

# *Life with Althaar*

## **Episode 2: Asymmetry in Band Structure Theory**

### **Draft 3.0, 5/18/19 - PJC (Draft 3, BAJ)**

*Fade up on beeping and white noise of air vents on the Fairgrounds Bridge. Ding of a call coming in on the ship-to-station comms.*

#### **TOURIST SHIP**

RVD Krankor to Human Exchange Concourse, do you read?

*Beat.*

#### **COMMANDER**

Is somebody gonna get that? Where is the Comms Bot? He was here a second ago. Did you see him? Ensign Rose...can you get that?

#### **ROSE**

Uh, negative, Commander. Last time we did the CB's job he threatened a work stoppage.

#### **COMMANDER**

Rose, they always threaten a work stoppage. The comms still need to get answered when the robots are on one of their mandatory "coffee" breaks doing Jones-knows-what.

#### **ROSE**

I know, but since the last one transferred out, the new one is really mean and well...scary.

*Clamor of general agreement.*

#### **TOURIST SHIP**

RVD Krankor to Human Exchange Concourse... We are in final docking mode. Awaiting instructions, over.

#### **ROSE**

The last one would just complain, you know, threaten sit-ins, strikes, the usual... this one waits for us with his friends in the hydro parks.

#### **COMMANDER**

Wait, what? They're attacking people now?

#### **ROSE**

I mean, not exactly, but...

**COMMANDER**

Rose, the Robot Union may be a pain in my ass, but as far as I know they haven't negotiated a Right-to-Inflict-Grievous-Bodily-Harm Clause.

**ROSE**

Ok, right, no, but they don't have to! They'll kind of... surround you, and...

**COMMANDER**

...And?

**ROSE**

...and...say really hurtful things, ok? They're just... (*getting a little weepy*) super mean, sir!

**COMMANDER**

Are you flotting kidding me.

**ROSE**

And the new Comms Bot is the worst! It's bad enough to have all your personality flaws dissected by a robot, but it's even worse when he looks just like Stalin! It's... look, somehow they just know exactly how to destroy your self-esteem, ok, and honestly, I'd rather take the beating.

**TOURIST SHIP**

RVD Krankor to Human Exchange Concourse... Is anybody there?

**COMMANDER**

Useless... (*comms bloop on*) Affirmative, reading you Krankor. This is Commander Torianna at HEC Command. We have you cleared for docking at Berth Sowilo 4, and... ah, I see your passengers are listed as a tour group bound for the Hotel Splendide, so one of their Hospitality Specialists will be escorting you through Priority Customs. Bridge out. (*comms bloop off*) Rose... for Nell's sake, grow a pair... Go find the Comms Bot and tell him to get his refurbished Soviet ass down here. He can make all the cutting remarks he wants once he's back at his station.

**ROSE**

(*still a bit sniffly*)

Aye Aye, Commander.

*Door whoosh as Rose leaves the bridge.*

**TOURIST SHIP**

RVD Krankor to Human Exchange Concourse.

*Two Bridge Security Officers start playing "rock, mirror, laser" in the bg. (rock smashes mirror, mirror deflects laser, laser cuts rock)*

**COMMANDER**

Oh, what now?! (*comms bloop on*) Go ahead, Krankor.

**TOURIST SHIP**

We just wanted to confirm that we can go to the all-inclusive buffet before the casino tonight... and we wanted to confirm the 500 complimentary introductory credits at the casino.

**COMMANDER**

The Hotel Splendide Reception staff would be the folks to speak to on that issue, RVD Krankor. I am the Commander of this Space Station.

**TOURIST SHIP**

We also have two vegans... will there be vegan options at the buffet?

**COMMANDER**

Um, you're breaking up Krankor...proceed to Berth Sowilo 4... *(comms bloop off)* Seriously, do I have to do everything myself?

**SECURITY OFFICER 1 & 2**

Rock, mirror, laser, shoot!

**COMMANDER**

And what are you two idiots doing?!

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Deciding which one of us gets to go to the Egg for a sneak snack inspection.

**COMMANDER**

Weren't you over there this morning?

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

We hit it at least twice a day. That place is like a grocery store for contraband.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Seriously, there's peanut butter everywhere. It's a guaranteed collar.

**COMMANDER**

I see. Carry on.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1 & 2**

Rock, mirror, laser shoot!

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Laser cuts rock! Nice! Later, Loser!

*Whoosh of doors as Security Officer 2 exits the bridge.*

**COMMANDER**

*(exasperated)*

Children.

*Frallen Br'ar shimmers into existence.*

**FRALL**

Good evening Commander.

**COMMANDER**

Ah! Frall... PLEASE do not sneak up on me like that. Why can't you just use the door?

**FRALL**

That would be much less efficient than simply materializing on the Bridge, sir.

**COMMANDER**

But also much less likely to give me a heart attack!

**FRALL**

Apologies, Commander. Would you believe me if I said that manifesting in the vestibule rather than the Bridge proper could eventually have catastrophic repercussions that would threaten the safety and sanity of all aboard the Fairgrounds?

**COMMANDER**

No, because that sounds like total horseshit.

**FRALL**

And yet you have no way of disproving it.

**COMMANDER**

...This kind of thing is how you ended up stationed all the way out here in the first place, you know that, right?

**FRALL**

I am aware, sir.

**COMMANDER**

Of course you are. So, Frall... Is this Xybidont peanut butter issue still as much of a problem as those useless Security goons would have me believe?

*"Hey!" from the remaining Security goon in the background.*

**FRALL**

While Security has a considerable financial incentive to exaggerate the severity of the issue, I'm afraid we have indeed been unsuccessful in our attempts to curb the movement of peanut butter both to and through the Fairgrounds.

**COMMANDER**

Dammit, Frall. You know all the answers... there is a solution to this, yes?

**FRALL**

Oh, certainly.

**COMMANDER**

Great!

**FRALL**

After all, in an infinite Universe, the existence of a solution to any given problem can be assumed to already exist. Of course, our having access to that solution cannot be so assumed.

**COMMANDER**

Ah. Technically true, and yet completely useless. You're really on form today, Frall.

**FRALL**

Thank you, sir. Is there anything else I can help you with?

**COMMANDER**

Ok. Yes, actually, one thing. Am I crazy in thinking that as Commander of the Fairgrounds I shouldn't have to answer the damn phones?

**FRALL**

Without a doubt.

**COMMANDER**

Thank you. Wait, without a doubt I'm crazy or...?

**FRALL**

Mm, sorry to interrupt, Commander... there is a development with Althaar, the young Iltorian.

**COMMANDER**

Althaar, ugh... I accidentally caught sight of his reflection in a windowpane a few weeks ago... Couldn't keep food down for two days. (*audible shudder*) So, what's this development?

**FRALL**

As I'm sure you recall, Althaar applied to the League of Humans to become the first Iltorian ambassador to Earth, and the League in its infinite wisdom instead named him Cultural Attaché to the Fairgrounds. Well, his latest attempt at cohabitating with a Human has seen some degree of success, as he's managed to retain his new roommate for almost two weeks. It's the first time since his arrival that his Iltorian/Human diplomatic project has come close to accomplishing anything, and he's keen to give you a progress report, in your capacity as the de facto ranking League diplomat on station.

**COMMANDER**

Oh, for--of all the crap I have to put up with on this job, these “diplomatic formalities” have to be the crappiest. Or they would be, if I could get my crew to *(voice raising for the benefit of the bridge crew)* actually ANSWER THE DOCKING COMMS. *(back to normal)* All right, schedule an appointment for him to make his “progress report,” just make sure it happens when I’m not on the bridge.

**FRALL**

I’m afraid you misunderstand, Commander. He’ll be here in eleven seconds.

**COMMANDER**

Dammit Frall! LISTEN UP! ALL HUMANS ON THE BRIDGE! KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE FLOOR UNTIL I GIVE YOU THE ALL CLEAR! THIS IS NOT A DRILL! DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES LOOK AT THE ILTORIAN who will be here in how long?

**FRALL**

Two seconds.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Oh my sweet Jesus!!

**FRALL**

Annnnd he’s here.

