

[Dramatic science-fiction music plays, like the text crawl at the beginning of Star Wars]

NARRATOR: It is a period of civil war. The rebellion against the sinister and corrupt Federated Alliance grows stronger, and the fate of the galaxy hangs in the balance. Now, Rebel Emissary Pleck Decksetter and his intrepid crew travel the farthest reaches of the galaxy to explore astounding new worlds, discover their heroic destinies, and meet weird bug creatures and stuff. This is [echoing] Mission to Zyxx.

[Music becomes more dramatic and trumpet-y, then fades away]

PLECK: Hey, Bargie?

BARGIE: Yeah?

PLECK: I haven't seen your boyfriend around in a while. How's he doing?

BARGIE: Oh, we broke up.

PLECK: What? Why?

BARGIE: Honestly, we just didn't have that much in common. All he did was deliver shrimps, and I am a former international holo star with a long list of lovers and experiences.

PLECK: You were sort of dating down a little bit on that one, Bargie. I gotta say, I think you could do better.

BARGIE: But also, mainly, it was he smelled--

PLECK: Like shrimp?

BARGIE: Yeah.

PLECK: Yeah, yeah. That makes sense.

BARGIE: [not terribly enthusiastic] Anyway, so, single and ready to mingle! [unenthusiased noises] I'll make up a new Shipdr profile.

PLECK: Sure. Okay. Yeah, well, best of luck out there, you know?

BARGIE: Whatever.

PLECK: Nermut, uh, you feelin' okay, buddy?

NERMUT: [unconvincing] Yeah, what do you-- why wouldn't-- [sighs]

PLECK: You're just looking out the window so wistfully this whole time.

NERMUT: Uh...

BEANO: Beano *wuv* ennui.

[Pleck laughs]

NERMUT: [glumly] Yeah. Beano and I were just looking out the window and... [Beano sighs quietly] it was weird to realize that Dar and I, like, didn't-- when it came down to it, it's like we're-- we *seem* so similar, right? [everyone makes uncertain noises]

BARGIE: It's like you're ships. You're both ships, it should always work! But--

NERMUT: And, like, then you try to-- you just realize you're actually very different on the inside.

BARGIE: And one of you delivers *shrimp*, and then the other one doesn't. Yeah.

C-53: Which one is the shrimp-deliverer in your and Dar's relationship? [Nermut sighs]

BARGIE: [struggling] Nermart's definitely the shrimp.

NERMUT: Oh, wow. Nermart was very close.

BARGIE: Sorry, I've been interjecting so much, I just--

NERMUT: Nermart was the closest--

BARGIE: Sorry, I take that back. Lemme do it again. Narkfin is definitely--

NERMUT: That's more on-target for where we've normally been. Yeah. Okay. Uh, yeah, I'm probably-- in terms of me and Dar, I'd say I'm the shrimp-delivery guy to Dar's Bargie.

[door opens]

DAR: So are we all in here talking about me?

NERMUT: Oh, hey, uh--

PLECK: Well, we're not *all* talking about you!

BEANO: Ooh, Beano love drama!

DAR: C-53, I take it *you're* not talking about me.

C-53: Well, to be honest, I was talking. I was wondering who is the shrimp delivery guy in your relationship with Nermut.

TWO: Did someone say shrimp? [snaps fingers]

PLECK: Whuh? Uh-- who are you?

TWO: Hello. My name is Two.

NERMUT: Does the word 'shrimp' conjure you? What is going on?!

TWO: No, I just thought it would be a great entrance.

DAR: If we say 'shrimp' three more times, does that send you away?

PLECK: No, Dar, I don't think it actually-- I think it's just--

C-53: [quickly] Shrimp, shrimp, shrimp.

PLECK: Yeah, I don't think it has anything to do with shrimp.

C-53: No. No effect.

TWO: This Tellurian is right. Nothing to do with shrimp.

DAR: That was just, like, your way of entering?

TWO: That's right, I--

C-53: You know, if you'd shown up maybe, like, holding a big shrimp cocktail--

BARGIE: Wait, the word 'shrimp' is-- I mean, let's move past this.

NERMUT: Yeah, who is this?

DAR: Oh, we're sorry, Bargie.

BARGIE: Why do you keep bringing up memories?

TWO: No, no, no. I really want to address this. It's captivated this entire crew, and you're right. I should have come with some shrimp cocktail. How about this? [snaps fingers]

PLECK: Okay, now listen-- listen--

TWO: And wait! Not just me! [snaps fingers]

C-53: Okay, now we're all--

PLECK: We're all holding-- this is very nice!

NERMUT: Aw, that's mean to make Bargie have that giant platter of shrimp.

BARGIE: This is mean!

[shrimp-eating noises]

TWO: Can I just say that you all are taking this *very*, very well.

PLECK: Well, we sort of got off on the shrimp thing, and then it kinda stopped being-- I think the initial surprise of you appearing on the bridge of the ship wasn't--

TWO: Actually as shocking as me saying--

C-53: Yeah. 'Did someone say shrimp,' I mean, implies that you're here for some sort of shrimp-related reason. And so I think we were just trying to figure out *that* more than we were [laughing] surprised?

PLECK: I mean, it's fine. When you mentioned it again, I was like, 'yeah, I do not know how he appeared on--'

C-53: Yeah. That should've been equally as mysterious as the shrimp line.

