

[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, C-53, where's Nermut?

C-53: Oh, he went back to Rebellion headquarters.

PLECK: Wait, what? When?

C-53: I guess almost a day ago, at this point.

PLECK: [laughing] A day ago? How did I miss that? He didn't even say goodbye?

C-53: I dunno, I guess you were asleep when-- he left in kind of a huff, to be honest.

PLECK: [slightly disappointed] Oh.

BARGIE: You were too busy practicing that *song* of yours.

PLECK: Uh, well, it's a ballad, for one. It's not *just* a song. But yeah. I wrote it, and now I need to memorize it.

BARGIE: And now you need to sing it!

PLECK: [small sigh] If I sing it, I don't want you guys to hear it until it's ready, okay?

BARGIE: Well, we've been hearing it, because you've been practicing it. So at this point, we know it as much as you know it.

BEANO: Beano wuv it.

PLECK: Thank you, Beano.

C-53: Well, Beano wuvs a lot of stuff.

[door opens]

DAR: [agitated] I wanna keep busy. Let's keep busy! Let's go! Let's go! Let's do something!

PLECK: Dar, Dar, why are you carrying all those bags?

DAR: I'm ready to go on a mission!

PLECK: Okay. We're gonna get one at some point. You can just calm down--

DAR: No, we gotta take one now. You know what? [snaps fingers] Let's just create our own missions! Let's--

C-53: Uh, that's not really how the system works.

DAR: [forceful, deeply aggravated] I don't care!

C-53: Alright.

PLECK: Wow. Listen, Dar--

BARGIE: The thing is, it's like once you go through heartbreak, you wanna distract yourself so you don't have to think about it again.

C-53: Oh, that's true.

BARGIE: So I really know what Dar's going through. You wanna keep busy, so those memories don't just keep coming back. You just go out there, you start--

DAR: I want to agree with you, Bargie, we're on the same page, but if we talk about this anymore, then we're talking about my relationship.

BARGIE: That's right! Let's keep busy! I want to keep busy! You wanna keep busy? Let's go keep busy.

DAR: Let's do it!

PLECK: Whoa, guys, guys--

BARGIE: [rushed] I wanna do something. Let's just do something. What do you wanna do, Dar? Anything.

DAR: I wanna-- I wanna feel like I've accomplished something without having to do too much.

BARGIE: I wanna put my kroon into something and get something returning for what I'm giving my kroon to.

PLECK: Uh--

DAR: We're gonna go shopping! Let's go shopping!

BARGIE: Shopping!

DAR: Shopping trip.

BEANO: Ooh, Beano wuv late-stage capitalism.

BARGIE: Great. Uh, the mall!

DAR: I love the mall! Let's go to the mall!

PLECK: Guys--

BARGIE: We're going to the mall!

PLECK: Guys, listen, we're gonna have a mission at some point. We can't just really go to the mall, right? I mean--

[incoming-transmission noise]

C-53: Emissary Decksetter, I have an incoming transmission from Missions Operations Manager Nermut Bundaloy.

DAR: [urgent] How do I look?

PLECK: Fine.

C-53: Fine, Dar.

BARGIE: Put your flaps up! Put your flaps up!

DAR: Okay! Okay, answer.

[start-transmission noise]

PLECK: Hey, Nermut!

NERMUT: Hey, guys!

PLECK: Hey, man, I miss you! I thought you were gonna say goodbye before you left.

NERMUT: Oh, sorry. You know, I had to get back, and you were sleeping, and I just-- you know how it is. But, yeah, it was great being on the ship. And I'm-- look-- [distant] back in my office, feels good. It was good to see you guys.

PLECK: I guess. You know--

NERMUT: Back in the groove.

PLECK: As crazy as the last few weeks have been, things are kinda back to normal, huh?

NERMUT: Yeah, totally. Like, back to--

BEANO: Yeah, totally normal. Nothing weird's happening.

NERMUT: Right. Uh--

PLECK: Right. Like Beano said. Totally normal.

NERMUT: Yeah, yeah. You know, like, I came back, I hung out with Mel, and--

BARGIE: Okay.

C-53: Wow. Okay.

PLECK: Why would you start--

BARGIE: Why would you--

PLECK: Why would you *lead* with that, Nermut?

NERMUT: I said things were normal, and I just-- like, I hadn't seen Mel in a while, and--

DAR: [deeply aggravated] *Mission!* [normal tone, almost] Nermut, do you have a mission for us?

NERMUT: Yeah, totally.

BEANO: [distant, hushed] Beano love drama.

NERMUT: [sighs] Okay, so let me pull up the mission. Alright--

[door opens]

MEL: Nermie?

NERMUT: Oh, hey, Mel! Sorry guys, one sec.

MEL: [largely incomprehensible, probably inviting Nermut to a social function]

NERMUT: Uh, you know what, why not?

MEL: [incomprehensible]

NERMUT: [hushed] Uh, guys, do you know what she said?

[the crew make noises to the negative]

NERMUT: Okay. I agreed to do something. Cool, Mel! See you there! [Mel makes a noise]
Maybe write it out for me so I-- [door closes] okay. Uh, alright, guys. So this is exciting. Actually, you're gonna go on a mission that is based on intel that you gathered. It's exciting!

PLECK: What does that mean?

NERMUT: Well-- so the Rebellion finally, you know, processed the information from the Totopo Casino.

C-53: They *processed* the information?

NERMUT: Yeah!

C-53: We got that three months ago!

NERMUT: Well, you know, when I do a mission briefing, I send it into the data processing center. And they kind of factor it into the existing intel--

PLECK: Nermut. Nermut?

NERMUT: Yeah?

PLECK: We learned at Totopo Casino that someone has a Planet Crusher Crusher.

NERMUT: Yeah, it was--

PLECK: It took them three months for that information to reach the Rebellion?

NERMUT: Well, it was-- they thought the second 'crusher' was a typo, and so it went through--

PLECK: No, we told you--

NERMUT: I know you told *me*! I filed it right! But they deleted all the second 'crusher', they just thought it was a Planet Crusher, which is a known thing. Came back to me for fact-checking, I put the 'crusher' back in. So now that they know it was a Planet Crusher Crusher, we need to visit-- this is a name, a blast from the past, you ready? Zwog Tambouie!

C-53: Oh, okay.

NERMUT: Remember?

C-53: Yeah, the inventor of the Planet Crusher. That makes good sense.

NERMUT: Yes. So you guys are going to the Tiger Nebula Strip Mall to liaise with Zwog Tambouie, to figure out who he's building these things for.

DAR: [rushed] We were already planning on going to the mall.

[beat]

NERMUT: Uh, what do you mean--

PLECK: We were actually planning to go to the mall.

C-53: Mall visit.

