

[ponderous opening music gives way to the internal hum of Bargie]

AJ: Did anyone else's eyes go dark or is it just me?

PLECK: No... AJ-

AJ: Just me? I heard that there was a fail-safe that if they wanted to make all the clones go blind, they could. Is that-

PLECK: No, the lights just went out. Weren't you listening? Bargie just said that she had to turn off the lights. We've been floating adrift in this strange galaxy for so long. Her power's very low.

AJ: [relieved] Oh. So it's dark? Is that what we're saying?

NERMUT: Yeah.

PLECK: Yeah, it's dark.

AJ: It's just dark, I'm not blind?

PLECK: No.

C-53: [speaking with a much tinnier voice than normal] AJ, do CLINT helmets not have infrared? You don't have night vision in that helmet?

AJ: Oh, I do. [night vision clicks on] It's fine now, you're right.

C-53: Yeah.

AJ: Whoa, you're in the toaster now.

C-53: AJ, we've been over this a couple of times now.

PLECK: AJ, C-53's cube has been in the toaster for weeks.

AJ: Yeah, but so do I call you Mr. Toaster Man now or-

C-53: No.

AJ: Robot Toaster Man?

C-53: I would prefer C-53.

NERMUT: It's not a C frame, not to side with AJ, but.

C-53: *Wow.* I guess I would appreciate everyone being a little... kind with me about this, this isn't easy for me.

CENTURION: Hey Justin, look at the dumb toaster.

JUSTIN: [laughing] That is so lame.

CENTURION: [laughs] I love you.

JUSTIN: I love you too.

C-53: I'm feeling a little vulnerable without appendages or a face.

PLECK: Yeah.

BARGIE: [slurring and raspy] Everybody, everybody has slbfe-

PLECK: Oh Bargie, man, you sound worse and worse ea-

BARGIE: Everybody, everybody brrlash.

C-53: Are you okay?

BARGIE: I won't be as active as I used to be, so I'm not a problem boy, zervwis-

PLECK: Bargie, it's okay, we are gonna get through this, okay? Save your energy.

BARGIE: Turning off the toaster.

NERMUT: [skittering] No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Leave, just leave that on.

PLECK: [frantic] Leave the toaster on.

BARGIE: Keeping the toaster on it's veerrrrblm.

NERMUT: Whew.

PLECK: Well, Bargie, don't worry about us, as long as you keep just a little bit of oxygen going, we're gonna get through this together. And any day now, any day now, I'm sure someone will find us and pick us up.

BARGIE: Mrrrmvkay.

AJ: What was that?

PLECK: Did she say okay?

C-53: Mm-hm.

BARGIE: I drrntnnn brvmm no gars oil in me I'm just using the leftover dirt that's found in my body.

PLECK: The dirt that's found in your body?

BARGIE: [COUGHS UP GAS]

PLECK: Oh, wow.

C-53: This isn't good.

ROLPHUS: All right, everyone, crack your glow sticks.

PLECK: We don't, we actually don't all have glow sticks.

C-53: Glow sticks?

NERMUT: We don't all have them.

ROLPHUS: Crack the glow sticks.

[Rolphus opens a bag and cracks a glow stick]

AJ: [upset and recoiling] Oh, Rolphus!

PLECK: Yeah, you gotta turn down.

AJ: What the JUCK, man?

PLECK: You gotta turn off your infrared.

AJ: Yeah.

ROLPHUS: No one else has glow sticks?

C-53: No.

NERMUT: We haven't been to Mehnahnaroo for ages.

PLECK: I think these are tactical glow sticks.

C-53: Yeah, they're very bright.

NERMUT: Very big.

ROLPHUS: Yeah, they're both.

C-53: [laughing] Yeah, they're far larger than a standard glow stick.

ROLPHUS: It's a glow log.

SEESU: Crew, I don't want you to worry. Rolphus and I are in the middle of our seven day staring tantric experience.

PLECK: Okay.

ROLPHUS: It's what the glow stick's for.

NERMUT: [confused] Commander Gundu, do you think we were worried you weren't doing that?

SEESU: [ponderous] Rolphus, look me in the eye.

ROLPHUS: Yes.

SEESU: Yes.

ROLPHUS: Yes.

SEESU: Yes.

PLECK: [pulling AJ aside] Hey, AJ?

AJ: Yeah?

PLECK: I just wanna say, I'm really proud of you for how you've handled the Rolphus and Seesu getting back together thing. I really feel like you've grown and moved past it.