NERMUT: Yeah. Now I'm noticing your cloak, and that-- you are a very mysterious being.

C-53: Yeah, you sort of have a cloak that, you know, looks like a starfield that's in motion, somehow.

TWO: I'm here for a purpose. [snaps fingers]

PLECK: Oh!

DAR: Okay.

PLECK: [disappointed] Oh, our shrimp is gone.

TWO: That's right. [C-53 makes a disappointed 'hm'] You shall be tested today.

PLECK: Uh...

BARGIE: Shrimp tested?

PLECK: No, I don't think--

BARGIE: We've moved past this.

TWO: We have definitely moved past the shrimp.

BARGIE: Just making sure. Good. Good.

TWO: I just want everyone to know--

BARGIE: We're on the same page.

TWO: The shrimp thing... it was a nonsequitur.

PLECK: [laughing] Sure, sure, sure. Alright.

C-53: We ascribed too much value to it and it got a little out of hand.

PLECK: And just for the record, you should know that we talk about shrimp way less--

BARGIE: Again, again, I mean-- I'm the one who brought it up again, but let's move past.

PLECK: I'm just saying, it's not representative.

C-53: It's an atypical day for us to talk about shrimp *this* much.

DAR: Absolutely.

BEANO: Beano *wuv* talking about shrimp.

PLECK: That's actually not true.

BEANO: Beano *wuv* it!

TWO: [echoing menacingly] Enough!

PLECK: Whoa!

TWO: [still echoing slightly] You've upset me.

NERMUT: Oh, geez. Okay.

TWO: [menacingly level] And the purpose of today's visit from me, Two, is not... to talk... about... shrimp.

NERMUT: Failed so far.

TWO: Now. Do you know who I am?

PLECK: No. No idea.

C-53: Other than being Two?

DAR: Your name is Two, we know that.

C-53: Yeah. We know.

TWO: I'm a being beyond your comprehension.

PLECK: Uh... yeah. Okay.

TWO: I'm a being that is here to test your mettle.

PLECK: Oh, I don't know if that--

DAR: I feel pretty tested right now.

BEANO: Beano love tests!

TWO: Oh, good. [Dar sighs] We don't need this ship, right? [snaps fingers, choking noises] Oh! Oh, I'm sorry. Hold on one second. [snaps fingers]

BARGIE: Where did you go? What?

C-53: [alarmed] What was that?

PLECK: I was almost--

DAR: Was that the test?

TWO: No, that wasn't the test. That was--

DAR: Surprise, we can't breathe in space!

PLECK: My eyes-- the tears in my eyes were boiling!

C-53: But also freezing.

PLECK: Simultaneously.

BEANO: Beano had fun!

PLECK: Okay. Listen, Two--

C-53: Two, this is a lot.

PLECK: Yeah, Two--

TWO: You're right, this is a lot. Let's take it a little slower, if we can. Maybe a place that relaxes the mind. How about that? [snaps fingers, the crew make pleasantly surprised noises] Yes.

PLEASANT VOICE: Would you like a small pear?

DAR: [mildly bewildered] A small pear?

TWO: Yes, I transformed your ship into a circle-- [laughing slightly] a steel circle that hands out food.

PLECK: Oh.

BARGIE: [pleasant, smooth voice] My name is Bargarean Pear. Please take a pear.

[pear-eating noises]

PLECK: Two, can you please just tell me what's going on? I feel like-- I don't know what kind of test this is supposed to be, but I'm kind of getting scared.

TWO: Alright, here we go. [sighs] I am a part of a collective known as the Singularity. We exist in every corner of the universe. Our purpose is simply to observe and test living organisms, to make sure they're worthy of being a part of this great and wonderful circle that we call life.

BARGIE: [pleasantly] Can I be a ship again? This is-- I really don't like this.

TWO: Oh, sure. [snaps fingers]

[Bargie sighs in relief in her usual voice]

NERMUT: Wow.

C-53: Bargie, you looked great as a circle, to be perfectly honest.

BARGIE: I was *freaking out!*

C-53: You were exceptionally regular.

BARGIE: I was *freaking out!*

C-53: Perfect circle. It was amazing.

NERMUT: Aw, my pear's gone.

[laughter, intermission music interrupted by beeping]

AUTOMATED VOICE: You have received an audio transmission from Rebellion Headquarters. Playback will follow decryption.

[static, transmission-start noise]

SEESU: Listen up, rebels! This is Commander Seesu Gundu. Support for our rebellion against the complete tools of the Federated Alliance comes from SquareSpace. With SquareSpace, you can turn your cool idea into a new website, showcase your work, or sell products and services of all kinds! On *our* SquareSpace site, therebellion.space, we upload hard-to-crack intercepted encrypted transmissions, several brand-new incredibly helpful advice posts written by Captain Hark Tartigast, who... you know, I haven't seen Hark in a while. [aggravated] I'll tell you this, he better not have joined another trivia team! [calming down] Anyway, on therebellion.space, there's also a guide to neutralizing CLINTs written by my respected professional colleague and co-parent, okay, Rolphus Tiddle. We're fine. A stunning poster for Turk Manaked's REB Talk, a page where you can upload your own sound effects for our weekly propaganda transmissions, and of course, the page 'Make a site', which links to squarespace.com/zyxx, where you can get a [singsong] *free* SquareSpace trial. And when you're ready to launch, use the offer code Z-Y-X-X, ZYXX, to save 10% off your first purchase of a website or domain. That's therebellion.space for bleeding-edge rebel content, and squarespace.com/zyxx, offer code ZYXX, for your own new website. [pleased] I did it! Gundu out like pow!