NERMUT: But it's a work day. What do you mean, you were--

DAR: It doesn't-- it doesn't matter. You don't tell me where to go, I've already decided that we're going to the mall, and guess what? That's where we're going.

NERMUT: My job is literally to tell you where to go. It's my actual job, Dar.

DAR: I just have my own thoughts and feelings.

NERMUT: I didn't say you didn't!

BEANO: [whispering] Beano love the drama!

DAR: You did. You did say that earlier. That I have no feelings.

NERMUT: Okay, great. Well, you can continue going to the mall, because it's the actual job. So.

DAR: Great. And I'm gonna knock this job out of the freaking park.

NERMUT: Great. That's what-- that's what we here at the Rebellion are all about, so-- [Pleck sighs] so you guys have your mission, and I have my mission here.

C-53: Yeah, what is your mission, again?

NERMUT: Hanging out with Mel.

C-53: Where?

NERMUT: That's for me to find out and for you to wonder.

C-53: Okay.

DAR: Couldn't care less! See ya, Nermut!

NERMUT: [sighs] Bye.

[end-transmission noise]

PLECK: I don't like this.

[intermission music interrupted by static]

FINNIFORD: Hey! Hey, you! It's me, Finniford J. Ryan, board-certified loan shark! Whenever I loan out some of my precious, precious kroon, I reach into the pocket of my mechanized water suit and hand the borrower my stunning VistaPrint business card. See here? It says "Finniford J. Ryan" on it! And my tagline, "You owe me a lot of kroon!"

MOSS: [faint] Yeah, kroon!

FINNIFORD: Feel that cardstock! Look at that gorgeous ink! People take this card and they're like, "No way I'm gonna scam Finniford J. Ryan!" I've even loaned a lot of kroon to one of the Council of Seven! Huh? How much does it cost to make a first impression like that? Just ten dollars! How about that? And if you don't have it, ol' Finniford J. Ryan might loan it to ya! And then you'll owe me a very small amount of kroon! With VistaPrint, you can easily upload your design or start with one of dozens of professionally-designed options! Add your logo and your contact information with just a few clicks. Check out this deal. VistaPrint wants you to do something great with your business right now! Which is why you 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. M-T-Z at vistaprint.com! Great!

[beat]

FINNIFORD: [distant, walking away] Hey, wait a second. [walking back over] You! It's me, Finniford J. Ryan! Board-certified loan shark! Whenever I loan out some of my precious, precious kroon, I reach into the pocket of my mechanized water suit and hand the borrower my stunning VistaPrint business card! See here? It says "Finniford J. Ryan" on it!

[intermission music resumes, transition to myriad footsteps]

C-53: Huh. Well, this is where Zwog Tambouie's furniture store was the last time we were here, but this doesn't look good.

PLECK: Yeah.

RUCE: Welcome to Pierce Anything, where me and my partner Bruce-- we pierce [with Bruce] anything!

PLECK: Yeah, no, we're good, actually.

BRUCE: Commencing pierce protocol!

PLECK: [frantic] No, no, no! No, we're good, we're good!

DAR: Uh, I actually could use a few piercings.

PLECK: Okay.

CUSTOMER: I just got my kidney pierced, it's awesome!

BRUCE: Looking jucking fantastic!

CUSTOMER: Cool! Bleedin' out!

C-53: Yeah. Shouldn't you, I don't know, sew that up?

RUCE: We don't believe in sewing. It's all organic.

CUSTOMER: Yeah, what a square!

BRUCE: Not part of piercing protocol.

PLECK: Alright, uh-- Bruce, great to meet you. You don't happen to know who used to own the shop that you're in now, do you?

RUCE: Me or Bruce?

PLECK: You.

RUCE: My name is Ruce.

PLECK: Your name is Ruce?

RUCE: Ruce and Bruce! Bruce is my protocol robot.

C-53: Sure.

BRUCE: Initiating pierce protocol!

PLECK: No, don't get close to me. Ruce, Bruce, do you happen to know what happened to the--

RUCE: Oh, they foreclosed. Ugh, money.

BRUCE: It was extremely mysterious! Initiating pierce protocol!

PLECK: [laughing] No! Get away from me!

RUCE: Furniture is out and piercing is in!

C-53: Seems like two different markets, really. Well, uh, Ruce, Bruce, thank you for the information.

RUCE: Well, here's a certificate! One piercing for the price of one!

[footsteps, door jingles]

C-53: Emissary Decksetter--

CUSTOMER: What'd you guys get pierced?

C-53: [mildly annoyed] Nothing. Calm down.

PLECK: Do you just hang out outside the piercing parlor between piercings?

CUSTOMER: Of course! I'm gonna go get my midsection pierced!

C-53: The whole midsection?

CUSTOMER: Yeah! Torso, baby! Bye!

PLECK: You'd have to watch out for the spine.

C-53: This place attracts a weird clientele.

PLECK: Yeah.

C-53: Maybe a Blue Julius to drown our sorrows, Emissary Decksetter?

PLECK: Yeah, you know what? Actually, a Blue Julius sounds great. That Blue Julius--

DAR: And I think a Blue Julius will go great with my new piercings.

C-53: You got the talons pierced.

PLECK: Yeah, wow.

DAR: Yep!

C-53: Mm.

[automatic door opens]

OLD DERF: Hello. Welcome to Blue Julius. It's worse than a milkshake, but it's drinkable!

DAR: Wait, where's Tom?

OLD DERF: Tom? Manager's always busting my balls.

C-53: Wait a minute. Pull your hood up, sir.

OLD DERF: Yeah, sorry, this is standard Blue Julius uniform. A hood that covers my face.

PLECK: Old Derf?!

OLD DERF: [bewildered stammering] Pleck! The prophecy! It's come true once again!

PLECK: What are you doing here?!

OLD DERF: I'm waiting here for you.

PLECK: That's-- [laughing] I think you just have a job at the Blue Julius.

C-53: No. You're wearing an apron.

OLD DERF: That's-- I can wait and work at the same time. Earn a wage while I-- you think it pays to wait around and fulfill the fabled scrolls of the Zima warriors?

PLECK: No, but you could be doing anything. Anything else.

OLD DERF: This is one thing. Oh, what have you been doing? You're still pallin' around with these d-bags!

PLECK: Well, we're coworkers--

C-53: Well, that's a little--

PLECK: And friends!

DAR: D-bags? What is a d-bag?

OLD DERF: A dantomite bag.

PLECK: Yeah, that's explosives.

OLD DERF: An explosive bag you throw at enemies, or into a small hole you want to make into a larger hole. Do you not know about casual mining?

DAR: I don't.

PLECK: You learned-- you picked up a lot from that 'stroid.

OLD DERF: Yeah, I lived there for forty years. Went from young to old. Now I'm older.

PLECK: Wait, you were waiting for me before I was born?

OLD DERF: Yes.