*Door whoosh.*

**ALTHAAR**

Greetings to Commander Torianna and all skilled and hard-working crew members of the Fairgrounds! Commander! It is a great pleasure to Althaar to inform of most happy news!

**COMMANDER**

*(terrified and grossed out)* Oh, is that so? That’s... great, um. What... is it?

**FRALL**

This is fantastic.

*FRALL disappears.*

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar has commenced the living arrangement with a Human room-mate! John B, Probationary Mechanic’s Under-Assistant at Wanting and Sustainment Systems, Incorporated. This is an achievement of great pride to Althaar! And surely the growth of friendship between our peoples will be of great excitement to you as well! Althaar is most gratified to share in this! So Althaar wishes to be most meticulous in keeping the League of Humans informed of all progressings!

**COMMANDER**

Oh, that's very... conscientious of you, Althaar, thanks. I'll... be sure include that in my next report to Earth Central. Anyway, I'm... sure you'll be wanting to get back to your... cultural exchange now, so...

*Door whoosh.*

**ROSE**

Commander, I told the CB to come back to the Bridge but he threw his pipe at me, and then he started in on my haircut, and I--

*Increasingly desperate attempts of bridge crew to warn her before she catches sight of ALTHAAR during the above.*

**COMMANDER**

Rose! Look at the floor!!!

**ROSE**

Wha-- No! No! No!...dear lord...It's awful...(vomits)...make it stop... (vomits)

**ALTHAAR**

Oh! Althaar has caused disruption of the Human work-place! Many apologies from Althaar! Please fear not, Humans! Althaar will depart!

**COMMANDER**

*(terrified relief)*

I think that would be wise, Althaar.

**ALTHAAR**

*(departing)*

Althaar wishes all bridge crew a joyous work cycle!

*Door whoosh as he exits. Theme music and shift out of bridge bg.*

**ANNOUNCER**

Gemini Collisionworks presents...

*Life with Althaar!*

Episode 2: "Asymmetry in Band Structure Theory"

*The melody of "Danube Planum" plays in the Electric Egg Egg (this song sounds almost exactly like but is legally different from "Blue Bayou"). **Low conversation, glass clinking, an occasional laugh or two, the hubbub of a bar.***

**DEE**

*(as the band vamps)*

We want to thank all of you at the Fairgrounds who have made our two months here such a blast. Once again, please give it up for Charles Stringus on synths, Diego Volto on drums, Ziggy Katz on fleezborp, and Tiny Bill Tremaine on bari sax.

Oh I'll return some year  
Never fear  
Danube Planuuuuuum...

*Applause and back to club noise.*

**DRUNK ALIEN**

"Beyond Uranus!"

**ZIGGY**

*(not on mic, as Dee continues)*

Aw, stow that shness.

**DEE**

Thanks again to everyone here at the Electric Egg. We'll see you again soon, Fairgrounds.

**CHARLES**

Hey Delilah! Come have a drink with us!

**DIEGO**

Yeah. Join us for one last one before we split this ghost town!

**DEE**

Eh, I don't know, I just want to ditch this rust-bucket as soon as I can.

**ZIGGY AND TINY BILL**

C'mon Dee... One drink.

**DEE**

OK... Just one.

**SOPON**

What'll it be?

**DEE**

Give me a dry Rob Roy straight up. So what's the plan, boys?

**CHARLES**

Well, I'm headed out to Bootes II with M2 and Tiny Bill. We got four weekends at a Selenium spa over there.

**DEE**

Nice.

**ZIGGY**

I have a bit of time and then the Fleezborpalooza jumps off in a month.

**CHARLES**

This is what your fifth year, Zig?

**ZIGGY**

Seventh. It's a sweet gig.

**SOPON**

A Rob Roy for the lady.

**TINY BILL**

What about you, Delilah?

**DEE**

Y'know, it's been a while since I've been back in Human space... I was thinking I might head to Earth, go check out the ancestral homeland, you know, see the sights--the Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal, the Antarctic Mystery Hole. I know it's kind of touristy, but what the frid, every Human should see Earth once, right? All I know is I am on the 26:00 GalaxBudgie departing for the Local Group.

**CHIP**

Those are on me, Sopon, and I'll take a beer.

**THE BAND**

CHIP!!! Right on, Chip. Thanks, man! You're alright.

**CHIP**

Hey guys, great job, a pleasure... Here's to the 7-System Swingers!

**THE BAND**

Cheers!!! Right on Chip. Thanks, man! You're alright, *(etc.)*

**DEE**

You got our money, Chip? Cuz some of us have to split right away.

**CHIP**

*(giving out envelopes)*

Charlie, Diego, Ziggy, Tiny Bill, thanks so much. Come back anytime.

**DEE**

Ahem, where's mine, Chip?

**CHIP**

Yeah... Delilah, you and I need to talk. Let's sit at my table for a second. *(leads her away)*

**DIEGO**

Uh oh...

**CHARLES**

What's going on?

**ZIGGY**

Dunno. But it don't sound good, cuz.

**TINY BILL**

Hey Sopon. What's going on with Dee?

**SOPON**

No idea.

**ZIGGY**

C'mon, my dude! Sopon... Give it to me straight. Sopester... Sopenstein's monster... Master Sopon, We have heard the...

**SOPON**

All right! It's something about her contract.

**DEE**

What?! Eight years?! What?! You cannot be serious!

**CHIP**

My hands are tied, Delilah..

**DEE**

Charlie! Where did you sign your contract?

**CHARLES**

We signed the stock contract the Electric Egg sent us. Why? Didn't your agent use the same one?

**DEE**

My regular agent doesn't book in Human space! She referred me to this other zood on Callisto. Never met him, but he seemed legit. And he insisted we use his standard contract...

**DIEGO**

Aw, Dee...

**DEE**

I looked it over, it seemed fine!

**BAND**

No!! No Way! Are you serious? *etc.*

**DEE**

Why? What's the difference?

**DIEGO**

You always gotta check your localization, buddy.

**DEE**

What does that mean?

**TINY BILL**

Ok, look at the Egg's contract. (*bloop as he pulls it up on a device*) Right, see, they got the localization clause here: "Years, months, and weeks shall be defined as Earth standard for the purposes of..." blah blah blah, you get it?

**DEE**

No.

**CHARLES**

Without that little clause, you're working on local time.

**DEE**

What's the difference?

**TINY BILL**

Depends on the locals. Like, Mercury's tooling around the sun a hundred thousand miles an hour--sign up for a year there, you're done and dusted in 88 days.

**DIEGO**

But go out to Neptune, same contract has you on the hook for 165 Earth years.

**TINY BILL**

Right. So two Earth standard months is, y'know, two months, but two months on the Fairgrounds could be...

**DEE**

Eight years, 4 months, and 26 days.

**TINY BILL**

Yup.

*Celebratory burst comes from some patrons.*

**DEE**

I'm not putting up with this.

**DIEGO**

Yeah.

**DEE**

What do you mean, "Yeah?" Can you stay and help me sort this out?

**DIEGO**

Well... I'd like to, but we've got this big gig that starts in a week...and our contract here is over... so... yeah.

**DEE**

So... you're not going to do shness for me.

**DIEGO**

I would suggest you fire your agent.

**DEE**

So that's it? Sayonara, Dee?

**CHARLES**

You know we love you Delilah, but...

**TINY BILL**

We gots ta take care of our own, you understand.

**DEE**

Yeah, I get it. Fine, go. But if you run across any labor attorneys who do pro bono, send them my way, yeah?

**DIEGO**

Will do!

**DEE**

So Chip, what do you propose, Dee Mallory's a capella hit parade?

**CHIP**

There are plenty of musicians around that could replace those guys. You just have to go out and find them.

**DEE**

By when?

**CHIP**

Tomorrow night.

**DEE**

So... no pressure, right, Chip?

**CHIP**

Not too much.