[transmission-end noise]

AUTOMATED VOICE: End of message.

[intermission music resumes]

PLECK: Two, what is your purpose here on this ship?

TWO: I need to determine whether or not the Tellurian race should exist in the galaxy.

PLECK: Oh. [bewildered exhale] Wow. Okay. Easy! Yes.

BARGIE: No.

PLECK: Oh--

BARGIE: Sorry. [laughter]

PLECK: Bargie!

BARGIE: What? Oh, come on.

TWO: Are you not the captain of this ship?

PLECK: [noise like saying 'well,'] Captain? I don't know-- I'm sort of the emissary--

DAR: He's absolutely not the captain of this ship.

C-53: That's a big term for such a--

PLECK: Yeah, I probably shouldn't have acted like that was partially true, [laughing] because it's actually not true at all. I just am-- I'm an emissary. We're rebel emissaries. Bargie kind of flies herself, so captain is not really the...

TWO: Don't you start most of the conversations?

PLECK: Uh... yeah, I guess so. If you want to put it that way, I mean...

C-53: Well, that's factually accurate. I mean, listen to this.

[transmission-start noise]

RECORDED PLECK: [clicking between questions] Hey, Bargie? Hey, Dar? Hey, Nermut. Hey, C-53? Hey, Dar, uh-- Hey, Bargie-- Hey, C-53? Hey, guys? Hey, Bargie? Nermut! Hey! Hey, Dar? Hey, C-53? Hey, Dar?

[transmission-end noise]

PLECK: Okay, yes. I start a lot of-- I mean, I'm a curious, inquisitive person!

TWO: From my vantage point, the person who starts the most conversations is a captain, of sorts.

PLECK: Oh, okay. Great! Yeah! Well, congratulations to me, I guess, then. Right?

TWO: So now the responsibility of the Tellurian race rests on your shoulders.

[the crew make alarmed and unenthused noises]

BARGIE: Wow, good luck. Good *luck*.

NERMUT: Geez.

DAR: So he trapped you, Pleck. He trapped you in that.

NERMUT: Yeah, glad you're such a good conversation-starter.

DAR: Oh boy. Oh boy, Nermut.

NERMUT: Okay.

TWO: However, I will grant you [laughter] the help of your trusty crew.

PLECK: [stammering] Uh... great. Yes. I mean, yeah, we're... best friends, most of us. So-- sometimes lovers. Not me.

BARGIE: What?

NERMUT: Hm?

PLECK: I mean, just-- that's a part of the history--

TWO: Which one of the crew were you--

C-53: He doesn't *need* to know that.

PLECK: Well, it's important!

BEANO: Beano wanna know what the test is! Beano wanna move things along.

TWO: Your first test, should you choose to accept it...

DAR: Oh, we have a choice in this?

TWO: Yes. Every crew member has a choice.

C-53: Hypothetically, if we decline the test, what happens?

TWO: The entire Tellurian race will be decimated.

PLECK: Okay, let's definitely not--

NERMUT: Bargie, think hard before instantly declining it, okay?

TWO: Your first test, should you choose to accept it... will be here. [snaps fingers, Pleck makes a bewildered noise and C-53 whirrs] Yes, you two are alone.

PLECK: Oh. Uh, yeah.

C-53: Right. Well--

PLECK: Is this a box? Are we in a box?

C-53: Yeah, this seems to be a box.

TWO: Yes, this is a box of wood.

C-53: Alright.

PLECK: Okay.

C-53: Not a ton of room in here. [continuous noises of C-53 wandering around the box]

TWO: You have to find a way out. And if you don't, [C-53 knocks on the box] one of your crew members will perish.

[C-53 knocks again]

PLECK: [stuttering in panic] Wait-- one of my crew-- okay, so there's one in three chance it's Beano.

[C-53 knocks again]

TWO: Do you not consider your ship a crew member? I thought you guys were--

C-53: Oh, geez, yeah. That's a fair point.

PLECK: So we have to--

C-53: So we just have to get out of this box?

TWO: Did I mince my words?

PLECK: My confusion is which of the crew members is--

TWO: I feel like you're really caught up on this. Which crew member is gonna die? I'm just saying-- I just assumed you would be equally in love with all of your crew members!

PLECK: I'm saying, if there's any chance it's Beano, I'm gonna try a little less hard.

C-53: But it's a wooden box, is it not? Can I not just [C-53 knocks again] punch through this wooden box?

TWO: Well, all I know is that you guys still haven't gotten out of the box. I actually thought this was one of the *easiest* parts of the test, but now it's proving that this test was worth it.

C-53: I'm just gonna-- I'm gonna punch out of this box.

[mechanical wind-up noises, wood clattering]

PLECK: Oh, yeah. Seems we're in some sort of storage area.

C-53: Hm.

PLECK: If we get out of the box, then what? Do we just keep going, or--

TWO: Wow. Wow. I-- I instructed you with one task. [audibly agitated] You still have not exited the box!

C-53: Okay, we're just--

TWO: Proving once again that this test was worth it!

