That's what a real woman does, she has all kinds of nice candles everywhere. That's when I'll know I've become a real woman."

AVA

Did you ever get your candles?

GLORIA

No. Because then it became "having a nice kitchen" meant I was a real person, and then it became "having a really nice couch" for some reason, not sure what that was about. Then it became a restaurant.

AVA

What is it now?

GLORIA

Jesus Christ, I have no fucking clue. Self-completion is a moving target. I mean, look at me. Look at us, look at what we do. We're in a mall in the 80s looking for damage to the fabric of space time and I don't feel much different than my teenage self. I thought candles were going to do it? Seriously?

CHIME HEARD OVER LOUDSPEAKER.

EFFIE

Oh my. Dear, did you hear that? There's a little noise every time we talk.

ZEBULON

I like it.

EFFIE

Y'all, us talking through this here building has had some unforeseen effects.

GLORIA

What's up?

EFFIE

I seem to have a sense of this building like it were my own skin and bones.

AVA

You're probably co-opting whatever electrical systems they have like it's a nervous system.

ZEBULON

Well, I don't know about that but I do know that we can tell where both you and Caspar and Leif are relative to the diner.

AVA

That could be useful.

EFFIE

Caspar and Leif are at some sort of establishment with a devil on it.

AVA

Really?

GLORIA

They're at an Orange Julius. Anything else?

EFFIE

Yes. We are not alone.

GLORIA

There's someone else in here?

ZEBULON

We believe so.

EFFIE

This building may seem closed to the public but I am sensing many people within.

GLORIA

That's creepy. Okay. Track down Leif and Caspar and let them know.

EFFIE

Will do.

GLORIA

What are the odds that Caspar and Leif are actually looking for something like we are?

AVA

Low probability.

THE BLENDER OF THE ORANGE JULIUS ROARS.

LEIF

(Yelling over the blender.)

Look, I understand that you're upset but I still think it was the right call.

CASPAR

(Yelling over the blender.)

You blew a guy up, Leif.

LEIF

(Yelling over the blender.)

And what was that guy's name again?

BLENDING STOPS.

CASPAR

John Wilkes Booth.



LEIF

I think there's a big difference between blowing up a guy and blowing up John Wilkes Booth.

CASPAR

It is still, without provocation, not out of self-defense, blowing up a guy.

LEIF

I see what you're saying. You're trying to do it like a math problem. "Killing bad, therefore all killing bad." But I've evolved.

CASPAR

Oh. You've evolved have you?

LEIF

That's right.

CASPAR

Well do tell, Homo Superior, how have you evolved?

LEIF

I kind of went through the wringer while you were gone. Got confronted with a lot of old shit, old versions of myself. I decided, rather than deny it, or leave it behind, I would merge it all into one person, bringing the best of all worlds into one dude. I'm Leif the cook, Leif the engineer, Leif the criminal, all in one guy. I'm Smart Hulk now.

CASPAR

Smart Hulk would not have killed John Wilkes Booth.

LEIF

Smart Hulk would've stopped the fuck out of John Wilkes Booth.

CASPAR

This is going nowhere, drink your Orange Julius. I guess I just don't want it to come back and haunt you or something.

LEIF

This is really good. How do you know how to make an Orange Julius?

CASPAR

First job.

LEIF

Your first job was at Orange Julius?

CASPAR

Yeah. What was yours?

LEIF

Weed delivery. I was 13.

CASPAR

Seriously? It's like you're not even a real person.

LEIF

I know.

TAMARA

You two! Freeze!

CASPAR

Whoa!

LEIF

We're not here to hurt anybody.

CASPAR

Put the gun away, we're not stealing anything.

LEIF

I mean, we're kind of stealing.

TAMARA

Who are you?

CASPAR

I'm Caspar. That's Leif.

LEIF

Hey.

TAMARA

How'd you get past the perimeter?

CASPAR

Perimeter?

STRANGE NOISES. ZOMBIES?

LEIF

Whoa.

TAMARA

Shit.

LEIF

What the hell is that sound?

TAMARA

They must have heard us. Out of the way.

CASPAR

What's happening?

SECURITY GATE FOR THE ORANGE JULIUS IS PULLED DOWN.

TAMARA

We're going to be stuck here for a minute.

LEIF

Why?

ANGRY CROWD APPROACHES.

CASPAR

What the hell is that?

TAMARA

If we're quiet, they'll probably ignore us.

LEIF

Who?

TAMARA

Them.

A CROWD OF ANGRY SHOPPERS RUSHES BY THE ORANGE JULIUS.

LEIF

Shit, are we in a "Mall full of Zombies" situation?

CASPAR

I mean, honestly it was only a matter of time.

LEIF

True.

TAMARA

They're not zombies.

CASPAR

Who are they?

LEIF

They look crazed out of their minds.

TAMARA

Shh! They're not zombies, they're not trying to eat anyone's brain.

CASPAR

What are they trying to eat?

THE CROWD PASSES.

TAMARA

How'd you two get here? You guys make a bet you could sneak in or something?

CASPAR

We don't know what you mean.

TAMARA

Look, I don't know what it is about men, when you see a restricted sign, you think it's a dare. It's not a dare, there's fucked up shit happening here.

LEIF

Obviously.

CASPAR

What is happening here?

TAMARA

It's too weird for you to comprehend, you wouldn't believe me if I told you.