*Sound transition into WSS office: We hear TYPHOID MARY-BOT over the intercom.*

**TYPHOID MARY-BOT**

*(over speaker)*

Attention all hands, this is your safety director, Mary Mallon-bot. There will be a mandatory escape pod drill at 09:45 tomorrow for sapients residing on all floors in sectors Mem through Samech. Participation is required from all organics and robots, regardless of rank, position, or ability to remain functional in the vacuum of space. Please line up at your designated emergency ports by species and how many family members you'd be leaving behind.

**H.F.**

So you settling in all right?

**JOHN**

I guess... I still don't quite understand the labor dynamics of the Fairgrounds, or how a simple break in a beverage line can create a catastrophic singularity, or how I wound up with an incredibly friendly roommate who can reduce me to a puking, screaming ball of jelly.

**H.F.**

For the Fairgrounds, that's settled in. Have you read your WSS employee manual?

**JOHN**

I, uh, skimmed it. Don't worry, I know how to fix a soda machine.

**H.F.**

So you got it all covered?

**JOHN**

Totally covered.

**H.F.**

No questions?

**JOHN**

No sir.

**H.F.**

So I could leave you alone here?

**JOHN**

If you wanted to.

**H.F.**

You could run the office?

**JOHN**

Yep.

**H.F.**

OK, it's yours. I'm not here.

**JOHN**

Fine... I got it.

**H.F.**

Fine.

**JOHN**

Fine.

*Pager rings the WSS Jingle.*

**H.F.**

Phone!

*Ring.*

**JOHN**

You gonna get that?

**H.F.**

I'm not here! Don't worry, you've got it totally covered.

*Ring. Bloop.*

**JOHN**

Uh, hi. Wanting and Sustainment Systems... how may we, uh... how may we...

**H.F.**

"Reverse..."

**JOHN**

Reverse... uh...

**H.F.**

“Reverse Entropy...”

**JOHN**

Reverse Entropy... uh...

**H.F.**

REVERSE ENTROPY IN YOUR IMMEDIATE VICINITY!!!!!! I knew you didn't read the manual! Give me the phone. Wanting and Sustainment Systems, how may we reverse entropy in your immediate vicinity? Oh...Oh...OOOHHHHH....Ok. On it.

**JOHN**

What is it?

**H.F.**

Well it sounds like a basic rewiring, but it's in... not the safest location.

**JOHN**

Where's that?

**H.F.**

Engineering sub-module in Samech 56. Also known as Vent Biter Alley.

**JOHN**

Vent Biter Alley! Will Sanitation be there in case there's an... an... an attack?

**H.F.**

You better pray to whatever gods you keep handy that they are. I don't know what we'd do without those fearless HVAC warriors... OK, get going, kid. And keep your eyes open. Don't worry, you got it totally covered.

**JOHN**

Yeah... thanks.

*Transition to the Transit Hub.*

### **TRANSIT HUB ANNOUNCEMENT**

Welcome to the Intake and Arrivals Terminal. Please note that the freshwater and saline Customs tanks are provided for the comfort of our guests from water-breathing species. Due to limited tank capacity, non-breathing travellers and those capable of gaseous respiration are restricted to the standard Customs kiosks only. We don't care that it's been a long flight and your feet need a soak. The Human Exchange Concourse thanks you for your co-operation.

*Kaiser Wilhem-bot is conducting an entry interview.*

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Please-enjoy-your-stay-at-the-Human-Exchange-Concourse-and-take-pride-in-the-many-wonders-Humanity-has-to-offer-NEXT! Papers?

**XTOPPS**

There you go, my good bot.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Name?

**XTOPPS**

Q'Bonzo Abacab.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Port of Origin?

**XTOPPS**

Lika 3.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Species?

**XTOPPS**

Count the arms, mechano-man.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

*(not amused, as he types it in slower than he needs to)*

Xyb-i-dont...

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Purpose of visit?

**XTOPPS**

Work... I hope.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

In what capacity, sir?

**XTOPPS**

As much as I can get, mang. You'd be amazed at my capacity. I got room for it all...

**CUSTOMS BOT**

...In what capacity will you be employed?

**XTOPPS**

Oh, musician. Yeah.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

I see... Am I to surmise that you are here for this month's open auditions at the Electric Egg?

**XTOPPS**

You got it, chief.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Local address?

**XTOPPS**

I'm staying with a colleague... uh... I got it here... Dalet 22, Suite X.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Mm-hm. And are you aware, Herr Abacab, of the restrictions on class F substances for Xybidonts travelling or residing in Human space?

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, mang, I'm hip.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Very well. Anything to declare?

**XTOPPS**

Nope.

*Pause followed by a rapid fire interchange.*

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Raw peanuts?

**XTOPPS**

No.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Roasted peanuts?

**XTOPPS**

No.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Peanut Butter?

**XTOPPS**

No.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Goober peas?

**XTOPPS**

No.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Reeses products?

**XTOPPS**

No.

**CUSTOMS BOT**

SNICKERS!!!

**XTOPPS**

NO!!!

*Stamp noise.*

**CUSTOMS BOT**

Welcome to the Fairgrounds. Please-enjoy-your-stay-at-the-Human-Exchange-Concourse-and-share-in-the-many-wonders-humanity-has-to-offer-NEXT!

**XTOPPS**

Bleth!

*Slight shift as **the CUSTOMS-BOT** starts questioning their next victim and Xtopps moves through a gate, out of the customs area into the busier central area of the travel hub. Background hubbub of travellers & whatnot.*

**GATE WELCOME VOICE**

Welcome to the Human Exchange Concourse! Whether you're taking the first step on your journey, or making the final stop of your travels, we're here for you! The HEC respectfully requests that all long-term residents refrain from open weeping in the Central Promenade.

**SHLOOMA**

Xtopps!!

*(louder)*

XTOPPS!!!

**XTOPPS**

Hey! There he is! *(sound of two dudes with 24 arms between them doing the bro-hug back-pat thing)*  
Haven't seen you since... frid, was it the "Literal Monsters of Rock" tour? That was a triple-tiler. How they hanging, Shlooma?

**SHLOOMA**

Most of them to the left. So... how's my old buddy?

**XTOPPS**

You know, getting by, keepin' s pry...

**SHLOOMA**

Any problems in Customs?

**XTOPPS**

Why would there be? I'm clean as a yttrium whistle, my zood...

**SHLOOMA**

Only way to get in.

**XTOPPS**

So, what's first?

**SHLOOMA**

I figure we hit the crib, drop off your things, get cleaned up, and then I'll take you to the spot.

**XTOPPS**

You sure I can get a job there?

**SHLOOMA**

C'mon Xtopps, you're a genius. You can get a standing gig here with no problem. You write your own songs, play keyboards, guitar, percussion...

**XTOPPS**

And fleezborp! And don't forget the vox... I got some new numbers to lay on you, real patie stuff.

**SHLOOMA**

I can't wait, mang.

**XTOPPS**

Yeah... Fairgrounds... All right! So, now we in, Shlooma... where's Mr. Eliot at?

**SHLOOMA**

I got some at the crib, but we gotta call my man when we get home. Seriously Xtopps, you gotta be careful with that stuff round these parts. Humans may be down to bone anything remotely sentient, but they turn into total prudes when it comes to chemical recreation. The penalties for possession at the Fairgrounds are severe, man.

**XTOPPS**

I got you, baby, settle your gizz... You know I walk between the raindrops my man, I'm like the wind.

**SHLOOMA**

Ok, palomino, you've been warned.

*Fade out on travel hub noise, fade up on shitty vamping as Dee and her new crew finish their set.*

**DEE**

Ok Electric Egg, that's it for us tonight. Thanks for being a part of our first show ever in the Teegarden's system, or anywhere else for that matter. Please give it up for the... band, for lack of a better word... Tommy Viejo on guitar (*high pitched rock riff a little flat*), Booboo DeBates on bass (*dopey bass riff*), Xanthon Szetza on fleezborp (*sad fleezborp noodle*), and Lean Trep on drums.

*Sloppy drum fill to end the song. A smattering of applause.*

**CHIP**

Fantastic guys, what a... show... here's a few drink tickets. Hey Dee! You got a second?

**DEE**

What is it now, Chip?

**CHIP**

C'mon Dee. Are you serious with this garbage? Those are the best pikes you could come up with?