C-53: Well, this test is sort of oblique!

PLECK: Two, we're sort of just-- we're just not really sure what the parameters are--

TWO: Oh, I'm sorry! Is this test not *good enough* for you?

C-53: Okay! Alright! We're gonna exit the box.

TWO: Oh, no, I don't know anything about *tests*, do I? Huh?

PLECK: Okay. Look. I'm outside of the box. I thought it was some sort of trick! ...I'm pretty sure this is the lower cargo hold of Bargie, right?

TWO: Yeah.

PLECK: Hey, Bargie?

BARGIE: Yeah?

PLECK: Oh. [laughing] Yeah, no, we're still on the ship.

TWO: Well, you passed the test.

PLECK: I mean--

TWO: I'll see you guys later. [snaps fingers]

PLECK: Wait, that was the whole test?

C-53: I thought we did a good job at that test.

PLECK: That sorta seemed... kinda easy, right?

C-53: You know, you feel like with a demi-Rodd like this, they're trying to trick you somehow.

PLECK: That there'd be some sort of irony involved.

C-53: Yeah, yeah.

PLECK: Yeah. But turns out--

BARGIE: Sorry to interrupt, but I just wanted to let you two know that the door to this area has... disappeared?

PLECK: Oh. Uh...

BARGIE: So you're stuck and have to find a way out.

C-53: Of the lower cargo hold?

BARGIE: Yup.

[Two laughs in a menacing, heavily echoing fashion]

C-53: Okay, see, now that's a sinister laugh.

PLECK: Okay, now the irony. I get it now. I get it.

C-53: Yeah. So we got out of the box, but how do we get out of the cargo hold without hurting Bargie?

TWO: [echoing] Let's introduce some more players to this game. [snaps fingers twice]

DAR: Listen, I get it. We agreed! We're in the 'won't they' phase of our 'will they, won't they' thing!

NERMUT: I was not flirting with him!

PLECK: Hey--

DAR: You *absolutely* were!

NERMUT: I wasn't!

DAR: I recognize the sparkle in his eye too, and frankly, I would've been attracted to it! But then *you* were attracted to it, so I was *not* gonna--

NERMUT: Okay, fine! Fine!

PLECK: Hey, guys--

NERMUT: You're not the only one who flexes!

C-53: Guys.

NERMUT: You guys hang on one sec. I am allowed to talk to anybody!

DAR: Of course you are! We're both allowed to talk to whoever we wanna talk to!

NERMUT: 'Cause you make everything about you!

PLECK: C-53--

DAR: [in disbelief] *I* make everything about *me*?

NERMUT: I rode in your flap *once*!

PLECK: C-53, I think we--

C-53: We should just start looking on our own.

PLECK: We should get outta here, yeah. This is-- this is becoming-- Two has removed the door, for some reason, to the cargo hold. We need to get out.

NERMUT: That means we could just go through, if there's no door.

DAR: [still confrontational] What do you think of the fact that Two chose a form where he is not wearing a shirt?

PLECK: That *is* a little confusing.

DAR: I mean, it's not like he *worked* for those muscles. He just made 'em up!

C-53: He does have a fantastic upper body.

PLECK: Manifested the muscles, yeah.

DAR: Thank you, C. He does have a fantastic upper body.

C-53: Just throwing that out there.

NERMUT: It seems like Two doesn't necessarily *need* a physical form and therefore wouldn't need clothing, so that would be extra.

PLECK: Why are you *defending* Two?

NERMUT: I'm not! I'm--

PLECK: He's clearly some sort of trickster Rodd who's come in and decided to mess up our--

C-53: Alright, Nermut--

[Two snaps his fingers, everyone goes 'oh!']

TWO: Oh, sorry, am I interrupting something?

NERMUT: No, no, no.

DAR: Did your hair get *longer*?

TWO: Do you like it?

DAR: Yes.

C-53: Extremely luxurious.

TWO: Thank you. I'm getting used to this form, I must say. It's quite fun.

PLECK: Yeah. Uh, you know, two legs. Turns out--

TWO: You like legs and arms?

PLECK: Yeah. Yeah, I like 'em.

TWO: Yeah?

PLECK: Yeah. [Two snaps his fingers] Oh! My arms and legs! [Nermut makes a horrified noise] How am I gonna get out of the room now?! Oh no!

[Dar laughs in terror]

NERMUT: Pleck! Pleck, you're barely taller than me!

TWO: You know who *has* arms and legs, Pleck? Not any of these. [snaps fingers repeatedly, the crew cry out in horror] But this guy... [snaps fingers]

BEANO: Beano have arms and legs!

[loud thumping footsteps, crew makes disgusted noises]

PLECK: [laughing in horror] Oh, it's so grotesque!

NERMUT: Oh no!

PLECK: It's so grotesque to see him with *my* arms and legs!

BEANO: Beano have big arms and legs now!

TWO: As you see-- [snaps fingers] this very tall refrigerator, and on top of this tall refrigerator is a jar of cookies. You must each eat a cookie.

PLECK: Wait, are we still trying to get out of the room?

TWO: No, this is a new test.

NERMUT: We didn't get out of the room.

PLECK: We're still stuck in the room!

TWO: Yeah, but-- you guys weren't, like, doing that one. It was, like, really boring.

PLECK: We were trying!