PLECK: Bad plan.

OLD DERF: Don't I know it! You don't have to tell me! Tell my family it's stupid, they know.

PLECK: A solid 18 years before I was even born, you were in the--

OLD DERF: Oh, the prophecy, there's-- you know, it's a wide range. It's not like they give you a date and a time. "Hey, be here at 4 pm!" No, it's just like, "wait around until it happens."

C-53: Derf, did you get ejected into space?

OLD DERF: Yes.

C-53: And you're alive?

OLD DERF: I'm most comfortable in space. I used the Space.

PLECK: That makes sense.

C-53: You used the Space to survive space.

PLECK: Of course! Why wouldn't you?

C-53: Yeah, well.

OLD DERF: Also, I had an oxygen tank.

C-53: Okay, so this makes more sense.

OLD DERF: Suit, jet pack.

C-53: Yeah. Yep.

OLD DERF: Shot over here, got a job. Makin' some cash. [all laugh] And yes, I am older. Fine. Watch this! [backflip noises] Backflip!

PLECK: Wow.

OLD DERF: That is good.

PLECK: The gravity-- the gravity is higher on this--

OLD DERF: Did you hear my bones crack?

PLECK: Yeah.

OLD DERF: It's the spine.

PLECK: [laughing] Are you alright?

OLD DERF: [strained] Yeah, I'm good. I'm just gonna sit down for a sec.

C-53: Are you worried at all about your wife and children?

OLD DERF: Nah, they're good on the 'stroid. They have a controlling vote because there's only three other people, and they're three, so-- they're a voting block. That place sucked anyway. It's like when you know you're having a bad time, you know, it only can get worse.

PLECK: I mean, yeah, I guess that's true.

C-53: Well, no, it could get better.

OLD DERF: Why are you still here with this droid? He's got a bad attitude. This is not the droid you're looking for.

PLECK: Okay, alright, great. Listen, Derf--

C-53: [a bit hurt] Are you looking for a replacement droid and you didn't tell me?

PLECK: No! No, I would never-- I would never--

OLD DERF: Is he the same guy from the humidifier?

C-53: Yeah.

OLD DERF: Wow. You got this dude a new body and you're still palling around with him?

PLECK: Yeah!

OLD DERF: Get a new droid! There's a million droids! Why you still got the same guy?

PLECK: I don't know. I mean, we know each other, we have a rapport, we're friends. Listen--

OLD DERF: Pleck! [fabric rustling] How has the training been going? Surely you've been able to master the Space?

PLECK: Uh-- [C-53 laughs] I mean, you know, it's--

OLD DERF: Let me see your woodsaber.

PLECK: Oh, yeah, of course. [zipper noises]

DAR: Whoa.

OLD DERF: What-- this is the same-- same one. It's broken, taped together with-- what is this, scotch tape? That's not even the best tape. [Pleck laughs] Let me be honest. Make a new woodsaber. What are all these teeth marks?

PLECK: Oh, that's Beano. Yeah.

OLD DERF: Oh, is Beano-- you've taken on someone to train, to be your next assistant in the Zima warrior--

PLECK: No, not exactly.

DAR: No, Beano is this, um... bean. Used to be really warm, and now it has eyes and a lack of language.

OLD DERF: [completely nonplussed] Okay, that checks out. No questions there. So, uh--

C-53: Sort of uncommon, but alright.

OLD DERF: No, I get you. A bean that cooled off and grew eyes and hands and nose and-- teeth, I guess. I don't know.

PLECK: Listen, Derf, are you still a Zima knight? What's happening?

OLD DERF: Of course I am!

PLECK: But why are you here?

OLD DERF: Pleck, don't you understand? When you become a Zima knight, it is a lifestyle. It's a commitment. It's something that informs your life and every choice you make.

[electronic door jingle, footsteps]

CUSTOMER: Um, are you guys in line, or--

DAR: Uh, yeah. If you could just hold on a minute, I'm still deciding.

PLECK: You can go, you can go ahead.

CUSTOMER: Okay.

OLD DERF: Excuse me, sir!

CUSTOMER: Yeah?

OLD DERF: I will take your order, I am technically on the clock here. What can I get for you?

CUSTOMER: Uh, I'll get the medium.

OLD DERF: Good choice. Right in the middle.

[sounds of Blue Julius production]

CUSTOMER: Thanks, man.

OLD DERF: Hey, man, live your life.

CUSTOMER: Oh! That's really good advice!

[footsteps, distant slurping]

OLD DERF: See? I just helped him, and he's not even in the prophecy.

C-53: [laughing] That's not anything.

OLD DERF: What?

C-53: Just 'live your life'?

OLD DERF: Yes! That's good advice!

[C-53 makes an unconvinced humming noise]

CUSTOMER: [distant noises of jubilation]

OLD DERF: Look at him. Look how happy he is. He's got two sparklers, one in each hand.

C-53: Where'd he get both of those?

[Pleck laughing quietly]

OLD DERF: That's fun.

C-53: Mm.

OLD DERF: Hey, robot, what's your name?

C-53: C-53.

OLD DERF: Oh, that's not a name. That's a number. What does that *tell* us about you?

C-53: [snappy retort] What does the name Derf tell us about *you*? [laughter]

OLD DERF: Uh, it's *Old* Derf, so there's an adjective there.

C-53: But I don't know that we needed the word 'old' to figure out Old Derf.

OLD DERF: Oh, really? Because my name is Old Derf, but I'm older than that.

[electronic door jingle, footsteps]

7PV: Sorry, are you guys in line?

DAR: No, no, go right ahead.

C-53: Just a loose clump.

OLD DERF: Welcome to Blue Julius. I am the Zima knight, obviously. Can I take your order?

7PV: Are you-- obviously? What's obvious?

OLD DERF: Well, my robe, and it's over my eyes.

7PV: Okay, well, I-- [increasingly antsy] sorry, I'm actually a PD. I'm a personal droid, and-- uh, I just--

OLD DERF: Yeah, I can tell because you're literally shaking.

7PV: [jittery] It's part of the programming. I'm on 'quiver' setting right now. If you want, I can turn up to 'tremble'.

PLECK: No, no--

7PV: [sounds of violent shaking]

OLD DERF: That won't help anyone.

7PV: Okay.

C-53: All those settings are a waste of energy.

7PV: Anyway, I just need to put an order in. I need, uh, a large. For Nermut Bundaloy.

OLD DERF: Yeah, no problem. Wait! What was that?

DAR: Wait.

7PV: The name is-- I'm not Nermut, but it's under the name [whispering] Nermut Bundaloy?

DAR: [hostile] Who sent you?

7PV: Uh, well, I--

PLECK: Probably Nermut Bundaloy.

7PV: Nermut Bundaloy. Initiating wink protocol now.