**DEE**

Are *you* serious, Chip? You completely blindsided me with an eight year prison term at the Fairgrounds and then give me one day to find a new band, *and* I somehow miraculously get that done and now you're gonna criticize their chops?!

**CHIP**

Absolutely. They suck.

**DEE**

Chip, you gave me twenty hours to get these nulls together! I had to go to that hydro park on Mem 46 to dredge up Booboo. Seriously, what is wrong with you?

**CHIP**

I got a business to run, Dee. Look at this place! It was full an hour ago, before your ensemble of disaster artists started stinking up the joint. You better find yourself a real band... and quick.

**DEE**

Forget it, Chip, I'm done. If you think these rusty gates are bad, you can imagine what the ones who didn't make the cut sound like. So, your move there, Bill Graham.

**CHIP**

Listen, if you don't have a band then it's gonna have to be just you up there. Remember, you're under contract.

**DEE**

So what, I'm back to a solo act? You want me to pull out an old Martin and attack the Baez songbook? Yeah, didn't think so. I could maybe put together like a six song acoustic Bastard Mojave set but that's gonna get old real quick.

**CHIP**

All right Dee, relax. I got people coming in for the open audition tomorrow. Why don't you come check it out? See if there's anybody worth playing with. Couldn't hurt. C'mon, be a team player here.

**DEE**

This isn't a team, it's a hostage situation. All right, I'll keep looking, but if I can actually put together a decent band, I'm charging you an A & R fee.

**CHIP**

Whoahh! Slow down there, Mario Andretti. Let's see who shows up. Sopon, get Ms. Mallory a dry Rob Roy. I have a... thing I gotta get to, but Dee, I'll see you at 1600 tomorrow. Enjoy!

**DEE**

Great... Thanks a lot, Chip.

**SOPON**

Heh. You called him Bill Graham... Heh.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1 & 2**

FREEZE! This is a raid! Stay right where you are. Step away from all bags, parcels, or satchels and put your hands up in the air. Xybidonts, that is all twelve hands up. Nobody move!

**SOPON**

Aww man, this is getting tired. These Fairgrounds Barney Fifes are raiding us like two times a day. Chip!

**DEE**

What's this?

**SOPON**  
PBJ Raid.

*Security can be heard shaking down Xybidonts in the background.*

**DEE**  
PBJ Raid? That's the, uh...

**SOPON**  
Peanut Butter Junkies.

**DEE**  
Right. What's Security doing in here? Isn't that Customs' job?

**SOPON**  
They go after the smugglers, sure. But I guess Security decided that's not enough, now they're going after the users, too. Ugh, Security. Bunch of clown shoes.

**DEE**  
Are there really that many?

**SOPON**  
What, you don't know about the PBJs? I thought you Humans had them all over.

**DEE**  
Maybe on the major planets, sure, but I grew up on Tammuz Beta.

**SOPON**  
Never heard of it.

**DEE**  
No one has, it's a farming colony at the ass-end of Human space.

**SOPON**  
Hang on, I thought this end was the ass-end.

**DEE**  
Fair point. I guess we've got a lot of ass-ends.

**SOPON**  
Oh, like the Dilurians!

**DEE**  
Hah, right. Anyway, we mostly grew sorghum, so there wasn't any reason for a Xybidont to show up there. Or anyone else, really. Seriously, that place is a total null set.

**SOPON**

So you've really never seen a Xybidont on a PB trip?

**DEE**

I mean, I've seen plenty of Xybidonts--I did a six-month stint in the Kakistos, and they're all over the place out there--but I guess the junkies stick close to the source? I don't think I've ever seen one.

**SOPON**

Oh, you'd know if you had. They're impossible to miss. The legume hits 'em hard. Like a heroin high on MDA... I'm talking WAY out there.

**DEE**

Wow. Must have been a real kick in the palp for the first Xybidont who found that out.

**SOPON**

Right?

**DEE**

You eat a snack made for Human children, next thing you know your brain is melting out your cochlea. That's insane.

**SOPON**

What's even insanier is, the Inter-Species Controlled Substances Act says it can be punished by a fine, imprisonment, or "deportation from local sovereign territory," right? But it lets the local fuzz set how much the fine is. So these two-cred bullies jack up the fines to make their quotas, and now the Xybs who can't afford shakedown prices have to choose between getting deported or doing a stretch in a League detention facility for a victimless crime. The whole situation's really frilled up. Sadly, the Electric Egg is like shooting ducks in a barrel for these little piggies.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Hey, what's this, buddy? A little bit of Jif to get you through the day?

**XYBIDONT 1**

That ain't mine!

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Oh, so that was someone else's spiracle I just pulled this out of? You're under arrest. Hands behind your thorax, all of 'em.

*Sound of six pairs of futuristic handcuffs being shut.*

**XYBIDONT 1**

C'mon, mang, have a heart. I just got out.

**XYBIDONT 2**

This is straight up profiling! Just because he's a Xyb, you can frisk him?! This has gotta stop!

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

When the Galactic War on drugs is over... then we'll stop.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Amen, compadre.

**XYBIDONT 1**

Q'Crudup! Call my Uncle...

**XYBIDONT 2**

Yeah, mang... Drag.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Let's go.

**CHIP**

What's going on here?! Again with the nickel and dime busts in my bar? Like I don't have enough to contend with. That's it, I'm taking this all the way up to Torianna. This is ridiculous.

**DEE**

OK, so see you tomorrow Chip. Two o'clock, right? Right?... Chip?... CHIP!!?

**CHIP**

Delilah! I'm a bit busy, here. Yeah, 1600 tomorrow. Unless these yahoos close me down again. (*to Security*) All right, you found your fall guy, go on, go follow your friend. Great piece of sleuthing there, Columbo.

**DEE**

See you, Sapon.

**SOPON**

Later, Dee.

*Music transition to John and Althaar's room.*

**JOHN**

...and as usual, the problem is this tiny little frayed wire. So I'm cleaning it up, getting ready to do a basic splice, easy, right? But while I'm doing that, I can hear these little staccato taps that are gradually getting faster.

**ALTHAAR**

That sound is most foreboding according to survivors, Room-mate John!

**JOHN**

Yeah... lucky for me, I didn't know that, so I kept working.

**ALTHAAR**

Room-mate John is very brave!

**JOHN**

Not so much “brave” as “completely oblivious.” So, the little taps start picking up speed until the entire vent starts shaking and the sound is deafening...

**ALTHAAR**

*(panicky)*

Room-mate John’s story is doing Althaar a concern!

**JOHN**

And just when I see the first of these demonic little hell-beasts coming around the corner right at me, the entire duct system lit up like one of those 5-D Dilurian Explode-o-ramas! Four of these Sanitation Heavy Infantry with flame throwers took on the front line of those vicious little bastards, while two Commandos with flash-bang grenades backed them off to the next junction. At that point, this gorgeous woman... an angel in a green coverall and jump boots... dropped in on a zipline, pulled a smoke bomb off of her utility belt and ignited it, then used the cover to carry me away to safety... the squad said afterwards that they only lost two, so it was a good day in the vents. And just like that, they were gone, all grappling hooks and jetpacks. It was... well, magnificent. Honestly, their bravery knows no limits.

**ALTHAAR**

Many tales have been shared with Althaar of the Glorious Warriors of the Sanitation.

**JOHN**

And I never even got her name... I’m a wreck. I gotta clear my head.

**ALTHAAR**

But is not the head where Humans store their organs of cognition? Can these organs be removed safely? Or is Room-mate John once again longing for the “sweet release of death?”

**JOHN**

No, it’s a figure of speech, Althaar. It means... I have to relax, depressurize. I used to meditate sometimes back on Earth, but I haven’t kept up with it. Trying to achieve a state of tranquility on the Fairgrounds isn’t exactly easy.

**ALTHAAR**

ROOM-MATE JOHN AND ALTHAAR MUST MEDITATE TOGETHER! Althaar has done much research regarding Human religious ritual! But Althaar will benefit greatly from practical experience! Surely direct observation of the meditation of Room-mate John will bring many understandings to Althaar! And much enrichment to Althaar’s Human Culture Data Base!