AJ: [weakly] I'm mindwiping myself so much.

PLECK: What?

C-53: Oh, AJ, how often are you doing that?

AJ: I mean, every time I see them together.

PLECK: No, you can't do that.

C-53: That's... AJ, that's too many.

PLECK: Is that how you're getting through it?

AJ: Yeah.

NERMUT: That's perpetual.

AJ: Yeah.

C-53: What memories do you have of the last few weeks?

AJ: [slowly] So I guess I remember there was the bean, the giant bean's glutes.

PLECK: Sure.

C-53: Yeah, okay.

PLECK: Yeah.

AJ: It's hard to get them sculpted that way. And that's about it.

C-53: That's not good.

AJ: I probably need to mind wipe after just seeing that display. Gonna do that.

C-53: [concerned] AJ, this is not a healthy way to deal with your feelings.

AJ: What's not a healthy way to deal my feelings?

C-53: Yeah, okay, yeah, that's I guess sort of what I'm getting at here.

PLECK: You gotta stop doing that.

AJ: I'm fine, I'm sure there's no residuam shmide mahffecks.

C-53: Ooh, that's not good.

[toaster pops a piece of toast out]

PLECK: Ooh!

AJ: Order up.

C-53: Did somebody toast something?

CENTURION: Yeah, I did.

C-53: Okay.

CENTURION: Dumb toaster. Justin, your pizza bagel's ready.

JUSTIN: That's awesome, but I'm so bored. What's something that we could do to pass the time?

CENTURION: Wanna make out or?

JUSTIN: No, I'm kind of over that part of our relationship right now.

CENTURION: [hurt] Okay, ouch, but yeah, okay. I don't know what to do.

JUSTIN: None of the data works.

CENTURION: There's no data.

JUSTIN: What do we, like, do? [eats pizza bagel]

CENTURION: None of the apps work.

NERMUT: Do you guys wanna hear how, like, Mission's Operations Management works?

JUSTIN AND CENTURION: [terrified] NOOOOOOooO!

NERMUT: Because it's pretty-

[door slides open and Dar enters]

DAR: [stilted] I know what we can do! I could invite you all to my hoooOoome for the evening!

JUSTIN: Captain Dar, what's wrong with your voice?

AJ: What's going on?

DAR: Everyone gather 'round, I have a plan.

PLECK: Captain Dar's got a plan, everybody.

DAR: No, no, no, I'm not Captain Dar, for I am in costume.

C-53: I had noticed your captain's jacket had been replaced by something almost infinitely more-

PLECK: Far shinier.

NERMUT: Yeah, yeah.

DAR: Nermut, you may recognize this from the classic trunk of costumes I keep in my room, but-

NERMUT: Indeed.

DAR: [dramatic] Tonight, you will all be invited to my house for a party.

AJ: Wait, you've had a house the entire time?

JUSTIN: There's a house inside of a ship? That's sick.

PLECK: No, I think Dar is inviting us to sort of join them on a flight of fancy.

C-53: Yeah, I believe Dar might be inviting us to a role-playing scenario.

NERMUT: [hushed] Dar, I don't know if I'm ready for this to be such a group thing.

DAR: No, no, no, no, Nermut, it's not. Sorry for the confusion. The cape tonight is because I will be playing the Countess, and you are all welcome to my mansion. For we will be celebrating-

NERMUT: Got it.

DAR: The birthday of my partner, the Counteur.

BARGIE: Irm the Coutneruu Dar Irm sorry but I dohnnt harve enough energy-

DAR: It's okay, Bargie, it's okay.

NERMUT: Low power Bargie is the main character?

CREW: [laughs]

DAR: Yeah, Bargie, of course, is playing my partner tonight. The Counteur, everybody, you are all here to celebrate the birthday of the Counteur.

BARGIE: I'm doing a movie.

DAR: But let's hope there's not a murder.

AJ: Papa, Robot Man, Lizard Man, a moment please.

[the three walk aside]

C-53: Yeah?

PLECK: Sure, yeah.

AJ: So the Captain's gone space crazy. [charges blaster] We're gonna have to take over.

PLECK: No, AJ, I think Captain Dar is trying to help us pass the time with a little bit of fun and games while we wait out this adrift in the cosmos scenario.

C-53: Well, in times of crisis or stress, some find role-playing games to be a welcome escape.

AJ: I don't like playing anybody else but myself.

PLECK: [laughing] Give it a shot, give it a shot.