PLECK: I don't know--

[sound of mechanical winking]

OLD DERF: What a great nervous wink.

DAR: Okay, droid. Where's Nermut? [7PV laughs nervously] Huh? Where is he?

7PV: Uh, he's very important. I can't actually say where he is, or what he's doing.

DAR: I know. I know why you're here. [menacing] I know *exactly* why you're here.

7PV: [audibly shaking] Updating to 'tremble'!

PLECK: Dar--

DAR: Don't you guys get it?

PLECK: What?

DAR: Nermut doesn't think that we're gonna knock this mission out of the park. He doesn't believe in *us*!

PLECK: Well--

DAR: [increasingly agitated] He thinks *we* are going to *fail*! And you know what? You can just turn right around, little droid. [7PV makes uneasy noises] C, we are going to go find Zwog.

PLECK: Yeah, and, uh--

OLD DERF: Pleck! Zima knight. I need to speak to you, of grave importance.

PLECK: Okay, uh, sure.

C-53: Is it alright if we just come pick you up later, when you're done with your friend?

PLECK: Yeah. Sure, fine, yeah. Good luck. Let me know if you need anything.

OLD DERF: I'm-- I'm not just a friend, I'm more of a teacher.

C-53: Alright, goodbye.

PLECK: Alright. Take care, guys! [receding footsteps] Hey, droid, what's your name?

7PV: [stammering] P P P P P P P V.

PLECK: PV?

OLD DERF: I think all of this is his name.

PLECK: Oh.

7PV: No, it's 7-P's-V.

PLECK: Oh. P P P P P P P V?

7PV: Yeah. P P P P P P P V.

PLECK: Alright. Well, tell Nermut Pleck says hi.

7PV: Uh, are you Federated Alliance?

OLD DERF: [whispering] Pleck, what are you doing?

PLECK: What? P P P P P P P V, I'll see you later, I guess.

[7PV makes a tense noise; receding footsteps]

PLECK: Derf--

OLD DERF: [fabric rustling] Please, come with me into the back of this Blue Julius, where I've built a Zima temple.

PLECK: You built a Zima temple back here?

OLD DERF: It was actually a very easy retro. [sound of walking through beaded curtain]

PLECK: What did you do?

OLD DERF: I just put up some columns and lit some candles. Put a tree in.

PLECK: Oh, yeah! It looks good back here!

OLD DERF: Some microgreens.

PLECK: Huh.

OLD DERF: [sound of spray bottle] Those are more for me. I'm trying to, like, eat a little healthier as I get older. I went from old to older. Like, ugh.

PLECK: Yeah. Older Derf.

OLD DERF: But Pleck! [fabric rustling] Nermut Bundaloy is the avatar of the Whack!

PLECK: What? We're friends!

OLD DERF: He's the person you must defeat to bring the Space back into balance.

PLECK: Derf, I think you-- I think the prophecy might be wrong. I mean, sure, Nermut's kind of a dweeb, and he can kind of get carried away on things. Especially with Mel and his situation with Dar-- I don't really understand, but--

OLD DERF: Oh, is he creating drama in your life?

PLECK: Yeah!

OLD DERF: [loudly] That's the wedge! That's how he works!

PLECK: But see, we've always gotten along really well!

OLD DERF: You and him?

PLECK: Nermut and I, yeah.

OLD DERF: That doesn't mean you can't become mortal enemies that one must kill the other. But it's fine because I'm sure you're, like, really working on your training. You've come so far. Like, are you a Zima knight technically, yet?

PLECK: Well, maybe. How would I know?

OLD DERF: Talk to me about your mastery of the Space. Are you able to influence other people by gesturing at them? Like, you point at someone and be like, "hey, let me in front of you into this holo."

PLECK: Oh, no. Yeah, I don't-- I usually let people go ahead.

OLD DERF: [unimpressed] Okay. Uh, can you lift stuff with your mastery of the Space?

PLECK: Uh, yeah! I mean, yeah, I'll lift this, uh, syrup container. The blue syrup that you put in the Julius machine.

OLD DERF: You know, I know this very well.

PLECK: Okay. [sloshing noises] Alright, yep. See? Up and down. There we go.

OLD DERF: But hold it up. You're barely even lifting. You're shaking. You're like that quiver-bot.

PLECK: [indignant] It's a big container!

OLD DERF: Let me look at your arm. What is this?

PLECK: I don't know, I just--

OLD DERF: You're like Plopeye pre-spinach.

PLECK: Plopeye?

OLD DERF: Plopeye, yes. Plopeye the Spaceman.

PLECK: Hmm. Listen, is being a Zima warrior about being physically--

OLD DERF: And Plopeye, he's in love with--

PLECK: No, I don't care about Plopeye!

OLD DERF: You should!

PLECK: [laughing] Why?!

OLD DERF: [yelling] He was a Zima warrior! [pounds fist on table; Pleck laughs] Okay. Geez, this is all just letdowns. Uh, you're still wearing shorts. Obviously you didn't take my big advice of dressing better. [laughs]

PLECK: It's very hot on the ship.

OLD DERF: Are you still working for the Alliance?

PLECK: No, no, no. We're with the Rebellion now.

OLD DERF: [shouting in disbelief] And you're still wearing these shorts?!

PLECK: Well, they don't have official uniforms for the Rebellion, so I--

OLD DERF: [increasingly shrill] You're still wearing your old shorts? Your bad-guy shorts? [Pleck laughs in bewilderment] You've done nothing! [pounds fist on table] What have you done?!

PLECK: I--

OLD DERF: You've only gotten worse at everything!

PLECK: What was I supposed to-- you took my dehumidifier and left! You gave me no information!

OLD DERF: [hushed with anger] I told you to let the Space flow through you.

PLECK: [enunciating angrily] What does that mean?

OLD DERF: Pleck. [beat] I am your father.

PLECK: [laughing] What?!

OLD DERF: Father's dentist.

PLECK: [flatly] My father's father's dentist.

OLD DERF: Yes. Your grandfather's dentist, yes. [stammering] Yeah.

PLECK: What does that have to do with anything?

OLD DERF: [indignant] Oh, you don't care?! That's a fun coincidence!

PLECK: [laughing] Yeah, I mean, it's sort of fun. It's certainly not *significant*.

OLD DERF: It's very significant. The most important space is the space between your teeth.

PLECK: Yeah, well, that's why you're supposed to floss.

OLD DERF: [whispering] Exactly.

PLECK: [slowly, thinking out loud] And the floss that I use... is minty fresh.

OLD DERF: Yes, keep going.

PLECK: Fresh. Minty fresh!

OLD DERF: Now you've got it!

PLECK: Fresh floss!

OLD DERF: And you use the freshness to get rid of the whack stuff that gets in between your teeth.

PLECK: Wow.

[intermission music]

WAXER: One, two, three.