TWO: No! You were talking a *lot!*

C-53: He sort of has a point.

TWO: You have no action! Seriously!

NERMUT: Well, to be--

BEANO: Beano have action! Look at Beano!

[thudding sounds as Beano dances around]

TWO: What a beautiful dance!

PLECK: It's so disgusting to see Tellurian-sized arms and legs attached to a torso that is the size of a bean.

C-53: It's deeply wrong.

BEANO: Beano!

TWO: So.

C-53: [annoyed] Alright, fine. Fine. We don't have any arms or legs, but we have to get on top of this refrigerator and eat a cookie?

TWO: That's right!

C-53: Alright. No problem. I'll just drag myself with my head. [mechanical whirring as C-53 drags himself] Taking a bit longer than I'd like, but I'm making progress.

BEANO: Ooh, Beano love cookies! [cookie-eating noises]

PLECK: Beano, no!

DAR: No, no, no! Beano! Beano, wait!

PLECK: Just give us one!

BEANO: You want cookie?

PLECK: Yeah.

DAR: Yes!

NERMUT: One cookie each!

C-53: Beano, each of us needs to eat a cookie.

NERMUT: Yeah.

TWO: Beano, have they treated you right?

PLECK: Beano, we tuck you in every single night.

DAR: We tell you the Beano story every single night.

TWO: Perhaps you'd like to look at this playback.

C-53: [muttering] This isn't going to be flattering.

PLECK: This is bad.

DAR: That's really not gonna look good.

TWO: Oh, yes.

[playback-start noise]

TWO RECORDING: I feel like you're really caught up on this. Which crew member is gonna die? I'm just saying-- I just assumed you would be equally in love with all of your crew members!

PLECK RECORDING: I'm saying, if there's any chance it's Beano, I'm gonna try a little less hard.

[playback-end noise]

C-53: Yeah, we don't come off great in that clip.

BEANO: [quietly] Beano... Beano sad. [slow footsteps, cookie-eating noises, distressed noises from the crew]

PLECK: Oh, Beano, come on.

DAR: Beano, come on.

TWO: Wow.

BEANO: Beano break arm!

[the crew cry out in horror, impact noises]

PLECK: That's *my* arm!

NERMUT: Oh no!

C-53: Also, Beano, didn't that hurt *you*?

BEANO: Beano no hurt.

PLECK: No, that actually--

C-53: Oh, that's--

PLECK: That hurts.

C-53: That's shaking around.

DAR: [shuddering] That is *upsetting*. Wow.

NERMUT: Don't--

C-53: Wow.

DAR: He keeps opening and shutting the refrigerator door on it.

BEANO: Beano close door on arm! [refrigerator door slams repeatedly]

NERMUT: Beano, look at me. Beano. We admit it. We've been disrespectful, and it's because you can be abrasive. But this is your chance to join the team for real. You can help us, and therefore be respected. And we'll tell you--

BEANO: Beano know.

NERMUT: Hm?

BEANO: Beano know.

DAR: Beano know?

[beat]

BEANO: Beano break *other* arm! [refrigerator door slams repeatedly]

DAR: [laughing miserably] Oh, no!

C-53: Now he can't even pull a cookie out of the jar, even if he wanted to.

TWO: Let's reset. [snaps fingers]

PLECK: [crying out in agony] Please unbreak my arms! Please, unbreak my arms!

TWO: You don't like them like that?

PLECK: No! It's so painful!

TWO: Oh, really? Alright. [snaps fingers]

NERMUT: You have four legs!

PLECK: [laughing] Oh! Oh no! [plodding footsteps]

TWO: Is that better?

PLECK: I mean, slightly.

C-53: Sort of like a Tellurian horse.

TWO: What about now? [snaps fingers]

C-53: Oh! Whoa, you're a shrimp!

[shrimp-like noises of distress]

BARGIE: Oh, come on!

[Two snaps his fingers, Pleck gasps for breath]

NERMUT: All these powers.

PLECK: Did you just do that as, like, a throwaway thing? Because that was *horrifying!*

DAR: Very good.

BEANO: Beano thought this test was... okay.

NERMUT: Oh. Alright.

DAR: Okay, Beano.

C-53: Tough review.

NERMUT: Yeah. Beano normally *wuvs* stuff, so that's actually kind of a harsh review.

PLECK: Hey, Two, can I ask-- like, how many of these tests have you given to different species?

TWO: [stammering] What makes you ask that question? Why would you ask that?

PLECK: I don't know. I just feel like I can't really tell what these tests are supposed to be doing, exactly. It's almost like you don't really know anything about Tellurians.

C-53: Or how to test things.

DAR: Are *you* the one being tested?

TWO: Interesting.

BARGIE: Yeah, buddy, what's your deal?

[laughter]

TWO: Interesting!

BEANO: Beano wanna know the final test.

TWO: [slightly nervous] Yes, of course. Okay.

PLECK: Beano, why are you so interested in these tests?

BEANO: Beano wuv tests. Beano *wuv* tests! Beano wanna test, [deep, threatening echo] or Beano go insane!

PLECK: Okay, alright. Alright.

DAR: Fair enough.

C-53: Uh, Two, we have a bit of a situation with Beano.

TWO: Yes. Don't I know it.

[beat, the crew make 'hm?' noises]

PLECK: Don't you know it?

DAR: I'm sorry?