**JOHN**

Yeah, I know, we’re making galactic history. Uh... sure, let’s do it.

**ALTHAAR**

Room-mate John is the most generous and supportive of Humans! It is a great joy to Althaar! (*brief gross happy noise, which he quickly stifles*)

**JOHN**

(*genuinely flattered but still grossed out*)

...Happy to help. So, we'll need to clear some floor space to do this... Maybe move the privacy curtain to the middle of the room, so we've got room to sit on either side. And the couch will be in the way, so...

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar will be pleased to adjust the furnishment of the room of living, in thanks for the helpfulness of Room-mate John! Althaar suggests that Room-mate John absent himself during the re-arranging, to ensure that there are no accidental seeings of Althaar.

**JOHN**

Yeah, fair point, that would be... the exact opposite of relaxing. Ok, I'll be back in a bit.

**ALTHAAR**

Oh! Althaar is so happy!

*Another happy noise from ALTHAAR, and a grossed-out reaction from JOHN as he leaves.*

*Music transition to Electric Egg: several hopefuls are chit-chatting as they wait to audition.*

**CHIP**

OK, folks, listen up. Thanks for coming to our open call, I'm Chip, Chip Frinkel, I own the joint. So here's how we're gonna do this. You each get five minutes to do your thing, please be respectful of the other applicants, and this should go without saying, but you're on a Human station here, you all know what the brown note is. The order of auditions for today is Q'Bonzo Abacab, Campy Von Christopher, Les Frères Ryanna, PR and Brooklyn Brown Grass, and lastly, um...Vert. So, that's the order and we'll start in about five minutes...

**DEE**

Hey, Frinkel.

**CHIP**

Ms. Mallory, only an hour and a half late! That's about right.

**DEE**

Uh huh. You still haven't started yet, so: pot, kettle. Is this everyone? I cannot wait to see the raw talent that you've assembled.

**CHIP**

Here you go, Dee. Know anyone?

**DEE**

Yeah, actually. I did two weeks with PR and BBG back in like, '17. They are definitely not backup band material.

**CHIP**

Anyone else?

**DEE**

I'm vaguely aware of Campy, never heard him, though. The others... nope. Guess we'll just have to give them a listen and see if anyone's halfway decent.

**CHIP**

Ok, but just remember, we can't afford to be too picky. *(to auditioners)* Ok, let's go. First up is Q'Bonzo Abacab... Q'Bonzo... are you here?

**XTOPPS**

*(clearly high)*

Yeah baby, I'm here twice over... Tell you what, lose that Q'Bonzo shness... Call me "Xtopps"... Yeah, I'm tiled from here to Tuesday... Xtopps.

**CHIP**

Ok, "Xtopps"... uh... You OK, Xtopps?

**XTOPPS**

Couldn't be better, baby... you got your gizz sizzlin' for this?

**CHIP**

Uh, sure, buddy, lay it on us.

*Xtopps auditions: BRUNO FROM FAME with keys, drums, guitar, fleezborp. He finishes.*

**DEE, CHIP, BANDS**

Whoah! Fantastic! Unbelievable! Woo!!! Awesome!!! *(applause)*

**DEE**

Holy Jones that dude is amazing. A virtuoso on four instruments at the same time. Are you kidding me? What's he doing in this smarkhole?

**CHIP**

Hey, watch it! You're playing this smarkhole too, you know. For another eight years.

**DEE**

Please don't remind me.

**CHIP**

Listen, Dee, I'm having an inspiration here. Galaxy brain time: *this guy* could be your backup band.

**DEE**

The entire band?

**CHIP**

You said it yourself, he can play all those instruments at once... which means I can get a whole band for the price of one... Hot damn, I'm a genius.

**DEE**

I knew it, Chip. Always playing an angle. Aren't you saving enough money on my ex-agent's stupid contract?

**CHIP**

Hey, I got a business to run. Gotta keep up that hustle! Hey Xtopps! Come on over here for a minute. Wow, that was incredible.

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, y'know... it's my thing.

**CHIP**

Have you met Delilah Mallory?

**DEE**

Call me Dee.

**XTOPPS**

Hey Dee... Xtopps.

**DEE**

Xtopps, I'm totally blown away... you are amazing.

**XTOPPS**

Thanks, Dee. Glad you dug the sounds.

**DEE**

Chip and I were thinking maybe, uh, you and I could make some sounds together?

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, I don't know... maybe.

**DEE**

OK, here's the thing. I just lost my band: four guys called the Seven-System Swingers. I'd only been with them a short while. Ya heard of 'em?

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, I've pinned those zoods... doesn't Tiny Bill Tremaine play bari sax with them?

**DEE**

He sure does.

**XTOPPS**

That little cat can wail! So how'd you lose 'em?

**DEE**

Long story, but I've got a standing contract at the Egg for... a while... and I need a backup band. Pickings were pretty slim around here until you showed up. I'm thinking with your chops, we could get together, rehearse a few of my songs, you could add a few of your own, and we could put together a few killer sets!

**XTOPPS**

I feel you, but that glorn won't hunt.

**DEE**

What do you mean?

**XTOPPS**

Xtopps is a solo act, mang.

**DEE**

Oh, come on...

**XTOPPS**

For reals, this grape jams alone. No shness.

**DEE**

Why?

**XTOPPS**

I got my reasons, yeah? I can't explain it, I'm a complicated zood.

**DEE**

Un-complicate it for me. Seriously, we'd be great together, why won't you at least give it a shot?

**XTOPPS**

All right, mang, it's like this...

**SECURITY OFFICER 1 & 2**

EVERYBODY FREEZE! This is a raid!

**XTOPPS**

Whoop, gotta go. *(running out quickly)* Excuse me, excuse me...

**CHIP**

Oh, come on, this is getting ridiculous! Straight up harassment! You are ruining my business, you realize this?! All right officer, that's it! I want your name and badge number. This is too much! I am fed up here!

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Sir, if you attempt to interfere with a Security Officer in the commission of their duty, we will be forced to use our neuro-dampers.

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Everyone, stay right where you are, hands up in the air. Xybidonts that is all twelve! Nobody move!

**DEE**

OK, guess I'll see you later, Chip.

**CHIP**

Wait, Dee, what happened to Xtopps?

**DEE**

He split the second Security showed up.

**CHIP**

Yeah, I figured as much. He's a great musician and all, but a PBJ is a major liability the way things are going around here lately.

**DEE**

But they only search the Xybidonts, right?

**CHIP**

Well, it's not illegal for us to have peanut stuff on our person, as long as it's less than you can eat in one sitting.

**DEE**

How much is that?

**CHIP**

Twenty pounds, I think?

**DEE**

Ok, so-- Hang on, what kind of Human eats twenty pounds of peanut butter in one sitting?

**CHIP**

Iunno. Ask the ICSB.

**DEE**

Ok, never mind that. I think I might have an idea. That Xtopps character was gripping one of those guitar cases like his life depended on it.

**CHIP**

Right... or at least his freedom...

**DEE**

Exactly. What do you think, chock full of FunnyBones?

**CHIP**

Nah, Drake's is strictly for chippies. He strikes me as a straight up peanut oil type.

**DEE**

Well, whatever it is, he keeps it in that guitar case. I'll catch you later.

**VERT**

Hey, uh, can we, uh, is someone gonna listen to us play, or...?

**CHIP**

Wait your turn, Vert!

*Transition to the Hydro Park as JOHN is arriving. XTOPPS is busking in the background. You can hear him playing three guitars (maybe two guitars and a banjo) in a next level Dueling Banjos type symphony.*

**SOOTHING PARK ANNOUNCEMENT VOICE**

The Human Exchange Concourse encourages all visitors to enjoy the hydroponics park responsibly. We assume no liability in the event of adverse digestive reactions in non-Human guests; please test all produce samples for biological compatibility before ingesting. And no, we don't grow peanuts, please stop asking.

