

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Interlude: The Westernville Town Hall Meeting.

By Joe Fisher

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SFX: A BUSY TOWN HALL, LOTS OF MURMURING.

BART-43

Y'all y'all let's come to order, we got all sorts a sortin' to do, so let's quit our yappin'. Thank y'all. Okay. Now I think I'm supposed to bang this gavel so here I go banging it. Here we go.

SFX: THE BANGING OF A GAVEL.

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Alright Now let's start with the simple stuff. This is the first official town meeting for the town of Westernville, which we have all just recently learned is NOT just outside of Tulsa but in fact on the planet Menlor which is just outside of a constellation called Cygnus that is in fact about 6 thousand light years FROM Tulsa. Now, I don't know what a light year is but I think we can all agree that somethin' called a light year SOUNDS real durn far.

Also what we have learned is that we are all robots. Which I think we're all agreed, is a surprise.

Now, I never liked surprises much, but to awaken one day with the knowledge that I was not flesh and blood but in fact a simulacrum of a man, really put some steam inside this hat a mine, y'all, it was a real humdinger.

Now, what we have decided is that we gotta start somewheres. So it was Anna's suggestion that we do what we've always done and have ourselves a good old fashioned town meetin'... uh, yes, Anna did you have a comment?

ANNA-77

Yes, Bart, thank you. I don't remember recommending a town hall to you but I do think it's a real good idea.

BART-43

I apologize for the confusion there, and this is a good reason why we need to have this here town meetin'. It was not yourself, Anna, that suggested it but in fact the Anna that is about three Annas to your left. That's right, hey there Anna, I appreciate the suggestion.

Therein lies the problem y'all. We all got the same name.

(MORE)

BART-43 (CONT'D)

All the fellers in town got the name Bart and all the ladies got the name Of Anna, and I feel like that just ain't gonna cut it in the long term, y'all. How the heck am I gonna know who the heck I'm talkin' about if we all got the same name? So can we all agree that the first order a business here today is for us to figure out what the heck we're gonna call each other? Yeah? We're agreed? Okay, resolved and I'm gonna bang this gavel again.

SFX: GAVEL BANG.

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Now, why don't y'all step up to the podium there and just speak your mind about whatever issue that you're workin on. Yeah, okay, Bart, what's on your mind?

IRISH BART

Good day to you Bart. I'd just like to say that it's a bit of good news for myself when I found that we were all named Bart. You see there could not be a less Irish name that of Bart and I was always confused about how I ended up with it. So now I find myself presented with choosing for myself a real Irish name. But there's quite a few of em out there, Bart, we're not all named Seamus.

BART-43

That's true, Bart, you got all kinds a names to choose from ya got yer Brendan, yer Liam, Shane, Shane's a real good one, Fionn-

IRISH BART

The choices are plentiful to be sure. The problem I seem to be havin' is that I don't seem to be Irish at all now do I? Way I see it, Irelands just about as far away as anything else. About six thousand a them light years you been talkin' about.

BART-43

That's one heck of a pickle you got there Bart, seein' as how your talkin' like an Irish person and turns out your just as Irish as anyone else in the town hall right now. At the same time we're all starting at square one and you gotta start somewheres, so I figure that you may as well start with the Irish names since you're gonna have to pick some kind a startin' place somewheres anyhow.

IRISH BART

That's awfully fine advice, Bart I appreciate it.

BART-43

Sure thing, Bart. Who's next there? Oh hey, Sister Anna.

SISTER ANNA

Hello, Bart. Good day to you all. I have to say I have deep concerns regarding this business with our names.

BART-43

Well that's what these town meetings are for so let's hear it.

SISTER ANNA

Our names are chosen when we take our vows as sisters of the church, as you all know. I feel it would be sacrilege to change the name I have chosen for my devotion to our creator.

BART-43

I'd say there, Sister Anna, that the problem there is that you and them blessed sister all chose that same name when you devoted yourself the church and all.

SISTER ANNA

But it is still our holy name, Bart.

BART-43

Sure thing. Is there any way y'all can maybe have a do over?