PLECK: Do you not know it?

TWO: [weary sigh] I need to find a Tellurian that actually *cares* about fellow man.

C-53: Might be on the wrong ship.

PLECK: No! No, no, no. Hold on, C-53. You're looking for a Tellurian who *cares*?

TWO: Yes, I just-- I need to find a Tellurian who... who cares about other creatures. So that, you know, we don't have to wipe the species from the face of existence.

PLECK: Okay, well, yeah. I would say that that's pretty much, like, a Tellurian's whole thing. We're *very* emotional. Care a lot. Maybe too much sometimes.

DAR: Empathetic to a fault.

NERMUT: I can say, despite the regularity with which Pleck messes up social situations, offends almost everyone he meets, and drags people into morass, he really means well.

PLECK: I'm just not intelligent enough to succeed at *doing* well.

TWO: So you care about all of these crew members that you have?

PLECK: Yeah. Oh, deeply. And I would say that I care way more than I am capable of succeeding at pretty much anything.

TWO: Hmm. Well, in that case, I guess... I guess just one more test will do.

DAR: And you really couldn't find, like, another Tellurian?

[Pleck laughs, intermission music interrupted by static; carnival noises]

CLINT 9214: Get down on the ground.

VICTIM: Okay!

9214: I'm CLINT 9214. You probably recognize me as the drummer from the band, The CLINTs. [victim makes uncertain noises] Yeah, well, I sit in the back, but I'm pretty much the frontman. Anyway, I'm here to tell you that if I demand that you get down on the ground and show me your FAIC, you better: one, get down on the ground. And then two, show me your FAIC. I will accept no other identification. The only exception being a high-quality business card from VistaPrint. That's right. When we started The CLINTs at CLINTillion three cycles ago, we wanted to be ready for any gig that came our way. That's why we all ordered cards from VistaPrint, to make the professional impression right in the moment. Because your next opportunity is coming *right now*. And all it takes to feel like you're ready to own the now... is ten dollars. Not sure what that is in kroon, but it's *low*. Just upload your design or start with one of VistaPrint's beautiful, professionally-designed options. Pick the paper stock, style, and quantity, order, and boom! Receive your cards in as few as three days! And you *know* those are carefully selected inks and responsibly sourced paper stocks.

VICTIM: Um, can I get up? I have a FAIC. [paper rustling]

9214: Um, yeah. Great. Just tell all your friends. VistaPrint wants you to do something great for your business *right now*. Which is why they can get 500 high-quality custom business cards starting at \$9.99. Use code M-T-Z at vistaprint.com. That's code M-T-Z at vistaprint.com.

VICTIM: I will.

9214: [chanting rhythmically] M-T-Z! At vistaprint.com!

VICTIM: At vistaprint.com. Yeah.

9214: All hail the Federated Alliance.

VICTIM: All hail the Federated Alliance.

9214: And also rock n' roll. [pause, cocks gun] Also rock n' roll.

VICTIM: Also rock n' roll.

9214: Alright.

[intermission music resumes]

PLECK: Alright, Two. I'm ready. I'm ready to take whatever test you can throw at me, and... you know, probably screw it up.

C-53: Are you absolutely sure about this?

PLECK: I mean, what other choice do I have?

C-53: Well, you could... maybe *prepare* for the test a little bit? So that Tellurians aren't extincted by your potential blowing of this test?

PLECK: I don't know how to prepare for a test like this! I've never--

C-53: Well, neither do I. But, you know, maybe just get into better shape, or...

PLECK: [laughing] Physically?

C-53: I dunno.

PLECK: That's mean.

C-53: Okay.

TWO: Do you want some time? I can give you some time. Fifty years, perhaps?

PLECK: [panicked] No, no, no! No!

TWO: No, here we go! Fifty years! [snaps fingers]

PLECK: [old man noises, plodding footsteps]

DAR: Whoa.

NERMUT: What?

DAR: Look how pink and wrinkly he is!

PLECK: [raspy old-man voice] My life...

NERMUT: Pleck, where did you just go?

PLECK: [rasping] Into space devoid of time or light, substance or matter. For fifty years I floated endlessly.

C-53: Did you learn... [with Dar] anything?

PLECK: [rasping] Nothing. I've learned nothing. [laughter]

TWO: What did you do for fifty years?

PLECK: [rasping] Well, for like the first six months I sort of freaked out. And then I was like, "I should probably-- this is part of the test." At a certain point, you just stop. I kind of lost track of reality for a bit. I kind of floated through. The thing was, I couldn't see anything. I kind of forgot what was real and what wasn't.

TWO: That was my bad. Let's reverse that. [snaps fingers, Pleck sighs in relief]

C-53: Whoa. He, like, re-inflated.

TWO: Feeling better?

PLECK: Uh, about what?

TWO: Right. Of course.

DAR: Wow.

TWO: Alright! Back to the test! [snaps fingers] As you can see, we are standing on a crystal obelisk.

C-53: Oh, yeah. Wow.

TWO: Before you lies [snaps fingers, sudden audience chatter] the entire Tellurian population.

PLECK & C-53: Wow.

[entire Tellurian population chants what sounds like Pleck's name]

TWO: Fleck--

PLECK: It's Pleck, with a P.

[beat; audience continues cheering, but it's now clear they're chanting Fleck]

TWO: Pleck--

PLECK: Wait, are they saying 'Pleck' or--

DAR: Have you been testing the wrong Tellurian this whole time?