CASPAR AND LEIF START LAUGHING.

CASPAR

Oh no.

LEIF

Oh no, not something weird.

CASPAR

Leif, what are we going to do about the weird thing that's happening?

LEIF

I hope we don't freak out.

CASPAR

I'm so fragile.

TAMARA

Who are you two?

LEIF

Weird shit's kind of our jam. Why don't you tell us what's going on?

TAMARA

Oh...kay...

CASPAR

Actually, you know what, if she tells us she's just going to have to explain it again to everyone else, let's head back.

LEIF

Good call.

TAMARA

Head back where?

LEIF

We'll explain, let's go.

TAMARA

Hang on... Okay, we're clear.

TAMARA RAISES THE GATE ON THE ORANGE JULIUS.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

LEIF

What's your name?

TAMARA

Tamara.

LEIF

You're a security guard?

TAMARA

Yeah.

CASPAR

They let them carry guns back then?

TAMARA

Back then?

LEIF

Oh yeah. Also, remember all the indoor smoking?

CASPAR

God, that's right.

TAMARA

Where are we going?

LEIF

That's our place over there.

TAMARA

What the... fuck is that doing here?

LOUDSPEAKER CHIMES.

EFFIE

Attention Caspar and Leif please stop acting like horses patoots, where have y'all got off to?

GLORIA

Who's on the PA system?

CASPAR

Y'all, be quiet you'll alert the zombies.

TAMARA

They're not zombies.

CASPAR

Be quiet, you'll alert the "Not Zombies".

LEIF

We were at the Orange Julius, where are Gloria and Ava?

GLORIA

(From the second floor.)

We're up here, did you guys see that huge crowd come through?

CASPAR

Yeah, they're dangerous apparently, stay away.

LEIF

They're not zombies apparently.

GLORIA

If it's zombies, I quit.

TAMARA

They're not zombies.

AVA

Who's that?

LEIF

This is Tamara, she's a security guard.

TAMARA

Who's on the PA system?

ZEBULON

Well, Hello Tamara, I'm Zebulon Mucklewain here with my wife Effie.

EFFIE

Hi, Tamara.

TAMARA

Who are you people?

LEIF

We run a diner. Come have a cup of coffee, tell us about your weird day.

SONG:

TWO COFFEE CUPS ARE SET DOWN ON THE TABLE.

TAMARA

You really expect me to believe that?

GLORIA

How it works is, I tell you our crazy story and then you feel more comfortable telling us yours.

TAMARA

Uh huh. Okay. Okay, fine... I had just started this job. I was excited, the pay was good, I look alright in the uniform, I'm pretty good at scaring teenagers. Then one day everything went off the rails. There was a riot over some toys, I couldn't keep the crowd under control, a bunch of stuff got stolen.

GLORIA

A riot over some toys?

TAMARA

Yeah, some kind of doll?

GLORIA

What kind of doll?

CASPAR

Oh God. Wait. What year is it?

TAMARA

For real?

CASPAR

Yes.

TAMARA

1983.

CASPAR

Ohhhhhhh noooooooooo.

AVA

What?

CASPAR

It's the Cabbage Patch Riots.

LEIF

The fuck are you talking about?

TAMARA

That was it, yeah. Cabbage Patch Kids.

GLORIA

The Cabbage Patch Riots?

CASPAR

It happened all over America. Every kid wanted one of these dolls for Christmas called Cabbage Patch Kids but they didn't make enough, there were literal riots. Delivery trucks were sacked, it was nuts.

AVA

Over a doll?

CASPAR

This is why I remember it, because it was so stupid.

GLORIA

Okay, we're going to put a pin in how stupid that is and we're going to go back to Tamara. You're saying that a riot happened and you couldn't stop it?

TAMARA

Right. People went crazy. They waited by the doors for the mall to open, not even in a line, just a mob of people. I was the first one here that day. It was way too early for anyone to go shopping, but there they were, all at the door to try and grab one of these Cabbage Patch Kids. When I unlocked the doors they pushed them open so hard that it knocked me down. They were running, like olympic style running to the KayBee Toys just to stand in line and wait for THEM to open. Eventually there was a line outside of every store that might possibly have one of these damn dolls. Montgomery Ward, Sears, whatever. There was even a line outside of Florsheim Shoes for some reason. Then they got the bad news. Delivery trucks ran late the day before and the dolls weren't on the shelves, they were still in the trucks... They all start to panic. Like, sheer panic, like they're life depended on it.

(MORE)



TAMARA (CONT'D)

None of the stores had stocked any of the dolls yet so they rushed back into the loading zone and literally ransacked three trucks full of them. Dolls, y'all. People got into fist fights, one guy had a bat. It was chaos. I need backup so I call the police and they literally laughed at me, started calling me Santa's little helper. So I say to myself "Please don't let me die over some fucking dolls," and I jump in there, trying to break it up... and then suddenly everybody was gone.

GLORIA

Everybody?

TAMARA

Yeah. Suddenly the whole mall was empty like I was the first one at work again.

LEIF

Time loop?

AVA

No such thing.

LEIF

Did your watch reset or anything?

AVA

There's no such thing as a time loop.

TAMARA

No, but as I walked back into the mall... They were here.

A MASS OF "NOT ZOMBIES" RUSHES PAST THE DINER IN A CRAZED FRENZY.