*We approach MRS. FRONDRINAX arguing with the JIM GARRISON-BOT, the Park Supervisor.*

**GARRISON-BOT**

It's a triangulation of fire. There has to be more than one shooter and that by definition makes it a conspiracy! A COUP D'ETAT with Lyndon Johnson waiting in the wings!!!

**JOHN**

I don't know, Garrison-bot, I always thought it was the Mafia. He got too close to Marilyn Monroe. Made the wise guys nervous.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, please. Everyone knows that Oswald was a lone wolf mastermind... and an incredible shot.

**GARRISON-BOT**

Mrs. Frondrinax, I suggest that wherever you read that particular piece of garbage comes from somewhere on the other side of the looking glass...

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Have you heard of the Warren Commission, Jimmy?

**GARRISON-BOT**

*(frustrated, teeing up for a rant)*

The Zapruder film clearly shows a triangulation of fire with the kill shot coming from the Grassy Knoll. It's right there for everyone to see! Look at the pergola--

**JOHN**

OK, OK! Take it easy! I thought this was supposed to be a tranquil, bucolic environment. You're here to give people directions, right? Not lessons on ancient history.

**GARRISON-BOT**

You haven't asked me for directions! And the Umbrella Man--

**JOHN**

So, hey! Can you, uh, point me in the direction of the water fountain?

**GARRISON BOT**

Back and to the left.

**JOHN**

Great, thanks. See you, Mrs. F...

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Toodles, Johnny. You give that sweetie Althaar my best. Bye now!

**DEE**

Mrs. Frondrinax, is that you?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Why, who else could it be, Dee love? I'm the only Fugulnari in these parts!

**DEE**

Right, but... you know how much you look like an ordinary plant to us. I've started a couple conversations with random parlor palms before I figured it out.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

They *are* good listeners!

**DEE**

But they're not--ok, never mind. I've got a question for you. Have you been here at the park for a while? Has that Xybidont over there been busking for a long time or did he just show up?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, he's been here about an hour. He's quite good. I bet he can play more than those guitars, if you know what I mean.

**DEE**

I'm... not sure I do, and I'm fine with that. Is he having any luck?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

A little bit, but you know, most of the folks who come to this park are from the youth hostel over in Shin, so they're not what you'd call big spenders.

**DEE**

Perfect. I need to convince this guy to start a band with me.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Well, who wouldn't want to be in a band with you, sweetheart?

**DEE**

This guy. And I'm gonna find out why... I'll see you later, Mrs. F.

**YOUTH HOSTEL KID**

Hey Stretch, where's the john?

**GARRISON BOT**

Back and to the Left... Back and to the Left... Back and to the Left... *(continuing and fading out)*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh dear, someone call Maintenance! The Info Bot is malfunctioning again!

*XTOPPS finishes. Smattering of applause, including DEE.*

**XTOPPS**

Thank you. I call that one "Two Earls and a Hillbilly."

**DEE**

Hey Xtopps, that's some pretty cautious stuff. You are killing it.

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, thanks, zood... umm, what was your name again?

**DEE**

Dee... Dee Mallory.

**XTOPPS**

Dee. That's right. You were at the Electric Egg, yeah?

**DEE**

You got it. Listen, I got a gig there later tonight and I'm still looking for a band. I'm going to level with you: you are the most exciting musician I've seen in my life, let alone on this tin can. I'm not just blowing smoke up your tubes--if you come in with me, we can collaborate on some next level stuff, I just know it. And I promise I'll get that tightwad Chip to pay you what you're worth. Well, like... at least 20% of what you're worth.

**XTOPPS**

That's an empty crib. Like I said, I'm a solo act. Xtopps works alone.

**DEE**

I know you said that, but you didn't say why.

**XTOPPS**

All right, mang. You gotta understand, when I was coming up, I was a pretty selfish kind of zood. Got everything handed to me on a bismuth platter, and that can really frill a kid's spiritual development, you know? Well, once I effoed that scene I started making a name for myself, and I knew the next level move was to get a partner... a gorgeous singer who would bring a sexy quality to our act. Not that I'm any slouch in the looks department, but a glossy carapace doesn't have that cross-species appeal, you dig? I figured I would lay down my sounds, and the canary would drive all the sentients wild. Well, I found her... She was a real knockout, from Xantho Prime, glistening lime skin, spots black as the void, with that perfect Xanthi toothpick figure, 3 meters tall soaking wet... She was a stunner, even without the paralytic spores.

**DEE**

Well I'm no Xanthoni but I've been called sexy once or twice.

**XTOPPS**

Miss me with that false modesty smark, Dee, you're a hottie, 'specially for a mammal. That's not the problem. Here's the thing... Breegiss and I started playing a few gigs, and everything was patic, until I started to get jealous of her getting all the attention. I couldn't share the spotlight, mang. Got so bad I started to sabotage her performances... flott around with her levels, unplug her monitor, mess with her in the pettiest of ways... One night, during sound check, I flipped my gizz, said we had to switch places on stage. She was normally to the right and downstage of me... I had them move all my shness to her spot and put her mic upstage and to the left. It was so stupid. That's not where you put the singer, but I was dridging off, and no one wanted to tell me to cut the skitter. So they went along with it.

*Pause.*

**DEE**

Well, what happened?

**XTOPPS**

One of the lights fell off the grid and she was crushed to death.

**DEE**

Oh, God... Xtopps... That's awful.

**XTOPPS**

It only weighed a couple pounds! If I'd been where I should have, it woulda bounced right off me! But she was so slim and fragile... She never stood a chance.

**DEE**

I'm so sorry, Xtopps. But listen--

**SECURITY OFFICER 1 & 2**

EVERYBODY FREEZE! This is a raid! Stay right where you are. Xybidonts step away from all bags, satchels, and parcels, and put your hands up in the air. Nobody move!

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, my bracts and stipules! Police activity! In the hydroponic park, no less. So exciting!

**XTOPPS**

Oh, nertz. I gotta go, Dee.

**DEE**

Go where? They're right here, mang. They're just itching to use those neuro-dampers on the first Xyb who tries to run.

**XTOPPS**

Hey, uh, help a boffer out?

**DEE**

How?

**XTOPPS**

Take my guitar case.

**DEE**

*(disingenuous)*

Oh, I don't know...what could you *possibly* have in there? You've got three guitars, but four cases... Is that one a backup?

**XTOPPS**

C'mon, Dee, don't frill me here...

**DEE**

Ok, ok, I'll take it. You can get it back at the Egg. But! You have to back me up tonight. Show's at ten, you get there a half hour before. See you then?

**XTOPPS**

You got it. Thanks, mang.

**TYPHOID MARY-BOT**

*(over speaker)*

Attention all residents: this is Mary, your safety director-bot. The mandatory escape pod drill is still scheduled to take place during first cycle tomorrow. Please disregard all rumors, jokes, memes, or other disinformation about the necessity of this drill, the reputed disrepair of the safety pods themselves, or my abilities and qualifications for the position of Safety Director. That is all!

*Transition to Fairgrounds Bridge.*

**COMMANDER**

Mr. Frinkel. Relax! No one is being "maliciously targeted" here.

**CHIP**

*(on commlink)*

Don't give me that, Torianna! Your little flunkies have been in my establishment, shaking down paying customers, four times this week alone! I am trying to run a business here! No one wants to drink somewhere they can get their neurons scrambled by some damper-happy Security mook. You have to rein in these clowns!

**COMMANDER**

*(firmly)*

The safety and security of the Fairgrounds is my concern, Frinkel. The fact is that your bar is simply rotten with peanut products. Would have me ignore ICSB regulations? Jeopardize our relationship with our neighbors in the Interstellar Co-operative of Sentient Beings? For the sake of your bar? Is that what you want?

**CHIP**

Oh, come off it! You expect me to believe that hassling my customers is vital to the future of Human-alien relations?

**COMMANDER**

Everything's connected, Mr. Frinkel. So I'm afraid the raids must continue until this issue has been dealt with. I've been informed that the situation is worse than we had earlier believed.

**CHIP**

By who? That pompous mist cloud that you pal around with?

*FRALL manifests.*

**FRALL**

Has the saloonkeeper finished insulting us yet, Mindy?