[ripping noise; Dar exclaims loudly]

DAR: Now, excuse me, sir. While you're down there, I'm looking for a very specific shape for you to wax me in. [ripping noise; Dar exhales painfully] Uh-huh. [ripping sound] Great.

C-53: Dar, I have to say, the way that you and Nermut are interacting-- I'm not sure it's healthy long-term for either of you.

DAR: [agitated] I know! You saw what happened today.

C-53: Yeah.

DAR: He sent someone to the Blue Julius! [angrily] He got in my head!

C-53: Dar, I know the name Nermut may have put you off a little bit, but we don't actually know where Zwog Tambouie is.

[ripping noise; Dar goes 'oo-hoo-hoo']

MOVER DROID: Hey, hey, hey! Be careful with that pocket universe! Don't break it! Label it. 'Zwog Tambouie'.

C-53: Uh, I'm sorry, what did you just say?

MOVER DROID: I said label it. Label the pocket universe. What do you want?

C-53: Oh, I'm sorry. I was just-- uh, overheard something and--

MOVER DROID: I don't know nothin'. I'm just a mover droid. I can't tell you where I'm taking this furniture and this pocket universe that belonged to renowned galactic architect Zwog Tambouie.

C-53: So does that mean you *can't* tell me any of the information, or--

MOVER DROID: Whoa, whoa, I'm just a mover droid! All I do is move things and give clues. That's all I do. I'm not tellin' you nothin', alright? But what I *am* gonna do is go behind this mall and continue packing up these boxes marked 'Zwog Tambouie' into a spaceship that might go somewhere, while loudly detailing the who's and wherefore's of this move.

C-53: Alright, but-- [mechanical tongue-clicking noise] you really can't tell me--

MOVER DROID: I can't tell you anything.

[scene-change noise]

PLECK: Listen, I don't know what I was *supposed* to be doing, but I was *thinking* about the Space a lot.

OLD DERF: You were thinking about it.

PLECK: Yeah! I'd look out the window, and I'd hold my woodsaber, and I'd think about-- what is the Space?

OLD DERF: Wait, wait, hold on a second. This isn't, like, a homework assignment in elementary school.

PLECK: Okay.

OLD DERF: This is the greatest single thing in the universe. You don't know what's coming down your way. Have you read the scrolls? I left a bunch of Zima scrolls.

PLECK: Those were-- I--

OLD DERF: What did you do with the wooden box full of ancient scrolls?

PLECK: [stammering] We ejected it. Uh, but not on purpose? It was sort of like a-- Bargie will just open her hatch sometimes, and stuff flies out.

OLD DERF: You *lost* the ancient scrolls? I entrusted you--

PLECK: I mean, you might say the Space took them back.

OLD DERF: [mildly annoyed] Don't use that against-- don't say shit like that. You can't just trick me.

PLECK: [small sigh] Can you just, like, sum up the scrolls for me?

OLD DERF: [half indignant, half mocking] Oh! Sum up the ancient Zima warrior scrolls?

PLECK: Yeah!

OLD DERF: [mostly mocking] Okay, let me give you the little-- the little short version! Okay! Sure! Well, here's what it is: [fabric rustling] you, Pleck Decksetter, are the chosen one, and you're about to face off against the Emperor. And you-- the Emperor, let me tell you what! The Emperor's been working on the Space! The whack side! The whack side of the Space!

PLECK: Wait, hold on. Who is-- what is the *Emperor*?

OLD DERF: The Emperor is the most powerful warrior in all of the universe.

PLECK: But--

OLD DERF: Look me in the eyes.

PLECK: The emperor of what? What?

OLD DERF: The Emperor? The Emperor of the universe.

PLECK: Okay. The galaxy doesn't have an emperor. We have a Council of Seven.

OLD DERF: I don't know all the politics. I don't follow politics. [Pleck exclaims in bewilderment] So like, I don't know about all this garbage. I'm just telling you [shouting shrilly] there's an emperor coming for you, bro! [pounds fist on table] And I'm here to help! I've been trying to help you! From a distance. I thought maybe me going out into space and dying would maybe leave an *imprint* on you, but apparently it did not!

PLECK: I mean, listen. I just didn't know--

OLD DERF: [shrieking] You haven't even changed your shorts!

PLECK: [laughing] I didn't know there was a timeline!

OLD DERF: Oh! When I left the airlock, I wasn't like, "hey, take your time, bro! I'm dying!"

PLECK: Well, you didn't, for one.

OLD DERF: Oh, *sorry* I didn't *die*. I was teaching you a lesson. That's what a teacher does.

PLECK: It was a fake lesson! You literally put on a jetpack and got a job at a Blue Julius!

OLD DERF: A teacher puts on a show, and then goes home, and then they have their own life. And my version of that is working in this mall. And yeah, I'm hooking up with people.

PLECK: [laughing] You didn't have to say that.

OLD DERF: Oh, well, you're really coming at me with, like, I'm not doing a good job here! And I thought I--

PLECK: But you're married! You have kids!

OLD DERF: That's-- that's my 'stroid life. This mall life? Totally different. Like, I'm down there at the pretzel place. Those things, very caloric, but I'll tell you what. They hire very good-looking older women.

PLECK: Older than you?

OLD DERF: No one's older than me. [Pleck laughs] Do you know anyone older than me? See how long my fingernails are?

PLECK: I mean, Beano's-- gee, wow.

OLD DERF: Don't-- quit bringing up this bean! What is this?!

PLECK: Beano's significantly older than you.

OLD DERF: Do you know how you sound? Bringing up Beano all the time?

PLECK: Yeah. Listen. I know a lot of the things that exist in my life, they sound like someone made them up. Maybe it's worth mentioning, Derf, that you think there's an *emperor*?

OLD DERF: I don't think there is an emperor. I *know* there's an emperor. And you will do battle with this emperor, and the fate of the entire universe relies on your winning this! [shouting] Do you believe in freshness?!

PLECK: I mean--

OLD DERF: Or do you believe in whackness? You're still palling around with the ultimate whack, Nermut Bundaloy!

PLECK: I mean--

OLD DERF: Have you been seduced by the whack side?

PLECK: What are you talking about?!

OLD DERF: Because honestly, like, I look at you and I'm like, "whoa, that dude's whack."

PLECK: [bewildered] What?! How so?

OLD DERF: You got a really jucked-up eye. You don't wear socks, I don't understand why.

PLECK: You told me I pulled them up too high, and so I took them off.

OLD DERF: No, that's-- you overcompensated. I just said they looked stupid pulled up high, and [incomprehensible noises] on your feet! Your feet must stink! No wonder the robot's always making fun of you! You stink!

PLECK: Okay, fine! I'm doing everything wrong! Tell me what to do, so when inevitably you pretend to kill yourself again--

OLD DERF: I would never do that to you.