C-53: Were you supposed to find a *Fleck*? That would explain a lot.

DAR: Because this is *Pleck*.

PLECK: I will tell you this. Fleck Decksetter is a very famous Tellurian.

TWO: Hold on. What's your name?

DAR: Pleck. With a P.

C-53: Puh. Pleck.

PLECK: Pleck Decksetter.

DAR: P like pneumonia.

TWO: You're Pleck Decksetter.

PLECK: I'm Pleck Decksetter.

TWO: Not *Fleck* Decksetter.

PLECK: No. Fleck Decksetter's a very--

C-53: Oh, Fleck Decksetter the Zyball star?

PLECK: Yeah. He's a famous Zyball player.

C-53: Oh. Yeah, no.

TWO: This makes a lot of sense. But since I've already started, I mean, might as well finish the test.

[the crew make uncertain noises]

DAR: Uh, if you were supposed to be testing Fleck--

TWO: I mean... [long pause, Dar laughs] Pleck.

PLECK: Yes?

TWO: When I snap my fingers, you will have the intelligence that rivals Beano.

PLECK: [completely lost] What?

NERMUT: I think that's a compliment.

TWO: And it will be up to you to decide what to do when a comet comes--

PLECK: What?

TWO: To destroy this entire planet, that holds the entire Tellurian population. Riding on that comet... is Beano.

C-53: [whispering loudly] Oh, I see what's going on here.

PLECK: I-- okay, so my choice is to-- my choice is to either save Beano-- wait, if I--

C-53: Maybe give him the intelligence now.

[Two snaps his fingers, quiet laughter from the crew]

C-53: Pleck? Are you-- how do you feel?

PLECK: [unusually confident] Never better. With my enhanced vision from my K'hekk eye, I can tell that the comet's current rate of descent and distance gives us about a minute and a half. So we'll have to act fast. C-53, can I borrow your left arm, please?

C-53: Yes, of course. [sparking, wires snapping] Here you go.

[stone-chipping noises]

DAR: He's chipping away at the crystal obelisk with [with Nermut] C-53's left arm.

C-53: I guess he could have asked *me* to chip away at it.

PLECK: You'd be far too slow for that, C-53.

C-53: [mildly affronted] Oh, wow. Okay.

NERMUT: Wow. Look at how fast he's going.

DAR: Did you also give him super-*strength*?

TWO: Well, actually, when the Tellurian mind is at top speed, it is able to take the body to limits not-- not having-- [laughs]

PLECK: Shut up, you idiot. [all laugh] Not that you could break my concentration, but if you could, I would ask you to kindly shut up. Ah yes, the crystal is nearly complete. Stand back!

[melodic humming noise]

C-53: He's created a giant refracting laser.

PLECK: This lens I've created will reflect light from this planet's sun and send a beam of focused energy back toward the comet, slowing its descent as it comes towards us. As the comet blocks out light from the sun, the energy from the lens will decrease as well until the comet is in a perfect geosynchronous orbit around the planet. Thereby saving both Beano and the Tellurian species.

C-53: [whispering] It's brilliant.

[entire Tellurian species cheers Fleck's name]

PLECK: I shall also carve in the rest of this obelisk a giant P, so that the crowd will know that I am not Fleck, but rather Pleck Decksetter. [C-53 makes an unenthused noise] It's important. It's important to me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [very distant] Oh!

[audience chanting changes to 'Flep']

PLECK: Now they're saying-- they're saying Flep now.

C-53: That's a common Tellurian name.

PLECK: No, yeah. Well, Flep Decksetter is a *retired* Zyball player. He's now an umpire.

[Two snaps his fingers, applauds slowly]

TWO: Magnificent.

PLECK: Two, I must say, it wasn't until you unlocked the depth of my intellect that I was able to fully grasp your test. You wanted to see if I would put the existence of my species above that of a warm bean, and you gave me the intelligence to save both if I so chose. I'm honored that I was selected for this test. I hope I've proven the importance of my species.

TWO: Well, thank you. That being said, the Tellurian race-- I mean, it's saved, but *important?* That's... wow. I definitely would not use that word. Like, there are so many species in all of the different galaxies. You guys, like, if we were ranking them-- which we don't... officially. But like,

you know. [laughter] In the locker room, we rank 'em all the time. And you guys-- [laughing] I mean, you guys are--

PLECK: Way down there?

TWO: So far down. There are inanimate objects that rank above you.

C-53: Hm. Give us an example?

TWO: [instantly] Moss.

C-53: Mm. Yeah, moss can grow pretty much anywhere.

TWO: An inanimate object it is not, but still. [laughing]

PLECK: Did you switch intelligence with me?

TWO: I'll be honest. Giving you intelligence took away from mine. It's actually one of the hardest things we can muster. Oh, man. I'm gonna need that back. [snaps fingers, sighs in relief]

DAR: Pleck, how do you feel?

NERMUT: Are you dumb again?

PLECK: What do you mean, again?

DAR: I mean, now you have--

PLECK: No, he hasn't taken it back. I still have it. You know, I just gotta say, I really pulled out some smart stuff right then-- back then. Earlier. And I appreciate that you let me keep all the smarts that I had. Because it still feels good.

DAR: [mocking] Yep. All the smarts still feels real good with Pleck.