AVA

Yeesh.

GLORIA

Seeing them up close now, are we sure they're not zombies? Because remember, if it's zombies, I quit.

TAMARA

They're not zombies. They don't try and eat people. They only crave one thing.

CASPAR

No way.

TAMARA

Cabbage Patch Kids. They are constantly tearing up the mall, trying to find the Cabbage Patch Kids.

A BEAT. EVERYONE LAUGHS.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

It's not funny.

CASPAR

I'm sorry, it's objectively funny.

TAMARA

Maybe to you all. You just got here. And it's getting worse.

AVA

How do you mean?

TAMARA

I swear they're getting angrier. More desperate. The first time they were just really intense shoppers now it's like...

CASPAR

Here they come again.

MASSIVE CROWD BEGINS RUNNING PAST THE DINER.

GLORIA

God, look at them.

CASPAR

I'm not saying they're zombies but they do look like they're from a zombie movie.

LEIF

One of the newer ones too. A fast zombie movie.

AVA

That's disturbing.

LEIF

They look crazed.

ZEBULON

They seem to be possessed by some terrible spirit.

EFFIE

Indeed. I can feel it myself, that's some unnaturalness right there.

CASPAR

"This summer, there is no sale that can satisfy...  
the zombie shoppers."

LEIF

"Shopzies..."

CASPAR

Ohh that's better, "Shopzies..."

AVA

This doesn't make any sense. What else is effected?  
Is this happening everywhere on the planet?

TAMARA

No. In fact... Now that they're gone, come up to  
the roof, I'll show you.

CASPAR

Hang on, we should all arm ourselves. Leif, do we  
have any baseball bats with nails driven through  
them?

LEIF

I'll get the laser saw.

TAMARA

Actually if you just stay out of their way, you'll  
be fine.

LEIF

Oh.

CASPAR

Bummer.

DOOR CHIME. THEY ALL WALK TO THE ELEVATOR.

TAMARA

Time-traveling, dimension-spanning diner, huh?

GLORIA

Yeah I know. Sounds ridiculous.

TAMARA

You're lucky I was desperate for someone to talk  
to.

ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSES.

GLORIA

How long has this been happening?

TAMARA

61 days.

GLORIA

Holy shit, Tamara.

CASPAR

Why didn't you leave?

TAMARA

I'm about to show you. I was thinking the other day, I better get fucking overtime for this.

GLORIA

Fuck yeah, you should.

TAMARA

What's the pay like at Midnight Burger?

LEIF

Terrible, our boss is a tyrant.

CASPAR

Ha ha, that's Gloria now.

ELEVATOR OPENS TO THE ROOF. A MILITARY HELICOPTER ROARS BY.

LEIF

Shit!

CASPAR

Was that an army helicopter?

TAMARA

Around the third day I noticed the tanks and helicopters. They set up a military perimeter around the Mall.

GLORIA

Why won't they come get you?

TAMARA

They say they're worried about "contamination" whatever that means. Here, binoculars. Check it out.

GLORIA

...Tanks? Seriously?

TAMARA

I know. I guess they're pretty freaked out.

AVA

Can I see?

GLORIA

So they just trapped you here with a group of crazies running around?

TAMARA

It hasn't been great.

HELICOPTER PILOT

(Through loudspeaker.)

Attention, this is a restricted area. You are now in an official quarantine zone, do not leave the area without authorization.

LOUDSPEAKER BUZZES.

ZEBULON

(In helicopter loudspeaker.)

Excuse me, Sir. You are disturbing our discussion with this contraption of yours.

HELICOPTER PILOT

What the hell?

EFFIE

(In helicopter loudspeaker.)

Set this whirly-gig of yours down somewhere else so we can hear ourselves think.

HELICOPTER PILOT

Pull back, pull back!

HELICOPTER PULLS AWAY.

TAMARA

The hell just happened?

GLORIA

They don't like people being rude.

AVA

There they are. Government scientists have a sensor array set up. Would love to see those readouts right now.

LEIF

What have they got?

AVA

Radar and a spectrometer... Chemical sniffer, that's dumb.

LEIF

No microwave scanner? Lame.

AVA  
It's 1983, what do you expect... Okay. None of this makes any sense at all. And that's great.

CASPAR  
Is it though?

AVA  
This is it. Damage to the fabric of space time. This is what we've been looking for.

CASPAR  
How is this weird shit different from the usual weird shit we encounter?

AVA  
Every world we go to follows it's own rules. There's no rules to this it's just... broken. Angry shoppers turned into zombies that crave cabbage patch dolls? Give me a break.

CASPAR  
Kids. Cabbage Patch Kids.

TAMARA  
How does it get fixed?

AVA  
Tamara. Have you met any weird ladies lately? Before all this started?

TAMARA  
Uh, I'd only been working for a while. There's the occasional nut that walks in off the street.

AVA  
About yea high. Red hair.

TAMARA  
No.

CASPAR  
She could've been wearing a wig at the theater.

AVA  
Just anyone with a weird vibe.

TAMARA  
Y'know... it was my first day. There was a lady in the food court who started asking me a bunch of questions. At first about the Mall and then about where I was from, where my parents were from. She gave me something, she said she found it.

AVA  
What was it?

TAMARA  
A rock. It's still in my locker, come back downstairs.

ELEVATOR DINGS AND THEY WALK INSIDE.