PLECK: You'd never do that twice?

OLD DERF: I would never do that again to you.

PLECK: Okay, great. I'll--

OLD DERF: I'm here to be your teacher.

PLECK: You know, Derf, you have not given me a single concrete thing that I should be doing, besides 'make a new woodsaber'. Which you told me was an ancient, elegant weapon!

OLD DERF: It is that! But yours has a bunch of scotch tape around it! What are you gonna do with that?!

PLECK: Well, I killed a Zellnaaz with it.

OLD DERF: Well, congratulations.

PLECK: It was an allergy thing. So I didn't, like, skewer him or anything.

OLD DERF: Oh. So you're cocky 'cause you got lucky?

[Pleck laughs; transition to loading dock]

C-53: This does seem to be Zwog Tambouie's furniture. You can tell by the way it falls apart.

DAR: Has disintegrated underneath me.

MOVER DROID: It's difficult to move, I'll tell you that much.

DAR: Sure. And where are you moving it to?

MOVER DROID: Oh, I can't tell you that.

DAR: Oh, it's because you're a bad droid and you don't know where you're taking it.

MOVER DROID: No, I can tell--

DAR: I'd hate to tell your boss that you are directionless.

MOVER DROID: Wait a minute! No, it's in a secret location within the Federated Alliance space!

DAR: [sarcastic] Oh, yeah, a secret location? Oy-oy-oy, you really don't know where you're going.

C-53: Yeah, that sounds very likely.

MOVER DROID 2: Hey, boss, I'm supposed to label this 'Quantaris sector'?

MOVER DROID: Yeah, label it 'Quantaris sector'. Those are going there.

MOVER DROID 2: Okay. Great. [dot-matrix printer noises]

C-53: And you still won't tell us where he is.

MOVER DROID: Listen, I was programmed with an NDA. I cannot speak on these things. But I can tell you, however, that he has an office on Quantaris, where he is clearly working for one of the Council of Seven... who I cannot name at this time.

[beat]

C-53: [painfully droll] I just wish you could give us *any* information that might help us.

MOVER DROID: [hostile] Listen! The pieces are set on the board, the time is almost right, and the endgame is about to go in motion! But me? I don't know nothin'!

C-53: Mm. Well, Dar, I guess we're out of luck.

DAR: [dry] Wow, really. Ugh. You know, can I have your manager's information?

MOVER DROID: Initiating outrage protocol. Oh! 'Ey! Oh, 'ey! How dare you!

C-53: He's gonna be like this for a couple hours, Dar.

MOVER DROID: Oh! 'Ey! Come on! [outraged noises vaguely approximating New Yorker-esque outbursts]

C-53: Yeah, he's just gonna cycle through a bunch of different languages.

MOVER DROID: Oh, I don't go into your work and say, "gimme your manager!" Oh! Hey!

DAR: Just backing up, and--

MOVER DROID: Oh! Oh!

C-53: Just close the door.

MOVER DROID: Oh! 'Ey!

[door jingles; transition to mall]

OLD DERF: I've communed with the Space, and I need you to put me on your shoulder and run around the mall.

PLECK: What?

OLD DERF: Put me on your shoulder and run around the mall. We're training you now.

PLECK: You're like six feet tall! How would I ever do that?

OLD DERF: First off, use the Space.

PLECK: Okay, so I'll just--

OLD DERF: Take your shirt off.

PLECK: Why?

OLD DERF: Look, I'm just the conduit for the Space.

PLECK: [sighs] Alright.

OLD DERF: What are you, shy?

PLECK: A little!

OLD DERF: Well, that's one thing you're gonna have to get over. You're the chosen one, so let's do this.

PLECK: Okay. [fabric rustling]

OLD DERF: Oop. Okay, never mind, put it back on. Too pink.

PLECK: What?!

OLD DERF: You're very-- you're pinker than I expected.

PLECK: All of my body looks the same.

OLD DERF: No, I think it's pinker around the torso.

PLECK: [fabric rustling] Okay. Alright. Shirt's back on.

OLD DERF: Great. I'm gonna do a backflip onto your right shoulder.

PLECK: Please don't do that.

OLD DERF: What? Why? [backflip noises; Pleck cries out in pain] Backflip! [Pleck groans in agony] Okay, good. This is tentatively good.

PLECK: [groaning] You're so heavy!

OLD DERF: I know. I'm also very sweaty.

PLECK: Alright. Well, I guess let's head out.

OLD DERF: Run.

PLECK: Okay.

[slow footsteps]

OLD DERF: Okay, walk a little bit. Walk fast.

PLECK: Okay. How is this building my connection to the Space?

OLD DERF: Maybe on a-- I don't know.

PLECK: [breathing heavily] So how-- how will I know the Emperor when I see the Emperor?

OLD DERF: Oh, he'll be the known ruler of the universe, so that's a thing. There's a battle coming, so-- there's a great astral conflagration coming. Everything that you know will start to fall apart. The reality that you've grown comfortable with, clearly, because you just like-- go around to planets and-- I don't know. What did you do? What have you been working on at home? Like, what have you been working on earlier today?

PLECK: Earlier today?

OLD DERF: Yeah. What great task were you accomplishing earlier today?

PLECK: Uh, I was working on a song.

OLD DERF: [suddenly hyped up] Oh, a fight song! A song to inspire the troops that you will command! Okay, let me hear it so that I may let it resonate through the ages! [Pleck makes noncommittal noises] I figure since you've lost the great scrolls, the Zima scrolls, I will start a new scroll with this great song that you've created. This--

WOMAN: Old Derf! Ugh, the concert the mall was gonna put on was cancelled because the main star didn't show up! What are we gonna do?

OLD DERF: [overly excited] Oh, this is perfect. Don't you see how the Space guides us here? Look, right down here in the food court! There's a teeming crowd of people! Potential soldiers, waiting to be inspired by you, the great one! [sounds of Pleck being patted encouragingly] I'll make a short announcement, and you'll come out and sing your song. Thank you for telling me.

WOMAN: Of course! I mean, we were gonna shut it down, but--

PLECK: It's not ready! It's not ready! My song!

OLD DERF: *You* are ready. This is your moment to shine. And like I said, I will never abandon you, but if you blow this, I'm gonna straight-up kill myself right on stage.

PLECK: What?!

OLD DERF: I'm just telling you this right now, okay? So this is gonna be great. Ready? [distorted by microphone] Greetings, food court participants. Thank you for dining at the Bourbon Chicken spot, the multiple taco places. [scattered applause] Anyway, thank you for coming here. This is an important announcement. You are all the first soldiers in a great army that will bring the universe back into balance. The Space has brought us all here, and I will--

AUDIENCE: We can't wait to see Bliff Damor!