**COMMANDER**

Please hold... *(bloop)* He called you pompous, is that it?

**FRALL**

Oh, no, he's just getting started. Delightful. Please continue.

**COMMANDER**

Um, yeah... *(bloop)* Mr. Frinkel, why don't I come down there and we can discuss this in person? I'd like to see the situation for myself.

**CHIP**

What situation?! The only "situation" here is your--

*Bloop as the COMMANDER cuts the call off.*

**COMMANDER**

Let's go, Frall.

**FRALL**

How disappointing. I was looking forward to that rant. *(chuckling)* He *really* hates me.

*FRALL dematerializes. Sound transition to the Electric Egg.  
Top of third shift--a busy period at The Egg. Ambient music, laughter, toasts.*

**CHIP**

Sopon, three Zombies for Table 14. Also, can you change the music to Pre Dinner Funk? Thanks. Your table should be ready any minute now, folks... Annd good evening, Ms. Mallory! You're here early... and alone. Crowd's starting to shape up. What've you got for them, are we a solo act tonight?

**DEE**

No. Well, maybe? I'm not sure. Have you seen that Xybidont from this morning?

**CHIP**

Xtopps? Haven't seen him. I'm telling you, Dee, that's the kind of talent we need in here! He's amazing... not to mention cheap! Did you talk him into signing up?

**DEE**

I convinced him to join me tonight. We'll see how it goes. If he shows up, send him back to the green room, ok?

**CHIP**

You got it, Dee.

**COMMANDER**

Mr. Frinkel! I'm here to listen to your concerns. Let's hear it.

**CHIP**

Ah, Commander Torianna! Joining us for drinks? Sopon, the Commander can have whatever she wants.

**SOPON**

You got it, Chief.

**COMMANDER**

I'm on duty.

**CHIP**

Sure sure, how about a Moxie? Dr. Brown's? Hoovian milkshake?

**COMMANDER**

I'm fine. Get on with it.

**CHIP**

All right, the offer stands. Now then, Commander... Ms. Torianna... Mindy...

**COMMANDER**

No.

**CHIP**

Commander. Four raids so far this week. We have to come to some kind of understanding here. The Egg caters to an interstellar clientele! If this keeps up, they'll take their credits elsewhere.

**COMMANDER**

I told you, Mr. Frinkel, I'm responsible for the security of the station. I can't just--

**CHIP**

There isn't going to be anything left to secure if the tourist trade dries up! If we get a reputation for letting xenophobic cops run amok, that's it. It's not like this is a prime Human destination. How long do you think the League would to pay to maintain this scrap heap without the alien tourists to keep us turning a profit?

**COMMANDER**

That's... I see your point, but I can't just let the peanut butter problem slide either. We have to at least look like we're trying to do something about it.

**CHIP**

Sure sure, but there are Xybidonts all over the station. Security can bust them anywhere. So why is it always *here*?

**COMMANDER**

I'll admit that it's... possible that the scope of Security's investigations may have been getting a little... unnecessarily narrow.

**CHIP**

In other words, they're lazy bastards.

**COMMANDER**

Don't push it, Frinkel.

**CHIP**

Ok, ok. We're all in this together, yeah? I'd appreciate anything you can do, Commander. You sure I can't have Sapon get you anything?

**COMMANDER**

Oh, what the hell. A Gibson.

**CHIP**

Right away! A Gibson straight up--give her the good stuff, Sapon. Hey, Xtopps! Good to see you! Have you met the Big Boss of the Fairgrounds, yet? Commander Mindy Torianna, this is the very talented instrumentalist Q'Bonzo Abacab; Q'Bonzo, Commander Torianna (*FRALL materializes, CHIP turns cold*) and her toxic cloud, Frallen Br'ar.

**FRALL**

A pleasure as always, Chip.

**XTOPPS**

*(kinda freaked out by Frall and nervous)*

Uhhh... you see it, too? Ok, hi, yeah. Nice station you got here, it's a real curio. Uh, call me Xtopps. Hey Chorp, is that Dee zood around?

**CHIP**

It's Chip. Yeah, she's waiting for you backstage, it's that blue door there. I heard you're sitting in tonight, is that right?

**XTOPPS**

Uh, yeah... That's right, mang. Ok, I better split. Pleasure to meet you boffers.

**FRALL**

Welcome to the Fairgrounds, Sin (*pron. "Seen"*) Xtopps.

*Backstage. Groovy music.*

**XTOPPS**

Hey, Dee.

**DEE**

Xtopps! The maestro! Pull up a beanbag.

**XTOPPS**

Where's my stuff, mang?

**DEE**

We'll get to that. It's around somewhere... you keep that guitar case pretty close, huh?

**XTOPPS**

It's a... family heirloom. Sentimental value, yeah?

**DEE**

It's full of peanut butter, Xtopps. Plus Peanut Oil, O'Henry Bars, Reese's Pieces, and large, loose chunks of Brittle. I put those in a sandwich bag for you, by the way, because getting high is no excuse for eating guitar case lint. C'mon.

**XTOPPS**

Um... yeah. Thanks, mang.

**DEE**

Xtopps. Listen to me. You've got a great sound, but nobody's beating down your door. I mean, seriously, what are you working with right now? You've got holes in, like, eight of your shoes. I'd guess you've got less than 300 credits to your name. You came to Chip's open call, zood. That tells me you could really use a steady gig, and I happen to have one, with nobody to back me up. And if we work together, our sound might be good enough to reach way beyond the Teegarden's System. Frid, if we play it right, I could make enough to buy my way out of this place. So, I love that you're gonna sit in tonight, but I'm thinking more long game, here.

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, flush, but--

**DEE**

And that's why I'm going to have to blackmail you.

**XTOPPS**

Hey, what?

**DEE**

Go take a peek at the house tonight.

**XTOPPS**

Oh, you mean the Big Boss and that... cloud zood?

**DEE**

No, I mean-- Wait, Torianna and Frall are here?

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, talking to Frinkel.

**DEE**

Nice! If the brass is here, that's even better.

**XTOPPS**

Better than what? You're really nibbling on my arastates here, mang.

**DEE**

I called in an anonymous tip to Security that there was some major PB traffic going down at the Egg tonight. That Ponch-and-Jon should be outside...

**XTOPPS**

*(peeking)*

Yeah, they're out there... rustling everyone at the door. Aw, streez...

**DEE**

So, you have a choice: One year as my backup band, and I'll be here to cover for you whenever Security comes knocking. It's your only way out. They don't care that you're a genius; to them you're just another junkie. If you go it alone, it's only a matter of time before they catch up with you and toss you in a Human hoosegow. Unless you go for deportation. I *know* you don't have the brioche to pay the fine.

**XTOPPS**

That's cold, mang.

**DEE**

Look, Xtopps, it's not personal, I am just at my wits' end, and this is the only leverage I've got. I promise it won't be so bad... I wasn't kidding about us making a great sound together. We could get a really flush thing going here. And hey, learning to share the spotlight will be good for your spiritual development. How about it?

*Pause.*

**XTOPPS**

I get at least four songs on the setlist... for starters.

**DEE**

Sure.

**XTOPPS**

Fleezborp solos only when I want to.

**DEE**

You got it.

**XTOPPS**

If I don't have brown M & M's in here at all times, I walk.

**DEE**

Deal.

**XTOPPS**

OK... Deal.

**DEE**

Yes!

*Transition back out to the bar area.*

**CHIP**

So as you can see, Commander, you've been misinformed. These gentlebeings aren't peanut butter junkies, just a bunch of upstanding ICSB citizens out to have a good time and spend some of their hard-earned credits at the Fairgrounds.

**COMMANDER**

Ok, Chip, I get it. I'll tell Security to lay off. But you better not make me regret this, or I'll have them in here twenty-eight hours a day, tourist trade be damned.

**CHIP**

You're a peach, Mindy.

**COMMANDER**

Watch it.

**CHIP**

Alllll right then, good talking to you Commander. I'd better go light a fire under my musicians' butts or we won't have a show tonight.

**COMMANDER**

What do you think, Frall? Our presence seems to have chased away the bad element. Should we call it a night?