EFFIE  
(In the elevator loudspeaker.)  
Look dear, we're in the elevator as well.

ZEBULON  
(In the elevator loudspeaker.)  
Yes. Welcome to the 3rd floor everyone.

TAMARA  
I don't know what they are but I kind of like it.

GLORIA  
We do to.

ELEVATOR DINGS AND THE DOOR OPENS.

TAMARA  
So, I didn't think much of it at first. I'm supposed to put things in the lost and found in the office but it seemed a little too nice to put there.

TAMARA OPENS HER LOCKER.

TAMARA (CONT'D)  
Here you go.

GLORIA  
It's pretty.

CASPAR  
Is it a crystal?

AVA  
Leif?

LEIF  
Let me see... Huh... it's a diamond.

TAMARA  
What?

LEIF  
Yeah.

GLORIA

It looks grey.

LEIF

Yeah, it's an industrial diamond, you can't make it into jewelry. Still valuable though. Something this size, you're looking at about a hundred thousand dollars.

TAMARA

What?!

LEIF

Good call not putting it in the lost and found.

AVA

Where did she say she found it?

TAMARA

She said Mercury.

AVA

Mercury.

TAMARA

I figured it was the name of a new store that had just opened.

AVA

Mercury?

CASPAR

Doesn't sound like a store that I remember.

LEIF

I don't think she meant a store.

GLORIA

Don't tell me.

LEIF

Surface of Mercury is covered in diamonds just like this.

CASPAR

The surface of Mercury?

LEIF

Yeah.

CASPAR

Where it's a bajillion degrees and the atmosphere is methane or whatever.



LEIF  
Hardly any atmosphere at all, actually.

TAMARA  
Wait, you're talking about Mercury the planet?

GLORIA  
She was just going for a stroll on Mercury and picked up a diamond?

AVA  
Who the fuck is this woman?

TAMARA  
What the fuck is going on?

AVA  
I have no idea, Tamara.

GLORIA  
Okay look, let's think about the thing right in front of us.

CASPAR  
The thing right in front of us is a huge diamond from Mercury.

GLORIA  
No, the thing right in front of us is Tamara. She's trapped in a time loop with mall zombies.

AVA  
No such thing as a time loop.

CASPAR  
Shopzies.

GLORIA  
What are we going to do about it?

AVA  
No idea.

LEIF  
We could try and sneak her past the military blockade. Maybe if she could get away from the mall things would reset.

AVA  
My guess is you'd have entanglement problems. Her geographic location isn't going to matter much.

GLORIA

Not to mention she'd be on the run from the government.

ZEBULON

My friends, let us not forget, those possessed creatures we witnessed were not conjured from the darkness.

EFFIE

Those are some real folks down there, y'all. They've been captured by some sort of bedevilment, and leaving them as such just ain't right.

GLORIA

Well then we have to help them too.

TAMARA

You guys really think you can fix this?

GLORIA

We're going to give it a shot.

EFFIE

Gloria, if the smell of this place is any indication, Tamara has not had a proper meal in some time. Everything here smells like corn oil. Perhaps some proper sustenance so's we can wrap our heads around the problem.

GLORIA

Good idea. Back downstairs, everybody.

ELEVATOR DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES WITH THEM IN IT.

ZEBULON

...It's a generous thing, isn't it?

EFFIE

What's that, Dear?

ZEBULON

Bringing someone a diamond from another world.

TAMARA

... She said something like "I keep looking around for something but wind up finding stuff like this. Why do I only find the stuff someone else needs?"

ELEVATOR DINGS. DOOR OPENS. A MASSIVE CROWD OF SHOPZIES ARE SUDDENLY RUNNING TOWARD THE ELEVATOR.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

LEIF  
They're coming right at us!

GLORIA  
Close the door!

CASPAR STARTS PONDING ON THE "DOOR CLOSE" BUTTON.

CASPAR  
Shitshitshitshitshitfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckdorclosebut  
tondoorclosebuttondoorclosebutton DOES THIS THING  
WORK?

AVA  
It's closing!

GLORIA  
Close faster!

THE DOOR CLOSES RIGHT AS THE MOB IS ABOUT TO REACH THEM.

CASPAR  
Wow, that was a close one!

ZEBULON  
What in the world is so compelling about this  
children's toy?

LEIF  
What were they going to do if they got to us? Try  
and purchase us?

GLORIA  
Let's not find out.

TAMARA  
They can get violent. Especially if it's something  
new and y'all are new.

AVA  
How are we going to get back to the diner?

ELEVATOR DOOR OPENS AGAIN. THE CRAZED SHOPPERS RUN FOR THE  
DOOR AGAIN.

CASPAR  
Shitshitshitdoorclosedoorclosedoorclose.

GLORIA  
Go up to the next floor!

CASPAR  
Okay.

LEIF

Now what do we do?

TAMARA

We can just wait them out. Eventually they can move on after a few hours.

THE ELEVATOR DOOR OPENS AND THEY WALK TO THE LEDGE OF THE SECOND FLOOR. THE ANGRY MASSES CAN BE HEARD FROM DOWN BELOW.

LEIF

That's a lot of Shopzies.

AVA

How long until they move on?

TAMARA

It's random. Could be a few hours.

LEIF

We might not have that kind of time.

TAMARA

Why?

GLORIA

We're only on the ground for a few hours before we take off to somewhere else.