OLD DERF: Oh, okay. Quick update on that. Bliff couldn't be here. I think he-- [sounds of dismay from the audience] No no, he's totally whack. [audience chanting Bliff's name] He leans on his collaborators. That dude's on the way out, okay?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: You're a hater! Bliff! We're all Bliff-heads here!

OLD DERF: Yeah, no, clearly. But I'm gonna blow your Bliff-heads right off your Bliff-necks, because I got the future--

AUDIENCE: What? Is he threatening our lives?

OLD DERF: No, you said Bliff-heads, and I was just--

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: I have a family! I strained my Bliff-neck, I can't-- if you're gonna put some kind of pressure on it--

OLD DERF: No, don't strain your Bliff-necks. *Crane* your Bliff-necks for our next guest--

AUDIENCE: Bliff!

OLD DERF: Man, you guys are dedicated fans. You're not even listening to literally the words I'm saying. Bliff is over.

AUDIENCE: Bliff is dead?!

OLD DERF: No, he's just--

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Did you kill Bliff?! They killed Bliff!

OLD DERF: Let me be honest, I--

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: They took his head off! Right off his Bliff-neck! Who's singing?!

OLD DERF: Okay, great. Thank you. Good. We have a great guest for you. This guest is going to be the leader of the fight that will bring the Space back into balance!

BLIFF: [taps mic] Hey guys, it's me, Bliff! Sorry I'm late! [audience cheers] Hey, everybody! Alright! Come on!

OLD DERF: Hey, Bliff!

BLIFF: What? What?! It's my show!

OLD DERF: Yeah, I know. Sit down, I need--

BLIFF: What?

OLD DERF: Your patented rap-rock style is just gonna have to wait a second.

AUDIENCE: Bliff!

OLD DERF: Okay, one sec. Bliff, I have an opening act for you.

BLIFF: Okay.

OLD DERF: It's destined to be the headliner of the universe.

BLIFF: Alright. Wow.

OLD DERF: You won't understand this now, but there's an Emperor rising in this quadrant that--

AUDIENCE: Just get to it!

OLD DERF: Wow! Oh, big attitude all of a sudden! Please welcome to the stage, your--

BLIFF: [hollering loudly] Bliff!

OLD DERF: Not Bliff! You know what, Bliff, why don't you come with me for a second? You want a Blue Julius?

BLIFF: Ooh! Yeah, I'll take a large.

OLD DERF: It's like a milkshake, but not as good! Let me just take you back, grab a quick Blue. And I welcome to the stage, the chosen one. He's got a song that's going to inspire you to rise up and take down the Emperor. Please welcome Pleck Decksetter, Zima warrior.

[audience cheers]

PLECK: [taps mic; singing cheerfully] When I'm flying through space, it makes me feel great! I love it in space, 'cause I have a couple mates! [scattered boos] A second mate called C-53, and a big Dar! [much louder booing] And my buddy--

[sounds of incineration]

AUDIENCE: Whoa, that old guy just set himself on fire!

PLECK: No! No, Derf!

OLD DERF: [burning, but not terribly put out by it] Pleck! You did this to me! [yells in pain] That was, like, reverse-inspiring! That was like a parody of a good song! And now I will burn! You did this to me!

PLECK: Derf! What are you doing?!

OLD DERF: That's the song? That's the song that you've been working on?

PLECK: Yeah, it's a work in progress!

OLD DERF: Oh, well, progress has stopped! Pleck, all I can tell you is master the Space! You must! I can't be here anymore, because you really embarrassed me in front of the entire mall!

PLECK: [laughing in bewilderment] Why can't-- why can't you just come with me, and then actually teach me for once?!

OLD DERF: No! Take what I've taught you already!

PLECK: You've taught me almost literally nothing!

OLD DERF: This is a high-stakes way to end our lesson. [increasingly intense] You need to get ready to face off the Emperor that is rising even now, as we speak! As these flames crawl up my robe!

PLECK: Don't-- you don't have to do this!

OLD DERF: [yelling] It's lit! What is this, I cannot-- look at this, my woodsaber's all burnt up!

PLECK: [dismayed noise] Derf--

OLD DERF: Pleck! I wish I could be with you, but I'm instead going to be dead! And these are my last words. Please, punch me out for Blue Julius. I don't want to run up the payroll.

PLECK: No, Derf! Derf!

[slurping noises, mic feedback]

BLIFF: Hey guys, it's Bliff! What'd I miss? Ready for the show!

[intermission music interrupted by electronic beep]

AUTOMATED VOICE: You have received a transmission from Rebellion headquarters. Playback will follow decryption.

[static; transmission noise]

ROLPHUS: Attention, rebels! This is Commander Rolphus Tiddle. We here at Rebel Command know that the rebellion is stressful. Sometimes you just need to escape this harsh reality for a bit. That's why we recommend that all rebels listen to Imaginary Worlds. It's a great podcast all about science fiction and other fantasy genres. A super-bingeable deep dive into an array of geeky topics. You can start with the first episode that looks at what makes a good origin story, or check out the miniseries episodes about Star Wars, Doctor Who, and Harry Potter. I'll tell you, losing yourself in those fantastical stories is a wonderful salve for the psychic toll of battling the Federated Alliance and the jucked-up Zyxx quadrant! And also, you know, if you happen to be in any dysfunctional personal relationships or... in ever-faltering denial about a clone army being made from your genetic code. I've *heard* it's a great little getaway from those things as well. That's Imaginary Worlds. Exploring the fan experience, what makes us suspend our disbelief, and what happens when that spell is broken. With host Eric Molinsky. Through years of public radio experience, Eric brings a thoughtfully-produced voice to the far-out and the fantastical. Listen and subscribe at imaginaryworldspodcast.org or wherever you get your podcasts. Long live the Rebellion! Tiddle out.

[transmission-end noise]

AUTOMATED VOICE: End of message.

[intermission music resumes]

NERMUT: Wait, so this is insane. So we know that Zwog Tambouie, the architect for the Planet Crusher and the Planet Crusher Crusher, is going to Quantaris, the capital of the Federated Alliance. He shipped his pocket universe there, where he could actually produce multiple Planet Crushers. And it's all in service of some member of the Council?

C-53: That's an excellent recap.

[Nermut makes a stressed noise]

PLECK: So, listen, Nermut--

NERMUT: Yeah, I'm gonna put this in for processing. I'm gonna--

PLECK: No, Nermut, listen. You have to just take it straight to Rolphus' office. This is important!

NERMUT: No, he hates that.

PLECK: No, but just--

NERMUT: I'm gonna mark this [typing noises] middle-high priority.

PLECK: [spluttering] Just high priority!

NERMUT: No, that's really reserved for-- they--

PLECK: [loudly] For what?!

NERMUT: I-- they just--

C-53: Yeah, what event would be above this?