AJ: Mm-mm. [laughing] Only weirdos disappear into character.

DAR: Is your aside over yet?

AJ: Yeah, totally, let's play. [whispering] Hey, just among us, if we ever need a mutiny, just give me the word, mutiny.

PLECK: It's that easy, AJ? Put the gun away.

AJ: Just yell mutiny and I will blast my way-

C-53: AJ, this is just... so low a bar.

NERMUT: That is the worst way to announce a mutiny.

AJ: Just somebody say mutiny and I'm there.

PLECK: Thank you, AJ.

AJ: Or just spell it.

NERMUT: Why don't you spell it?

AJ: Huh? M-O-U.

C-53: You're already pretty far off.

DAR: [excited] All right, if you're done with your aside, I can hand out the roles.

PLECK: Ooh, roles.

C-53: Oh, Dar, I don't know if I'm going to be able to be part of this in the way that you're hoping. I'm sort of pretty stationary currently.

DAR: Ah. That's all right. C, you will be playing the Mayor.

C-53: Oh, all right. I'll happily assume such a role.

DAR: And here is your objective. [hands C-53 a piece of paper]

C-53: Okay, very good.

DAR: Nermut, you will be playing the 'Stroid Miner.

NERMUT: [disappointed] Hmmm. Yeah, wanted that.

DAR: And here is your objective. [hands Nermut a piece of paper]

NERMUT: Okay.

AJ: It's funny, because they're usually tall and big and stuff.

DAR: AJ?

AJ: Yeah?

DAR: I think you would be best as the Professor. Here is your objective. [hands AJ a piece of paper]

AJ: Okay.

DAR: And Pleck.

PLECK: Ah. Yes?

DAR: Well, I have the Fashionista left.

PLECK: Well, you know, I have won a fashion award.

DAR: All right. Well, here is your objective. [hands Pleck a piece of paper]

PLECK: Hey hey, should I put my pants eye patch back on?

DAR: I wouldn't, no.

PLECK: Okay.

DAR: I would like Justin to play the Lifeguard.

JUSTIN: Oh, man.

DAR: And Centurion, oh, the young Entrepreneur. [hands Justin and Centurion pieces of paper]

CENTURION: [upset] Oh, I hate money.

JUSTIN: [upset] Oh, I hate saving lives from water.

DAR: Okay, great. Now, everyone has their objective, try and internalize them.

HARK: [interrupting] Oh, sorry.

DAR: Oh, Hark, yes.

HARK: My card says, uh, I'm the Director.

DAR: Right.

HARK: I'm new in town, but I have a dark secret.

DAR: [frantic] N-n-n-nooo, Hark, Hark, Hark, please, please, please.

HARK: Sorry, sorry.

DAR: That is only for you.

NERMUT: Are we allowed to guess the murderer yet?

DAR: [laughing] No.

NERMUT: Okay.

DAR: Hark, you're just going to internalize it and let it come out naturally in conversation.

HARK: Right, of course.

DAR: Thank you. All right, this is perfect. And now we will take it again from the top.

[Dar plays their horn]

DAR: [stilted] Welcome, I am the countess, and you are all here for my partner, the Counteur's birthday.

BARGIE: lliitrts me Coutneurur

AJ: [whispering to the crew] Just say the word and we'll mutiny. Just say the word.

[transition music, the ambience of a bar emanates]

DUMPS BARTENDER: [pouring out a drink] You got it, one chardonnay. So what brings you to the Dumps?

LINDA: My husband left me.

DUMPS BARTENDER: Sorry to hear it.

LINDA: Well, first he got this big important job, so he was barely ever around. Then I noticed he was changing, and not good changes. Next thing I knew, the whole thing imploded. And now I'm here, so I guess it's final.

DUMPS BARTENDER: What's your name, friend?

LINDA: Linda. Linda Ballwheat.

DUMPS BARTENDER: Now, Linda, people come here to turn their lives around. And now, I don't want to be too forward, but I do have a recommendation. So many resolutions are about doing less of something. Why not give yourself more, Linda?

More pleasure, more rest, and more time to connect with yourself and your body. You can get in the habit with Dipsea.

LINDA: Oh, I don't mix space grains and space grapes.

DUMPS BARTENDER: [laughing] Oh, no, sorry. Dipsea is an audio app full of short, sexy stories designed to turn you on. They release new stories every week, so there's always more to explore, no matter who you're into or what turns you on.

LINDA: Oh, I like milquetoast men who don't transform into colossal flaming assholes.