TAMARA

How is that possible?

GLORIA

I think we're past the point where you ask how things are possible, I mean, there's zombies downstairs.

CASPAR

Shopzies.

GLORIA

We're not calling them that.

LEIF

Maybe I can sneak through, how dangerous are these nuts, exactly.

TAMARA

Here, I'll show you.

TAMARA PICKS UP A MANNEQUIN FROM A STORE FRONT.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Let's pretend this mannequin is you.

TAMARA THROWS THE MANNEQUIN OVER THE RAIL AND IT HITS THE GROUND. THE CROWD INSTANTLY STARTS HOWLING AND RIPPING THE MANNEQUIN TO SHREDS.

LEIF

Holy shit.

TAMARA

It's fine if you stay out of their way. But if you try and get through that crowd you're going to end up like that mannequin.

GLORIA

Great.

CASPAR

We need to get them away from the diner.

AVA

Obviously.

CASPAR

Okay, I have an idea. Tamara?

TAMARA

Yes?

CASPAR

Take me to the Cabbage Patch.

SLIDING DOOR OF A CARGO TRUCK SLIDES UPWARD TO REVEAL...

TAMARA

There they are. These are the few ones they haven't found yet.

CASPAR

Holy shit.

AVA

Jesus Christ, they look demonic.

CASPAR

For nine months in 1983 this was the only thing that any child in America wanted. It was like a mass hysteria event.

EFFIE

I feel like they're all lookin' at me.

GLORIA

Me too.

ZEBULON

Perhaps one alone wouldn't be too alarming but when they are all in boxes standing atop one another with such a blank stare on their faces...

CASPAR

According to Cabbage Patch lore they all sprung from the heads of cabbages.

LEIF

Cabbage Patch lore?

CASPAR

And I think they all come with an adoption certificate.

LEIF

People are psychotic.

CASPAR

We don't need to get a cat we can just get one of these.

AVA

NOPE.

GLORIA

What's this plan of yours, Caspar?

CASPAR

Tamara do you have one of those security golf carts type things?

TAMARA

Sure.

CASPAR

How about a megaphone?

TAMARA

I think so.

CASPAR

I feel like you can see where I'm going with this.

GLORIA

Jesus Christ. Okay. What do we do?

CASPAR

Just wait on the second floor and then make your move.

GLORIA

This doesn't solve Tamara's problem, y'know?

CASPAR

I know, but it will get Ava back to her booth where she can come up with a solution.

AVA

Why don't I just come up with a solution right now?

CASPAR

Because all your good ideas happen at the booth, that's your spot, that's the power zone.

AVA

...He's not wrong.

CASPAR

Leif, can you spruce up a golf cart?

LEIF

Is the Pope Catholic? Is John Wilkes Booth dead?

CASPAR

Very funny. Let's go...

GLORIA

Have you noticed the more ridiculous the situation the more ridiculous the solution?

AVA

... Does he seem alright to you?

GLORIA

Caspar? Caspar never seems alright to me.

AVA

He's different since he came back.

GLORIA

He went through a lot while he was gone. We all did.

AVA

I feel the same though. Did I not change?

GLORIA

Um. No, not really but that's kind of your thing. You're... y'know... unflappable.

AVA

Did everybody else change?

GLORIA

Well, yeah. I mean, Caspar had to confront why he was such a tool all the time, Leif had to confront the fact that he was acting like three different guys, I took over the diner and went up against the Teds and really tapped into some anger.

AVA

Right. Well, what about the Mucklewains, did they change? Where are they now?

EFFIE

We're up here in this tiny speaker now, Dear.

ZEBULON

Hello.

EFFIE

We changed as well, didn't we dear?

ZEBULON

I believe we did. We've learned so much about ourselves during Caspar's absence. There is so much still to be learned but I believe we reached a place of acceptance in regards to the deep mysteries of our being.

EFFIE

While also never forgetting that, while we may not know the nature of ourselves, God's got it all written down somewhere.

AVA

Am I... the only one who didn't have a big change?

GLORIA

Maybe, but that's okay.

AVA

It's hard for me to change.

GLORIA

I know.

AVA

It's hard to change when you're right all the time.

GLORIA

Sure.

AVA

I can change, I'm changeable.



GLORIA

Of course you are. So... Try it some time.

AVA

Ok. But what do I change though? I like everything about myself.

GLORIA

Maybe just keep an eye on it. Maybe something will come up?

AVA

Ok.

EFFIE

Y'all, I can see what Caspar's up to at this moment and... well if it don't work it will at least be a sight to behold.

GLORIA

This should be good.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DINER, THE SECURITY CART SLOWLY PULLS UP NEAR THE MASS OF SHOPZIES.

CASPAR

Okay, Tamara, you sure you know how to drive this thing well enough?

TAMARA

It's a golf cart, I don't need a masters degree.

CASPAR

Okay, but I don't want to die is the thing.

TAMARA

You'll be fine.

CASPAR

I'm going to go get their attention, get ready to burn rubber.

TAMARA

Jesus Christ. Okay.

CASPAR

Give me the Cabbage Patch Kid.

TAMARA

Here.

CASPAR

Well, hello there disturbing fake child. What's your name?

TAMARA

It's right there.

CASPAR

"Melvis Gray". Melvis?

TAMARA

Sure, whatever.

CASPAR

Let's go, Melvis.