SISTER ANNA

I don't know what you mean by a do-over.

BART-43

Well, sometimes in the morning when I make some coffee it just don't turn out right so I just have myself another go at it. I ain't familiar with the ins and outs of such holy bid'ness but maybe it'd be alright with the almighty if ya'll just chucked it and came around on it fresh.

SISTER ANNA

Well... Such a thing has never been done before.

BART-43

Don't I know it, Sister, there's a whole heck a lot a that goin' around, if you'll pardon my language. I don't imagine there's nobody in town who's feelin' accustomed to the particulars a their situation right about now.

SISTER ANNA

I thought of writing the diocese of this matter but well...

BART-43

Yeah, I hear ya, Sister, there ain't no pony express that's gonna make it six thousand a them lightyears they been talkin' about. Have you looked into the good book at all? Maybe there's somethin', even though a bit on the thin side, that can help us through this?

SISTER ANNA

Well there is Corithians: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

BART-43

Well, now that's real purty. I do like that. Sister, maybe y'all ought to pray on it a bit, maybe save these particular biscuits for morning, if y'all are catchin' my meaning.

SISTER ANNA

Very well. We shall pray on it.

BART-43

And until them prayers get answered what we're all going to do is just refer to y'all as the Sister Annas, and then as y'all get more guidance from upstairs we can adjust our salutations. Okay, who's next? Hey there Bart.

EDUCATED BART

Good morning to you Bart. I appreciate you calling upon me.

BART-43

Sure thang.

EDUCATED BART

It's a small issue, but I feel an important one. You just mentioned that we would be referring to our local ladies of the church and Sister Annas. I wanted to interject that the correct term would in fact be "SistTERS Anna" as a collective pronoun.

BART-43

Good lookin' out Bart, thank you for that. Y'all hear that? It ain't Sister Annas, it's Sisters Anna, we all good with that?...Okay? I'm bangin' the gavel again.

SFX: GAVEL BANG.

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Up next. Okay Bart, what have you got for us?

DARK BART

I ain't changin' my name to nothin' other than Bart-

BART-43

Bart-

DARK BART

And if any a' y'all got problems with that I encourage you to pick one of these six bullets-

BART-43

Bart, damn it, can you stop threatenin' to shoot people who disagree with ya?

DARK BART

Bart's my name and I ain't changin' it.

BART-43

Hell, Bart, what if there's someone else here whose takin' a fancy to the name Bart?

DARK BART

Then that's a dead man walkin'.

BART-43

Bart, yur puttin' a bit of pall on this here town meetin' with yer threats.

ANNA-77

Excuse me? Excuse me, Bart, may I speak?

BART-43

Sure thing Anna, you've got somethin' for us?

ANNA-77

Yes. Well I was thinkin' before the town hall that such a problem may rear it's ugly head and I thought I'd find a solution before the head went to rearin' itself.

BART-43

I appreciate you gettin' up before the chickens on that one Anna, what have you got for us?

ANNA-77

Well, I thought when we got to addressin' the problem of our names that there may be one or two of us that may like to stick with what we've got. So I headed down to our library and I got to lookin' into a few things.

BART-43

What'd you dig up?

ANNA-77

Well, it seems that the name Bart is actually short for something.

BART-43

Is that right?

ANNA-77

Yes. For several things in fact. Bart can be short for Bartholomew, also Barton, and also Bartolomeo.

BART-43

Ain't that a thing. Alright. Bart, do you take a shine to any a them?

DARK BART

... I'd like to be Bartolomeo.

BART-43

Sure thing. We can get behind that, can't we y'all? Resolved then, Bart here, and by Bart I mean this particular Bart who's always threatenin' to shoot y'all, this here Bart is now named Bartolomeo. I'm bangin' the gavel.

SFX: GAVEL BANG.

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Who's up next? Howdy Anna, what's on your mind?

SALOON ANNA

Well, I'm mighty steamed as I'm sure you can reckon, Bart.

BART-43

We all got a long list of things we're steamed about, Anna, what's the particulars of your steam?