DUMPS BARTENDER: [confused] Oh, that's a pretty... specific kink, but I'm sure they have you covered. Plus, Dipsea has wellness sessions to help you learn more about yourself and bedtime stories and soundscapes to help you relax before you drift off.

LINDA: Well, I'll have what she's having.

DUMPS BARTENDER: Well, if you mean a free 30-day trial, you're in luck. Just head to dipseastories.com/zyxx. That's a 30-day free trial when you go to D-I-P-S-E-A stories.com/zyxx.

LINDA: Wow, with deals like that, they could call this place the Funmps, not the Dumps. Because I put fun in there.

DUMPS BARTENDER: Um. dipseastories.com/zix.

LINDA: Or wait, the Bumps? Like, I'll fist bump the dipse-? No, gosh. Oh, boy.

[transition music]

DAR: It is such a pleasure to have you all here. Please all take the time to meet each other. You are our dearest and most respected friends.

NERMUT: [heavy accent] I can't believe I got an invitation to this soiree.

AJ: Whoa.

JUSTIN: Whoa!

NERMUT: [normal voice] Is this good? Is it good? Yeah.

PLECK: [laughing] It's really good.

AJ: Pretty good, yeah.

HARK: [impressed] Did some other lird come aboard the ship? I don't even know who I'm talking to right now!

NERMUT: [accent] Mmmhmm. Sorry to keep on my mask. I got to keep the mine dust out. [normal voice] This is fun! Pleasure to meet you, fine folks.

DAR: Gasp!

[horn blows]

DAR: There's been a murder!

HARK: Oh no!

AJ: [worried] All right, let's set up a perimeter, everybody. Close it all down. Close it all down.

DAR: All right.

AJ: Which one of you JUCKERS killed somebody?! [cocks blaster]

C-53: AJ, remember your character.

PLECK: AJ, AJ, the *professor*.

AJ: I'm a professor of literature. Secure the perimeter and everyone down on the ground.

JUSTIN: Did they die in the water?

DAR: No.

JUSTIN: [sobbing] Did I not do my job right?

CENTURION: No, babe, you did it.

DAR: No, the murder was not in the pool outside in the mansion garden. No, the murder happened here. It was my dear sweet partner, the Counteur. They've been murdered!

BARGIE: Thirs irs where I do myrh monologue-

HARK: [stiltedly reading] Oh, no, the Counteur was going to fund my new film! Did I... Was I too overt about that?

DAR: Yeah, Hark, you're nailing it. Absolutely.

HARK: It's important information, I assumed...

DAR: And of course now, none of you can leave until we solve this mystery.

AJ: [charges blaster] We've got to shoot our way out. As a professor of literature, we have to shoot our way out.

PLECK: That's not what a professor of literature would ever say.

AJ: Characters are stupid. I don't know why people do them. It's just like do your own thing.

PLECK: AJ...

NERMUT: [accented] Some characters ARE stupid!

[cast breaks into laughter]

DAR: Now, no one can leave until I find out who murdered my Counteur. A sob, sob cry.

PLECK: Dar is a great game master.

HARK: AJ, can I just talk to you over here for a second? [pulls AJ aside]

AJ: Yeah, you got it.

HARK: Sort of along the edge of what's happening here?

AJ: Yeah, sure. We call that an aside.

HARK: [chuckling] Okay. You know, that's on me. I don't know the lingo. [claps AJ on the back]

AJ: No, you don't. You don't, Hark.

HARK: All right, AJ. I know this is perhaps not one of your standard missions, but think about this. Imagine an infiltration mission.

AJ: I'm listening.

HARK: All right, where you're forced to pretend to play Professor --

AJ: Professor Wilford... Brimley is my name.

[cast breaks]

HARK: Okay! You've been assigned the role of Professor Wilford Brimley to seamlessly merge with this party and get all the intel.

AJ: Whoa, okay. That seems different from what we're doing, but also the same. Let's do this. Let's get in character! [crushes can]

HARK: That's it. Now you got it. Well, Professor Brimley, it was great to meet you. I'm Big Shot Director Ariflex Obar.

AJ: Also, my secret is I'm embezzling from the university, so --

HARK: Oh! Good, AJ, good.

NERMUT: [skitters up] Well, if it ain't the fashionista.

PLECK: Yes, that's right.

NERMUT: That's a fancy shirt there.

PLECK: Thank you, I designed it myself.

NERMUT: Wow. Well, let me dust off my hand. Nice to meet you. I'm Gart Tobago.