CASPAR INCHES CLOSER TO THE SHOPZIES. FEEDBACK IN THE MEGAPHONE.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

(In the megaphone.)

Ahem. Attention, Shopzies. Have you met my friend Melvis!!

THE SHOPZIES ROAR AT THE SIGHT OF THE CABBAGE PATCH DOLL AND START RUNNING.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

TAMARA

Let's go!

CASPAR

Oh shit oh shit oh shit oh shit. Hit it!

THE WHEELS OF THE SECURITY CART SCREECH AND THEY TAKE OFF WITH THE SHOPZIES RIGHT BEHIND THEM.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Goddamn, they are fast!

TAMARA

All they do is run!

CASPAR

Are we going to be able to stay ahead of them?

TAMARA

I think so, this thing's never gone this fast before, what did he do to it?

CASPAR

We could ask him but neither of us would understand it. Are we going to hit a dead end or anything?

TAMARA

No, this whole place is a circle, we can lead them around like this til the wheels come off.

EFFIE

(In the PA system.)

Caspar, how's all your foolishness working out for you?

CASPAR

Good, I think. We're going to be coming around the mountain again, though. Y'all get in the diner while they're distracted.

EFFIE

On our way.

TAMARA

... So they can just show up in anything that has a speaker?

CASPAR

Pretty much, yeah.

TAMARA

... Man, what the fuck is going on?

CASPAR

Ha! What do you mean, Tamara? You're driving a golf cart through a mall being chased by zombies who crave cabbage patch kids. What? They didn't cover this at Rent-a-Cop Academy?

TAMARA

They did not... You know that feeling when you get a good job and you just kind of say "Okay. This is it. I'm gonna settle into this and just cruise into it. Life will play out before me. Birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas over and over again. I'll find somebody to do it with maybe. I'll get grey hair, I'll get bored, I'll go on vacation, I'll come back, maybe I'll get a dog. Just cruise."

CASPAR

And then?

TAMARA

And then this happens. Going to be hard to go back to just cruising after something like this. If I make it out of this.

CASPAR

You'll make it out just fine. We have a 100% success rate.

TAMARA

Success at what?

CASPAR

The key to our success is not defining what success is... Y'know, this diner that brought us here, when I first found it I thought it was just a diner. And then suddenly I was on another planet.

TAMARA

Another planet?

CASPAR

Yes.

TAMARA

So it's not a time machine?

CASPAR

No, it's that too.

TAMARA

Where did you go?

CASPAR

A planet called Garrion.

TAMARA

What was it like?

CASPAR

Well it was weird Tamara, it was another planet. Hang on, they're falling behind.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

(Into megaphone.)

Let's go, Shopzies, pick up the pace. These dolls don't grow on trees.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

But then the next day was another planet, and another and another. Eventually I landed on a planet named Thegrion. And that's when it hit me. It wasn't all that weird.

TAMARA

How?

CASPAR

Thegrion was in a planet wide day of mourning. People started coming in needing to be fed, needing coffee. They needed to just be around each other. So I just started winging it.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Making them what food I could, I made some coffee and they just sat with each other. So there I was, on another planet, a diner full of aliens, and it was somehow normal. And that's what I've found, in the VERY long time that I've been working there... it's the same shit everywhere.

TAMARA

The crazed mob behind us is not the same shit as everywhere else.

CASPAR

A crazed mob desperately clamoring for something that is, in the end, actually worthless? I bet you see quite a lot of that, don't you?

TAMARA

So can you tell me what happens in the future, or not?

CASPAR

It doesn't work that way. I can tell you what MIGHT happen, but so can anybody else. For example, what might happen is that a couple of years from now two movies are going to come out: "Terminator" and "Back to the Future". They're going to totally fuck up how people think about time and how it behaves.

TAMARA

I was hoping you were going to be able to give me something.

CASPAR

You already got a 100,000 dollar diamond, Tamara, don't get greedy.

TAMARA

Oh yeah. I forgot about that. I've got to get out of here so I can go shopping.

CASPAR

And I think that's the irony of the day, you need to escape the mall so you can go shopping.

TAMARA

That lady. The scientist. You think she's going to be able to figure something out?

CASPAR

If anyone can.

TAMARA

And then she fixes it and for the rest of my life I just...

CASPAR

No matter how weird or normal, in the end you're always going to be just winging it like I was. There's no voice from above to guide you.

ZEBULON

(From the PA system above.)  
Pardon me, Caspar. Might I offer some guidance?

CASPAR

Except for maybe that one. Sure, Zebulon. What's up?

ZEBULON

I would just like to offer something from Hebrews. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

TAMARA

The voices are quoting the bible to me now?

CASPAR

The funny thing is, Zebulon thinks he's making it more normal by doing that.

TAMARA

These days I've been going with: "I am making my way in the wilderness and streams of the wasteland."

CASPAR

Isaiah. Lovely. Are you a church going woman, Tamara?

TAMARA

Oh Sure. Cuyahoga 1st Baptist. Always brought lemon bars to the bake sale.

ZEBULON

Good. Because Caspar is a very wise person.

CASPAR

Thank you, Zebulon.

ZEBULON

He is also wrong.

CASPAR

You know, just one compliment from someone at some point would be great.

ZEBULON

Effie and I have seen the wonders of many worlds as Caspar has, but through it all we have seen a constant.