PLECK: Thank you, Dar. Yes. Absolutely.

DAR: Couldn't have been saider bet.

[laughter]

NERMUT: Pleck, now that you're still as smart, can you explain kind of the math behind that trick you pulled back there with the--

PLECK: With the light and the comet?

NERMUT: Yeah. Just explain it again.

TWO: This seems a little cruel.

PLECK: So essentially, what I did, um-- Beano was on the comet. I thought, what if-- um, what if I was able to, um, use the power of the sun?

NERMUT: Mm-hmm.

PLECK: And then I did!

TWO: Wow.

PLECK: Yep. So--

TWO: Brilliant.

C-53: Well, I'm satisfied.

TWO: Pleck.

PLECK: Yeah?

TWO: Congratulations. Your test... has been passed. Two-a-do! [snaps fingers]

PLECK: [confused and unimpressed] Two-a-do?

C-53: Mm. That's his thing.

PLECK: I think he's trying to make that.

C-53: Little forced.

NERMUT: Yeah.

[intermission sting; baby-mobile nursery music, Two snaps his fingers]

TWO: Beano?

BEANO: Beano here!

TWO: I... I have finished the tests, and I think I did rather well.

BEANO: Excellent! Beano pleased with the progress you made, Two.

TWO: I... [deep breath] I must admit, that was a hard one. [small laugh] Pleck is a creature that is so dumb, I don't know how he's alive.

BEANO: Pleck dumb. Beano smart.

TWO: Yes.

BEANO: Beano thank you, Two. Thank you for running complicated probability field test in quantum space.

TWO: Any time. Please, it was an honor and a pleasure. And I hope I did you proud.

BEANO: Beano proud.

TWO: Well, thank you, Beano. And if you ever need me to come back... well, you know my number.

BEANO: Beano do! Two!

TWO: Bye, Beano.

BEANO: Beano!

[intermission sting; muffled sports-game chatter, Pleck sighs]

C-53: Did you put-- is this the Zyball game?

PLECK: Yeah, I just wanted to see who was winning.

DAR: Is that Fleck Decksetter?

PLECK: Yeah, that's Fleck Decksetter.

FLECK ON HOLO: Man, I can't believe we won another game. We really played really well out there today, you know? It was one of those games that you never knew what was gonna happen! But I got the smarts on me, and I can basically complete any game successfully a hundo percent.

PLECK: I wonder how he would've done on the test. He seems like kind of a jerk.

C-53: He's in great shape, though.

PLECK: Very good shape.

NERMUT: Are all the Decksetters related?

PLECK: No. No, no, no. It's an incredibly common Tellurian name.

FLECK ON HOLO: Let's just say, if I was in a situation where, like, a comet was coming at me and-- what would I do? That's a really interesting question. Thank you so much for asking. I would basically lift my shirt up and show my abs. And a hundo percent, that comet would [heavily slurred] go away.

DAR: [mimicking Fleck's pronunciation in bewilderment] Go away?

PLECK: You know, the game's over, we can probably just turn this off.

[holo turns off]

DAR: Yeah. I mean, honestly, when the athletes get interviewed, it's the worst part of a sports broadcast.

PLECK: Yeah, they're just-- it's just platitudes about the game. It's not really--

NERMUT: Good at one thing.

DAR: It doesn't matter.

[holo turns back on]

FLECK ON HOLO: All hail the Federated Alliance.

DAR: [laughing] We turned off this program!

[holo turns back off]

BARGIE: Oh no, that ship guy is here again.

PLECK: The ship guy?

BARGIE: The ship that I broke up with.

NERMUT: Oh, the shrimp-delivery ship?

[distant sound of Two snapping his fingers]

C-53: Wait a minute...

BARGIE: It's a-- it's a giant shrimp!

C-53: Oh. See, now there you go.

PLECK: There's some irony.

C-53: Transformed into the thing he spent his whole life delivering. Now that's good irony.

[Two snaps his fingers]

TWO: Did somebody say shrimp?

BARGIE: No, no, no!

C-53: Now, Two, did you do this? Did you turn the shrimp boat into a giant shrimp?

TWO: Yes! Yes!

C-53: See, now that's pretty good!

TWO: Ah-ha-ha. I've learned something after all.

C-53: I think you're gettin' there, buddy.

TWO: Thank you, thank you. Okay, I'm going for real this time. Two-la-do! [snaps fingers]

PLECK: He said two-*la*-do that time!

C-53: I feel like he's still workshopping it.

[finale music]

PLECK: Uh, Two, I don't know if you're still here, but I prefer two-la-do, honestly.

C-53: Eh, two-a-do has a nice sort of parity to it.

ALDEN: He'll keep testing.

WINSTON: Can he come back and do toodaloo?

TWO: [snaps fingers] Hey! I'm gonna leave again. Bye! Two-la-la-do! [snaps fingers]

BARGIE: Two-la-*la*-do?

C-53: Two-la-la-do sounds like a person.

PLECK: Wait, wasn't Two-la-la-do a famous holo star?

BARGIE: Yeah.

NERMUT: Okay. Wow.

TWO: Two-la-die-do! [snaps fingers]

BARGIE: Wow, you said it--

NERMUT: When you came *back*?

BARGIE: He came in and said it.

NERMUT: You can't-- what?

[all laugh]