PLECK: Wow, very cool. I am Trebus Philistair, fashion designer to the stars.

DAR: [sadly] I'm so sorry to interrupt. Were you close friends of my partner, the Counteur?

PLECK: If by friends you mean former lovers-

[long pause]

DAR: Gasp!

PLECK: Then maybe.

JUSTIN: What?

NERMUT: Yikes.

JUSTIN: We all heard that.

AJ: This seems like a big deal, right?

NERMUT: Trebus Philistair was porkin' the Counteur!

DAR: Gasp! [sorrowful] Behind my back after over 160 years of blissful partnership?

HARK: That is a long marriage. Congratulations.

DAR: You would dare to come between me and the Counteur?

PLECK: Listen, Countess, no one loved the Counteur more than me.

DAR: Hooooonnrgh!!

CENTURION: Whoa. Babe, are you hearing this?

PLECK: I would never have laid a finger upon him, so you know I'm innocent.

JUSTIN: As a lifeguard named Focusrite Fullbottle, I think that's suspicious.

CENTURION: As an entrepreneur named [opens paper] Geegoggins Forklift I also think this is a big reveal of information.

NERMUT: [whispering] Dar, great names.

DAR: Thank you.

AJ: Captain Dar- I mean, Countess, I need to talk to you.

DAR: But, Professor, we need a quorum. If we get three guests to confirm suspicion, then we must learn the secrets from --

AJ: Yeah. No, I just need to talk. Can you just talk to me for a second?

DAR: Okay, fine. What do you need?

AJ: Captain Dar, I really want to succeed in this mission of being in character, therefore I need a little bit of intel from you. Namely, what is a professor of literature? Take it word by word.

DAR: A professor is a teacher.

AJ: Oh.

DAR: A fancy teacher, yeah. And literature-

AJ: What is literature?

DAR: I guess to put it plainly to you, books?

AJ: I'm a teacher of books.

DAR: Yeah.

AJ: I've been playing this character wrong.

DAR: [confused] You've been playing the character?

AJ: Well, I didn't know what it was. Also, are you okay?

DAR: What do you mean?

AJ: If you're not, just like if something's going on, if you've got mind control or something weird's going on, just yell mutiny and I'll take you out. And whoever we need to-

DAR: You'll take me out, AJ, if I yell mutiny?

AJ: You're the captai- Yeah, just yell mutiny and I'll do it.

DAR: Thank you, AJ, for that offer.

AJ: [exaggerated] Thank you, CooOountess.

DAR: [excited] Yeah, no, give me more. Give me more.

AJ: I embezzled from the university and the Counteur found out.

DAR: Too much, too much, too much. Let that-

AJ: And he confronted me about it.

DAR: Nope.

AJ: And we had stern words.

DAR: Well, got to just roll this now.

JUSTIN: Wait. That sounds really suspicious. I like to nominate the professor as being a possible murderer.

HARK: I'm going to have to second that accusation.

DAR: But, Professor, when did you have this altercation with my lover?

AJ: A dozen yon years ago.

PLECK: [laughing] So that was a while ago. Not super relevant, right?

DAR: Well, it would seem that we have no quorum. We must continue to circulate.

HARK: Well, put her there, stranger. I'm Director Ariflex Obar, and boy, this has certainly thrown a wrench into my evening. [shakes Justin's hand]

JUSTIN: I'm lifeguard Focusrite Fullbottle, and I'm drowning in confusion.

HARK: Gosh, I wish I knew more about the Counteur. But I've only just moved to town, so I'm afraid I don't know much.

JUSTIN: Can I ask you a question? Like a question?

HARK: Sure, yeah.

JUSTIN: Okay, so like on my card, it says "is murderer."

HARK: [taken aback] Yeah, okay, well that's -- I think that means you committed the murder.

JUSTIN: Whaeat?

HARK: Okay, and I'm going to forget that I saw that. But the idea is that you committed the murder of the Counteur, and so you've got to act, y'know, like you're trying to hide it. Does that make sense?

JUSTIN: But like I never did it.

HARK: No, no, obviously nobody actually did the murder, but one of us has to, you know, for the story, be the murderer.

JUSTIN: My mom always told me like growing up, like literally, seriously, like no lie, like assdead. She was like, "You can't lie."

HARK: No, yeah.

JUSTIN: And you're telling me like it's okay to lie?

HARK: [flustered] Well, it's not --

JUSTIN: In like certain situations in your life?