CASPAR

That is true. Hot Dog on a Stick, not going anywhere.

ZEBULON

Though the world may bear no resemblance to the one you knew, there is always something that endures. Something eternal.

CASPAR

You're not allowed to say "God" for everything, Zebulon, it's not duct tape-

ZEBULON

AND THAT ETERNAL THING IS... Watching them care for each other. That has endured through it all. Do you have someone to care for, Tamara?

TAMARA

Is this dude telling me to go get a boyfriend?

CASPAR

Yes.

EFFIE

Not as such, Tamara. He's just telling you to fill up the room you're gonna die in.

CASPAR

He's what?!

EFFIE

We're saying somewhere out there is the room you're going to die in. How full of people is that room right now? Should it be more full?

ZEBULON

I don't know if I was going to say it exactly like that.

EFFIE

Well, I think you understand what I'm saying. Let's talk on a more pressing matter, are you making these lemon bars with butter or shortening?

TAMARA

...Shortening?

CASPAR

(In the megaphone.)  
Shopzies it is looking like all of you have skipped  
leg day, pick up the pace!

DOOR CHIME.

AVA

Okay, how much time do we have?

LEIF

Plenty of time before we jump but I'm overclocking  
the battery on that golf cart, so we've only got an  
hour before Caspar gets turned into Zombie chow.

GLORIA

Is that going to be enough time?

AVA

I don't know.

GLORIA

What are we doing?

AVA

Yes... yeas, what are we doing?... Okay I just need  
you two to be quiet for a minute okay?

GLORIA

Okay. What's going to happen?

AVA

Silence is going to happen...

GLORIA

Okay...

AVA

(Deep breath.)  
... two competing systems in a closed field one  
system native non-native system is capable of  
analysis and sampling with seeming sentience non-  
native system is non-agressive static within  
contrary system how does it sustain itself how..  
does... it... sustain... itself...

GLORIA

Is she doing slam poetry?

LEIF

No idea.



AVA

Oh... Ohhhhhhhhh... shared energy system leading to degradation of the minor system which system is minor? Who is tiny who is big... Newest system would have to be.

AVA (CONT'D)

(To Leif.)

This is all temporary.

LEIF

Great.

AVA

How temporary? 61 days she said with no registered degradation she said it was getting worse which means upswing in new system could still be occurring we're still at the beginning of the beginning.

AVA (CONT'D)

(To Leif.)

It's going to take a while though.

GLORIA

We don't have a while.

AVA

Snowballs. Like a snowball running down a hill it can't go forever but can't be stopped and gets bigger as it goes until it... What stops a snowball?

LEIF

A tree?

AVA

Tree tree tree what's the equivalent of a tree in this analogy two competing landscapes of energy one out of control the other static what's a tree what's a tree what's a tree... Aha. A third system. A third system standing there like a tree.

GLORIA

Ava.

CASPAR

(Driving by outside. On the megaphone.)

Is that all you've got?! Come on Shopzies, WORK for Melvis!

AVA

Right. Okay. We have to let the Zombies in.

GLORIA  
I quit.

WE HEAR THE HUM OF THE GOLF CART AND A CHIME OVERHEAD.

EFFIE  
Attention Caspar, please bring your wagon train  
back to the diner.

CASPAR  
What?

ZEBULON  
Ava has a plan.

CASPAR  
See, what did I tell you?

ZEBULON  
You are to lead the angry mob back to the diner and  
lure them inside.

CASPAR  
Inside the diner?

TAMARA  
Why would we do that?

EFFIE  
Caspar, how in the heck am I supposed to know why  
we're doing this? I don't even understand how that  
tiny automobile works.

CASPAR  
Okay, fine. Tell everyone to get ready. We're  
coming up on it right now.

ZEBULON  
Godspeed, Caspar.

CASPAR  
Sure

EFFIE  
(Now in the radio.)  
Keep a lookout y'all, here he comes.

LEIF  
Why is this going to work?

AVA  
Some trees, when they're under attack by  
caterpillars emit a smell.

(MORE)

AVA (CONT'D)

That smell attracts wasps and the wasps kill the caterpillars. Every system has corrective agents.

LEIF

Who're the wasps in this scenario?

AVA

I think we are. We're responding to an attack.

GLORIA

Here he comes.

DOOR CHIME.

LEIF

Ditch the golf cart! Get in here!

CASPAR

Okay!

GLORIA

Hurry!

CASPAR

Running running running. We made it!

LEIF

No! Keep going!

TAMARA

What?!

LEIF

We're going out the back!

CASPAR

Why?!

GLORIA

Let's go!

AVA

Drop the doll!

CASPAR

Good luck, Melvis!

THEY EXIT THROUGH THE BACK AND THE BACK DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

LEIF

Everybody up against the door!

THE SHOPZIES BEGIN SLAMMING INTO THE BACK DOOR. THEY ALL STRAIN AGAINST THE DOOR TO STOP THEM.

CASPAR

I thought they wanted the doll!

GLORIA

I don't think they know what they're doing!

LEIF

I'm going around to the front to bar the door, we need to trap them in there.

TAMARA

Then what?!

AVA

Then we wait.

CASPAR

Wait for what?

AVA

For me to be right again.

GLORIA

Uh... the Mucklewains are going to be alright in there, right?