NERMUT: They really try to shy away from-- like, you gotta be sure. You don't want to embarrass--

PLECK: Nermut. Nermut.

NERMUT: Yeah?

PLECK: Take it, in your hand, over to Rolphus right now.

NERMUT: [sighs] Okay. I'm gonna put it on my list. [writing noises; C-53 scoffs]

PLECK: What--

NERMUT: What?

PLECK: Is on your list besides that?!

NERMUT: Nothing! But I wrote it on the second line in case something-- one more important thing happens. But--

C-53: You moved it down?! Why are you--

PLECK: What could possibly be more important than this?

NERMUT: [defensive] We don't-- no one knows what happens in the future!

PLECK: That's a good point.

C-53: Sure, technically, but it just seems...

PLECK: But I will tell you this. The prophecy states that there's a battle coming, and that I'm gonna be very prominently featured in it.

C-53: This might not be relevant.

NERMUT: Yeah, who told you that at the mall?

PLECK: An old-- older friend.

NERMUT: [not convinced] An older-- hmm. Alright. And I got a 185 bowling while everyone was gone.

C-53: Oh, that's pretty good.

NERMUT: Yeah.

PLECK: That's pretty good.

NERMUT: They put up those inflatable things on the sides.

PLECK: That's actually pretty low for bumpers.

NERMUT: I'm 19 inches tall, guys. Throw me a bone.

PLECK: Sure.

C-53: Okay.

BARGIE: I bought a hat.

PLECK: At the mall?

BARGIE: Yeah. The ship mall, which is next to it.

C-53: Oh, I never even noticed the ship mall.

BARGIE: Yeah, I bought a hat. So that's a thing that happened to me. Also, I booked a part, so.

[the crew exclaims in surprise]

DAR: Lead with that!

BARGIE: I don't know, I just wanted to--

C-53: Bargie, what's the role?

BARGIE: I gave Beano power of my profession because I've kind of been in a bad place, and-- Beano, why don't you tell 'em about my new role?

BEANO: Beano booked Bargie a under-five in a--

BARGIE: Mm-hmm. Union.

BEANO: Space cop procedural.

BEANO: Yeah, I'll be a spaceship that's moving boxes and is telling these two detective people just what happened. But, like, under five lines of information. Because if you do over five lines, you get a higher rate, and this is a low-budget thing.

C-53: Sure. I understand.

PLECK: That's great, Bargie!

BEANO: Beano taking 45%.

C-53: Wow. That's high.

PLECK: That seems high, Beano. Yeah.

BARGIE: Well, that's what you gotta do with your career in the beginning, when your beginning starts over again.

BEANO: Beano know holo business.

BARGIE: Anyway, we're shooting it right now. So everyone be quiet--

C-53: Oh, should we--

BARGIE: Let me do my first take. [clears throat]

PLECK: Wait, we're--

C-53: Sorry, Bargie, I didn't realize we were--

PLECK: Are we in the show?

BARGIE: Yep. Well, you're inside of me. You're not, like, visually in-scene.

PLECK: Should we duck below the windows?

BARGIE: No, just be quiet. They are not looking inside of me.

PLECK: Great. Great.

[set noises]

DIRECTOR: Settle, settle. And action.

ACTOR: So where were you that night?

BARGIE: [terrible yet unplaceable accent] What can I say? I was here in space, just waitin' for you to come here, and-- I found a box, and inside of it-- [clears throat] can I--

ACTOR: Oh, you just found a box?

BARGIE: Yeah! I found a box!

ACTOR: Well, I guess that's all we need to know from you, isn't it?

BARGIE: Goodbye!

DIRECTOR: Cut!

BARGIE: Can I do a second take, or--

DIRECTOR: Oh, we got it.

BARGIE: We got it?

DIRECTOR: Yeah, we got it. Yeah.

BARGIE: Thank you very much.

DIRECTOR: One and done.

BARGIE: Yeah, that's what they say, but--

DIRECTOR: [whispering] I think we're gonna lose that scene.

BARGIE: Yeah, they're gonna lose it, aren't they? They are.

DIRECTOR: Oh? Hm?

[transition to Bargie's interior]

PLECK: Alright, Nermut. Well, you know, let us know what we can do with the-- you know, impending conflict.

C-53: Yeah. Enjoy your Blue Julius, by the way.

NERMUT: What do you mean?

C-53: The Blue Julius that you--

DAR: Oh, we know what you did.

PLECK: We saw-- we met your guy.

NERMUT: Oh, yeah, sure. You guys all enjoyed Blue Juliuses and I didn't get one. That's really nice.

C-53: No, I said *you* enjoy *your* Blue Julius.

NERMUT: I don't *have* a Blue Julius. I wasn't at the strip mall with you. Duh.

C-53: Right, but you ordered a Blue Julius.

NERMUT: What are you talking about?

PLECK: You know what, guys, I'll talk to you guys later. I'm gonna be in my room. [door closes, Pleck sighs; sound of rustling paper] Uh, Beano--

BEANO: Oh, Beano found this box!

PLECK: What do you mean?

BEANO: [singsong] Beano found this box! Beano *love* fine woodwork.

[rustling paper]

PLECK: Beano, these are Derf's ancient scrolls! Where did you get these?

BEANO: Beano know.

PLECK: Alright. Well, thank you, Beano. [door closes, Pleck sighs again]

OLD DERF: [ghostly voice] Read the scrolls.

PLECK: [shocked] What? Derf? I knew you faked it! You did it again!

OLD DERF: No, I'm dead. I'm just a voice now.

PLECK: Yeah, from where?

OLD DERF: Space. Easy answer, but Space.

PLECK: [sighs] Alright, fine. I'll read the scroll. It's what I was going to do. I'm not gonna sit alone in my room and open the box and then not read the scrolls.

OLD DERF: Okay, very indignant for, like, a pretty amazing thing I'm doing right now.

PLECK: Okay.

OLD DERF: Did you punch me out from Blue Julius?

PLECK: Oh, you know what--

OLD DERF: Oh, the payroll's gonna be a nightmare.

[Pleck laughs; outro music]

PLECK: Okay, yep, fair enough.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Get off the stage! Whoa, that old guy just set himself on fire!

PLECK: [laughing] No! Oh, Derf!

OLD DERF: Pleck! You did this to me! [all laugh; Derf yells in agony] That was, like, the Weird AI version of a song that we needed to hear! It was reverse-inspiring! It was like a parody of a good song! Like a Strange AI version of it! And now I will burn! You did this to me!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Old Derf is really cool about being on fire! That was awesome!

ALDEN: Uh, great, so--

JUSTIN: I mean, I don't know, I just thought it was funny to have him killing himself again somehow.

ALDEN: Yeah, of course.

JUSTIN: I was definitely-- I promised multiple times I wouldn't die, so I was definitely--