HARK: Uum. Oh, boy. You know, within the construct of a game, I think it's fine.

JUSTIN: Centurion!

[Centurion strolls up]

CENTURION: What's up, babe?

JUSTIN: This bro says we can lie, and it's like totally fine.

CENTURION: No, we can't lie to each other. We talked about this. We cannot lie to one another.

HARK: Oh. Yeah, don't lie to each other. You don't want to do that. I mean – Oh boy.

CENTURION: What are you doing, Uncle Hark? Like what is up?

HARK: [worried] Yeah, I know. Um. Jeez, I'm not really good at talking to teenagers.

CENTURION: You're my Roddfather. Like what is the deal?

HARK: [sweating buckets] I know. I would never want your partner to lie to you. I'm going to go get a drink. I'm so sorry.

CENTURION: Hey, babe?

JUSTIN: Yeah?

CENTURION: Are you the murderer?

JUSTIN: [long pause] NoooOooo.

CENTURION: Okay.

JUSTIN: [lying] I am no murderer.

CENTURION: Thank you for being so assdead with me.

[cast breaks]

CENTURION: I appreciate that, babe.

JUSTIN: Yeah, okay.

DAR: Alas, there's been a second murder.

NERMUT: [accent] Yikes.

DAR: No, Nermut, you're the one who died.

AJ: [poshly] Everyone form a perimeter. Seal all the exits. Keep your heads on a swivel.

DAR: It appears that the 'Stroid Miner has been vanquished.

NERMUT: Blehhghhh ehnnh ehnnh. Rigor mortis.

DAR: Corpses don't say rigor mortis, Nermut. And I believe the last I saw speaking with the 'Stroid Miner was the Fashionista!

PLECK: [worried] Ah! What?

JUSTIN: What?

PLECK: Me?

DAR: Yes, explain yourself.

AJ: Papa...

HARK: Yeah, friend, explain yourself. We're going to get to the bottom of this or my name isn't Ariflex Obar!

PLECK: Listen, yes, I was the 'Stroid Miner's lover once.

AJ: Wait, what?

PLECK: I loved him more than anyone! I would never kill him.

JUSTIN: Wait, whose lover were you not in this room?

PLECK: Yes, it's true. I've taken many lovers amongst us. For example, you, Ariflex Obar, famed director. Don't you remember that night on Scornlex 3?

HARK: [angstily] It's true.

PLECK: Yes. And you, professor.

AJ: Professor Wilford Brimley to you, rake!

PLECK: [laughing] Yes, I know. I know. Wilford. [flips paper] Yes, you and I were college roommates and lovers. And you, Countess. Do you forget our relationship so quickly?

DAR: I could never, but I would like to hear it read word for word for this entire room.

AJ: Like a book.

PLECK: Very well. [clears throat, reads dramatically] It all began 30 cycles ago. I was a young upstart undergrad fashionista. I found myself drawn to the irresistible charms of the bookish Wilford Brimley. Yes, we had a fling. It was brief, but tawdry.

JUSTIN: [quiet] Tawdry?

AJ: What do you mean?

PLECK: We loved, we were lovers. We loved here and there. In the stacks of the library and in the sewing rooms of the fashion building. Loving up and down, all around.

AJ: What?

JUSTIN: What?

PLECK: But soon enough I was discovered. Yes, discovered and brought to Holowood where I worked as a costume designer on the set of one auteur. None other than Ariflex Obar. We became lovers shortly after my first day on set. And loved we did.

AJ: What?

PLECK: We loved like no one has ever loved before.

HARK: Well, who could resist such a catch? Once I saw Trebus for the first time, I knew my heart was no longer my own.

PLECK: But my heart was only yours for several short days until one day on location on the beaches of Gadhatu, I left you for a handsome, young, buxom, curvaceous lifeguard named Focusrite Fullbottle!

JUSTIN: That's me.

PLECK: We became lovers almost instantaneously.

JUSTIN: We did?

PLECK: We loved right then and there.

AJ: How?

JUSTIN: What does that even mean?

AJ: I don't think that's how it works, right?

PLECK: [distressed] Yes, we were lovers. I was so ashamed of our loveresness –

JUSTIN: Wha?

PLECK: That I banished myself. I took an artist's fashionista retreat for the furthest asteroid I could find. There I met dear, deceased, sweet, simple Gart Tobago, a 'Stroid Miner. I think of all the lovers I gave my lover to.

AJ: What?

PLECK: His loverness was perhaps the loveliest.