**FRALL**

I'd strongly advise not. Something is happening for the first time and you'll want to be here for it.

**COMMANDER**

What is it?

**FRALL**

Enjoy!

*FRALL discorporates.*

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Commander Torianna! Pursuant to information received, we intend to do a sweep for Peanut Abuse on these premises, sir!

**COMMANDER**

Negative, Ness. Stand down. We're going to be having a discussion about your policing methods in the morning. For now, you don't lay a finger on anyone unless you see a crime in progress.

**H.F.**

Mindy! What are you doing here? Slumming?

**COMMANDER**

Apparently I'm here for a reason. Something to see.

**H.F.**

Oh yeah, like what?

**COMMANDER**

It was Frall's idea, so who knows? It could be literally anything. Hopefully it'll be happening in a dimension I can perceive, this time.

**CHIP**

All right, Electric Egg! Fairgrounds audiences are the best audiences in the system, am I right? 'Course we're the only thing in the system, but I kid, I kid. We've got a great show coming right up, and later on, our trademark infra-ultra Laser Floyd, for those of you who can see in the 4000-angstrom band! Everyone else, just use your imagination. And for all you sulphuric acid aficionados, our drink special tonight is the Ishtar Fizz! And now, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you... for the first time in the Teegarden's system... Please welcome... the galactic debut of the Electric Egg's very own Delilah Mallory and Xtopps!

*The band plays their version of Danube Planum with a synthy, Kraftwerk sound with a bit of DEVO mixed into it.*

**DEE**

*(singing)*

I feel so bad, I won't be leaving soon  
So I'll sing my lonesome tune  
Bout a mesa on Jupiter's moon  
Danube Planum

Earning credits, drinking brine  
Slaving in a helium mine  
Til I pay off this Jovian fine  
Danube Planum

Oh I'll return some year  
Never fear  
Danube Planum  
Where my heart abides  
By the scalding tides  
Danube Planum  
Oh those rocketships  
By the ancient crypts  
Where eldritch horrors dwell  
Yes, the coming bloodbath  
Will appease their wrath  
It sure will be swell

Io's sky will be lovely that night  
As the Old Ones lurch into sight  
When we begin our unholy rite  
Danube Planum

They all will rue that year  
Cower in fear  
Danube Planum  
As the volcano blows  
And the magma flows  
Danube Planum  
By the altar I'll stand  
Holding my lover's hand  
On the blood-soaked moon  
In the sulphur sand  
With this ancient knife  
I will take his life  
Oh, won't that be grand  
Open the fetid tomb  
And seal our doom  
Danube Planum

*Wild applause.*

**ALL**  
Yes! Wow. They're amazing! These two rock!

**DEE**

Thank you, thank you so much! We ARE Xtopps and Delilah Mallory, and we'll be stuck here a lot longer than you will, so we're gonna have some fun while we can, right Xtopps?

**XTOPP**

You got it, Dee!

**DEE**

I'm sure you all remember this one from Bastard Mojave... (*audience cheers, plus one "Beyond Uranus!"*) Hit it, Xtopps!

*Start of the next song fades into the background as:*

**COMMANDER**

Wow, when Frall's right, they're right! That was definitely worth sticking around for.

**H.F.**

You're not kidding! Her old group was pretty good, but this new guy is phenomenal!

**COMMANDER**

Speaking of new guys, how's your latest assistant working out? He seemed relatively on the ball, from what I could tell. Although you never know... You have to wonder what kind of Human can tolerate an Iltorian roommate.

**H.F.**

It's funny, I thought he'd be in here tonight. He had an explosive introduction to the vent biters yesterday... Thank all the gods for Sanitation, right? Anyway, I figured he'd be ready to tie one on after an experience like that. That's where I'd be. Wonder where he is?

*DEE and XTOPPS' song fades out, into:*

**TYPHOID MARY-BOT**

*(over speaker)*

This is Mary Mallon-bot, your former safety director. The supposedly-mandatory escape pod drill has been cancelled due to lack of interest, poor maintenance and occasional absence of the safety pods, and my apparent incompetence at my job. Applications for the position of safety director may be forwarded to command, if any of you degenerates think you can do any better, and until we have a new one, you're on your own. I'm taking over in food inspection. That is ALL.

*Fade up on soothing nature noises and chimes in Suite C.*

**JOHN**

OMMMMM.

**ALTHAAR**

OMMMMMMM...

*Nasty scraping insectoid noise.*

**JOHN**

The hell was that?

**ALTHAAR**

The meditation already begins to succeed, Room-mate John! As you can hear, much tension is removing from Althaar's flixators! Continuing, please!

**JOHN**

Uh, ok. OMMMMMMMM...

**ALTHAAR**

OMMMMMMM...

*Nastier scraping, plus some squelching.*

**JOHN**

OOM-- Althaar, I don't think this is going to work.

**ALTHAAR**

Oh! Please tell Althaar how he can further assist with the meditations! Althaar has ignited the sticks of aroma, repositioned the privacy curtain, removed the sofa and armed chairs, placed the throw pillows in their secondary location with much gentle-ness, and ensured that the white noise ma-sheen is at comfortable levels for Human hearing. What remains to be done, please, Room-mate John? Althaar wishes to create ideal conditioning for the meditations of his most kind and generous Room-mate!

**JOHN**

Uh, you know what, Althaar, it's fine. Let's try again, ok?

**ALTHAAR**

Oh joy!

**JOHN**

Ommmm...

**ALTHAAR**

OMMMMMMM...

*All the previous sounds, plus something that sounds like a swarm of beetles devouring a corpse.*

**JOHN**

Yeah, no, I don't think so. Uh, you're going to have to try meditating without me, ok? I'm... I'll be in my room.

**ALTHAAR**

Can not Althaar help Room-mate John with the attaining of inner peace?

**JOHN**

Sorry, Althaar, but if you get any more peaceful I'm going to puke.

**ANNOUNCER**

You've been listening to *Life with Althaar*, episode two.

This episode was written by Philip Cruise

featuring

John Amir as John B

Berit Johnson as Althaar

Ivanna Cullinan as Commander Torianna

Alyssa Simon as Lieutenant-Commander Frall

Amanda La Pergola as Mrs. Frondrinax

Eli Gantias as Hardyfox Fornes

Christopher Lee as Chip Frinkel

Zuri Washington as Delilah Mallory

--- as "Xtopps"

{etc. with other parts}

and Ian W. Hill as your announcer, William S. Burroughs-bot, {etc.}

*Life with Althaar* was created by Berit Johnson and Ian W. Hill

Berit is the supervising producer, showrunner, and script supervisor.

Ian is the audio producer, sound designer, and technical supervisor.

The writers' room consists of Berit, Ian, John, Amanda, Chris, Philip, Lex, and Linus.

This has been an audio production from Gemini CollisionWorks.

Tune in again in two weeks for our next episode, but first, what's this going on in the locker room at Security Station Delta?...

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Stand down? Stand down? What is Torianna thinking? That dingy little dive is rotten with the sticky stuff. Besides, if we don't keep our arrest numbers up, Dormer, we can kiss those fat bonuses goodbye.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Right? And I was starting to feel like we were making a difference. It wasn't Sanitation, Sanitation, Sanitation all the time. (*mocking tone*) Oh, look at them, they're so brave, running around with their flamethrowers and their grenades... Showoffs.

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

If only the Bots were strung out.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Man, I hear that. We could make quota in a couple shifts. But you know they'd strike for a "No Drug Busts" clause in their contract and turn it around on us. Follow us around, chanting "The Robots. United. Will Never be Defeated!"

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Right, everyone knows you don't mess with the Union... Ok, so the Egg's off limits. Where else does an alien go when they want to get glitched? The Casino? Hydroponics?

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Casino's too risky, remember the reaming we got after we shook down that Boosekani high-roller at the craps tables?

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

So we stick to the penny slots.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Yeahhh, ok, Casino it is. You got your insurance policy?

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

You bet.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

What you packing tonight? Snickers?

**SECURITY OFFICER 2**

Reggie Bar.

**SECURITY OFFICER 1**

Nice! Let's go.