SALOON ANNA

I been runnin' that there saloon for as long as I can remember. Each of ya' has been in at one time or another. But guess what Bart? I can't serve no drinks no more because none of y'all, myself included, partake in any sort of liquid nor do you eat any a that food I put out for ya', seein' as how these bodies a' ours don't require no food nor drink. And I'm wonderin' what the heck I'm supposed to do with myself in light a my business turnin' into just a big bunch nonsense.

BART-43

That's well heard, Anna, y'all if we can stick a nail in this issue of what the heck everyone's name is, another pressing issue is what the heck we're gonna do with ourselves seein' as how we been doin a heck of a lot of play-actin' for who knows how long. None of us need neither food nor drink, all we got to do is set ourselves down in one of them charging stations for a little bit each day. It's confusin' as all get out, and I ain't clear on what we're gonna do about it all.

ANNA-77

Excuse me, Bart. May I speak to that?

BART-43

Sure can, Anna. You got somethin' for us?

ANNA-77

Well... I think we can all agree that these are confusin' times for all of us. One day our lives are one thing and then the other they're... whatever this new thing is. We all spent a heck of a long time doin' things that just didn't need doin. It's real rough, to look back on your life and see that you spent a whole mess a time just... well, wastin' time. I'm gonna admit somethin to y'all now. Before we were all awakened to our current situation, all I ever talked about were my two children. Bart and Anna. How they were such a handful and how we were all waitn' for their father to come on back from Tulsa. And then one day I awoke to find that I didn't really have them little ones, and I didn't have no husband that was going to be comin' back from Tulsa anytime now. You see, that was just somethin' I was supposed to talk about, there weren't actually no husband and there weren't no children. And what I'm going to admit to y'all now is that I was relieved. It was a relief to know that there wasn't yet another thing that was chosen for me. I don't know that any of us can bear children or that any of us will need to do things like get married and such. But if it is possible, it should be somethin' we choose to do. Not somethin' that's handed to us. So, while this is all confusin' and we've all had the wind taken out of us real bad, I'd like to offer that we should perhaps have a speck of gratitude amongst the confusion. From here on out we make our own choices. That may mean lettin' go of what we know and what we understand, but I say we let go of what was, with the knowledge that a brand new thing is out there somewheres, waitin' for us.

BART-43

That's a heck of a thing, Anna. I appreciate you sayin so. Y'all I think if I could get us all down to brass tacks it'd be to say: "What now?" "Where to?" I suppose the pickle you get yourself into when no one's tellin' you what to do is that you gotta figure out for yourself what to do. Yes, Bart, apologies... Bartolomeo?

DARK BART

I'm gonna get a posse together.

BART-43

No, no, Bartolomeo we do not need a posse, they're ain't no one to chase down.

DARK BART

I'm sayin I'm gonna get a posse together to head on out, see what's out there outside the city, see if there's anything might be useful.

BART-43

Alright, alright, I hear ya'. That ain't half bad. If any of y'all want to join Bartolomeo's posse y'all talk to him after the meetin'. What else we got?

ANNA-77

Well, I was lookin' up about the names. I got a whole list of common names and I could put together a raffle of sorts where people can reach in and grab themselves a new name if'n they don't want to choose one for themselves.

BART-43

Alright well now we're cookin' with a little bacon aren't we? Anna's gonna handle the namin' situation. And for clarity's sake that's the Anna that is four rows down and three Annas in, talk to that Anna. What else we got?

SISTER ANNA

The Sisters Anna and myself shall pray upon our situation, and hope to gain guidance from the almighty.

BART-43

Okay, then. We got some exploration, some organization and a little bit of prayer. I reckon those three things combined may offer us a way forward. Hell, in the end maybe that's all anybody's got.

I'm gonna bang this gavel and bring us to a close.

(MORE)

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Then I'm gonna be here tomorrow and the next day,
and we'll just keep on havin' these meetings till
y'all get sick of me, then we'll probably just keep
havin' em after that. Okay, y'all?

ANNA-77

Thank you, Bart.

BART-43

Thank y'all.

SFX: GAVEL BANG.

BART-43 (CONT'D)

Adjourned.

END.