JUSTIN: [hushed] Hey, Pleck.

PLECK: What?

JUSTIN: Do you know--I feel kind of weird asking you this.

PLECK: What is it, former lover, Focusrite Fullbo-?

JUSTIN: Do you know what happens?

PLECK: Yes. Yes, obviously. You should know, we loved together for years at a time.

JUSTIN: [grossed out] I don't like that word. It just feels wrong when he says it.

PLECK: I'm pretty sure I know basically what all of that entails.

[Dar quietly pulls Pleck aside]

DAR: Pleck, I-I wrote some really juicy specifics on that card.

PLECK: Yeah, but to be honest, I didn't really know what a lot of that stuff was referring to, so I just figured I'd kind of fill in my own blanks on that, which I thought worked pretty well.

DAR: Just repeating the word "love" over and over again.

PLECK: [haltingly] Yeah. But it wasn't until I came here... to the mansion of the Counteur and Countess.... that I truly knew what lover... the lover I... [flips through script] lovers truly love.

AJ: It's all in one card. Wow.

PLECK: Yes, when I met the Counteur, the jucks we gave and received to each other were the finest quality.

DAR: Eugh.

HARK: Jucks?

DAR: I don't like this.

PLECK: When we loved upon one another, it was like birds eating in a field.

JUSTIN: Eating?

PLECK: Yes, the most accurate depiction of what, you know, loving is. [long pause] Anyway.

DAR: I'm so sorry to interrupt that rousing listicle of your lovers—

[cast breaks]

DAR: – but unfortunately there's been another murder!

[horn honks]

JUSTIN: Wha?

CENTURION: Oh, it's me! [dying noises]

DAR: You're dead. You're dead. You're dead.

CENTURION: Oh, I'm dead now.

DAR: You're dead now.

JUSTIN: Centurion, no!

DAR: While we all had our backs turned, the young cog Entrepreneur has fatally met his match.

AJ: Somebody must be invisible. Form a perimeter! [charges blaster] Keep your heads on swivels. Lock down the exits. Books!

C-53: Books?

[transition music, bustling sounds]

ZIMA MASTER PELL: [scrawling on paper] Dearest Cynthia, hello again from your erstwhile client, Zima Master Pell. I write to you from my lush garden retreat on Zima Prime. As my literary agent, you have no doubt wondered as to my whereabouts in the aftermath of the Allwheat's destruction. Well, worry not, Cynthia, for the hack circle remains unbroken, and I bear important news from Zima Prime, namely that I, Master Pell, have abandoned my novel. Yes, after more than 4,000 experimental pages and as many rejections from publishers, I hereby burn the manuscript with my Fist of Flame.

[flame fwoosh]

ZIMA MASTER PELL: Novels are for losers, and now I'm all about high-quality stock media. That's right. I have pivoted to video, and now more than ever, storytellers and content creators are challenged with producing more video content at a higher quality than ever before. I can keep up with the growing demands without sacrificing my vision with stock media from Storyblocks. With an ever-growing library that has over one million high-quality stock assets, including 4K HD footage, After Effects, and Premiere Pro templates, music, images, sound effects, and more. I mean, check out this video of Master Little Boy hovering.

[Pell clicks a video of Littly Boy hovering]

ZIMA MASTER PELL: Listen to that wicked sound effect I laid on there. Look at the glow I added. Eat it, terrible novel that I hated writing! Eat the hot dust of this amazing vid! And with Storyblocks' unlimited all-access plan, you can get unlimited downloads of everything in the library. And get this, Cynthia, I'm not writing from my retreat.

[bustling sounds disappear]

ZIMA MASTER PELL: I don't even own a pencil! Those were just more high-quality immersive sound effects from Storyblocks! And my Fist of Flame! Also a sound effect, see? This is the real thing.

ZIMA MASTER KIARONDO: Master Pell?

ZIMA MASTER PELL: Yeah.

ZIMA MASTER KIARONDO: Master Pell, if you are quite done with my stereo speaker system for the day, I was hoping to give this new Mehnahnaroo bootleg a spin, but--

ZIMA MASTER PELL: Yes, yes, one minute, Kiarondo. Yes, very well! You and me, Cynthia, influencers at last! Explore the library and subscribe today at storyblocks.com/zyxx. That's storyblocks.com/z-y-x-x.

[transition music]

PLECK: All right, who's left standing? Who could be the murderer?

JUSTIN: Well, it's definitely not me. And you can tell by the way I'm speaking in such confidence.