INSIDE THE DINER, THE SEETHING MASSES OF SHOPZIES MILL ABOUT WITHOUT DIRECTION.

ZEBULON

Well, now.

EFFIE

It is a captive congregation but certainly one in need.

ZEBULON

Yes. Good afternoon to you all. What shall the reading be today, dear?

EFFIE

Uh, well, it better be something about somebody getting resurrected.

ZEBULON

Yes. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

LATER. THE DINER IS FULL OF FORMER SHOPZIES RECOVERING FROM THEIR SIXTY-ONE DAY MADNESS.

GLORIA

(To the room.)  
Everybody take it slow, okay? If you need more coffee or food just talk to one of us. You're safe now. Hey.

TAMARA

Hi. These tacos are amazing.

GLORIA

Thanks.

TAMARA

But it's called Midnight Burger?

GLORIA

Yeah, I know. It's a good name.

TAMARA

I guess everybody's back to normal now.

GLORIA

-ish.

TAMARA

So in a little while you'll all just kind of "poof"?

GLORIA

Pretty much.

TAMARA

That will be something to see. No way the army guys outside are going to believe me.

GLORIA

You can skip the part about the diner. Just walk out there and tell them that they all snapped out of it somehow. Then, after a few months of making sure you're not a threat, they can let you have a normal life if you want.

LEIF

Hey, Tamara. We're probably going to jump soon and you don't want to be here when we do.

TAMARA

Alright, I'll start to gather everybody up. I'm not going to see you all ever again am I?

LEIF

The chances of that are pretty slim, but anything's possible. As you can see.

TAMARA

One more thing: How do I sell a big ass diamond?

LEIF

It's pretty easy, I'll walk you through it.

CASPAR

Hello!

CASPAR SITS AT AVA'S BOOTH.

AVA

Please, make yourself comfortable.

CASPAR

I got you something.

AVA

If you brought one of those fucking dolls in here.

CASPAR PUTS SEVERAL PENCILS ON THE TABLE.

CASPAR

... Pencils.

AVA

I can see that.

CASPAR

There they are.

AVA

What is all over them?

CASPAR

I believe those are My Little Ponies.

AVA

You expect me, as a grown woman, to use pencils with little ponies on them?

CASPAR

You said you needed pencils.

AVA

Were you... enjoying yourself today?

CASPAR

... Maybe, a little.

AVA

Why?

CASPAR

I discovered something.

AVA

What's that?

CASPAR

Remember when we were fighting and you said "Leif does this, Gloria does this, I do this, and then there's you." Implying that I contribute in no way to anything that goes on here?

AVA

Yes.

CASPAR

And do you remember how that was psychologically damaging for me to hear and I may be scarred for life now, do you remember that part?

AVA

You're welcome.

CASPAR

I figured it out. I do dumb shit. That's what I bring to the table.

AVA

Dumb shit.

CASPAR

Yes. Leading the Shopzies away from the diner on a golf cart. I do that. That's MY thing.

AVA

Any of us could've done that.

CASPAR

It's like modern art. Yes, you could've done that yourself, but you didn't think to?

AVA

Well congratulations on being the dumb shit guy.

CASPAR

Thank you... No sign of our new friend today.

AVA

No... but she's out there somewhere... she is out there somewhere...

SLOWLY THE SOUND OF A DINNER PARTY FADES IN. WE BEGIN TO HEAR A FAMILIAR SPEECH.

AVA (CONT'D)

Thank you so much for coming to my farewell party, though I am convinced that sixty to sixty-five percent of you are here to make sure you don't miss out on any gossip. Sorry to disappoint, but I won't be doing anything more embarrassing than actually being a professor at this shit-sack of a university.

LIGHT LAUGHTER.

AVA (CONT'D)

Today I officially transitioned into emeritus status, the flaming viking boat of academia. I did so under viscous rumors that I have lost my mind, which I shall wear as a badge of honor. I am proud to join the ranks of other nutty professors like Paracelsus, who believed in giants, Tycho Brahe who wore a copper prosthetic nose after losing his real one in a fist fight, and Pythagoras who had an inexplicable fear of beans.

LAUGHTER.

AVA (CONT'D)

You only get one chance to make a parting statement, so here goes. As we struggle to understand the universe, we may need to consider the idea that the universe is struggling to understand us. That our curiosity about the cosmos, may be reciprocated. Do our telescopes pointed skyward pose a question, and are the ebbs and flows of the starways an attempt at an answer. Are the scientist and their subject like two lovers in the dark; stumbling towards each other, hoping to find some skin... well, that got a little sexy didn't it?

LAUGHTER. SUDDENLY TIME SPEEDS UP AND WE SPEED THROUGH THE REST OF THE EVENING, STOPPING AT THE END OF THE NIGHT.

AVA (CONT'D)

Good night everyone! Drive safe, there are dangerous deer out there! They LOVE going through your windshield. Can't get enough of it.

FRONT DOOR CLOSSES. AVA SITS AND POURS A DRINK.

AVA (CONT'D)

And that, as they say, is that... Oh....

CLEMENTINE

Hi.



AVA  
Hark. A straggler.

CLEMENTINE  
I liked your speech.

AVA  
Thanks. Did I make a speech?

CLEMENTINE  
Yes, it was at the beginning of the night.

AVA  
Ah. Feels a million miles away. Who are you?

CLEMENTINE  
...Clementine.

**THE END.**