HARK: Not a waver, no suspicion there.

AJ: So it could be, I guess, *twist*, the Countess?

JUSTIN: What?

DAR: Me? Under suspicion? At my own party?

AJ: Oh, yeah, it also could be Papa.

PLECK: No, no, I just was loving everyone up and down.

AJ: Oh.

HARK: S'weird.

PLECK: It's on my card. I'm supposed to say it.

DAR: Thank you, Pleck, you're doing a great job. [dramatic gasp] There's been another murder!

JUSTIN: Wait, what? What?

[honks horn]

DAR: Oh, the director.

JUSTIN: What?

DAR: May we always remember their works.

HARK: [strained] I was on the verge of directing my masterpiece. [collapses]

DAR: Remaining un-murdered guests, does anyone have an accusation as to who the murderer could be?

PLECK: [dramatically] I formally accuse... the only person in this room who I have not loved upon.

JUSTIN: Eughhhh.

PLECK: What?

JUSTIN: [quietly] Mrngh.

PLECK: I accuse Geegoggins Forklift, the Entrepreneur.

CENTURION: [annoyed] What? I'm dead, you dip.

NERMUT: He's dead.

PLECK: Oh, sorry, I mean--

HARK: Yep, Pleck, he died before I did.

PLECK: Okay, sorry, it was a lot of people-- I accuse the only--

AJ: Papa, you're embarrassing us.

DAR: Oh no, there's been a murder!

PLECK: Oh, no!

AJ: Wait, what?

JUSTIN: What? How does that happen?

DAR: The lifeguard... has died!

PLECK: Oh, no.

JUSTIN: All right.

HARK: Wait a minute, he has? [stuttering] I didn't-- forget I said anything.

AJ: Wait, hold on, dead guy. Why do you say that? You went, "Wuh-buh?"

HARK: [nervous] No reason, I just-- I was helping Justin review some of his character notes on his card, and it said he was the murderer. So I know Justin's the murderer, but I- I didn't let it affect my game play!

CENTURION: Wait, you lied to me?

DAR: No, of course, but--

CENTURION: [upset] Justin! I asked you if you were the murderer. You said you weren't.

DAR: No, sorry, Justin, my handwriting is not great. This doesn't say you're a murderer, it says you're a noodler. You're great with pool noodles.

JUSTIN: Whoa. [relieved] So that means I-- I didn't lie. Centurion, I didn't lie!

CENTURION: Okay, it seems like you did, but I guess you didn't. I love you, babe.

DAR: Ahem, ahem. So it would appear the only one left would be the fashionista or the professor.

PLECK: [laughing] I have an accusation. I, Trebus Philistair, would like to formally accuse the last person any of us would think to accuse. The Counteur himself. Yes, the first person to die.

HARK: Hoho, wow, what a twist!

DAR: Gasp! You dare besmirch our equal lover?

PLECK: Yes, yes. Yes, he was always jealous of all my previous loves and all of the ways in which I loved into them and around them and stuff.

DAR: [drops stilted voice] We're going to have a talk after this.

PLECK: It only makes sense that his jealousy raged and raged, and he decided to kill every last one of my previous lovers.

DAR: But wait, if that were true, my beloved Counteur would have... gasp, I've been murdered too! [death rattle]

PLECK: No!

AJ: What? Wait, so who's the captain now?

JUSTIN: What?

PLECK: The, the, no, no, the cap-- the captain's still here.

AJ: There's been a mutiny!

PLECK: No, no.

AJ: [upset] There's been a mutiny and I didn't know!

DAR: No one said that word.

PLECK: The only answer is that the Counteur is not actually dead. He faked his death and has been sneaking around this manor.

[Nermut begins slow clapping]

PLECK: Uh, oh, so.

NERMUT: [accent] Well, well, well, Trebus, congratulations. Not only are you right, but the 'Stroid Miner all along... [poshly] was the Counteur.

PLECK: Whoa!

AJ: Twist!

DAR: My beloved! [aside] Great job, Nermut, great reveal.

NERMUT: Thank you, thanks so much. Good writing.

DAR: Thank you.

NERMUT: And what I must tell you is the deepest, darkest part of my backstory is that I never once— HRNNNHGH!

[Nermut dies]

HARK: No, no!

PLECK: Oh, no!

JUSTIN: What? No!

PLECK: I mean, let's not mourn too hard, he murdered almost everyone.

AJ: Oh, that's right, they were the killer.

HARK: I forgot about that.

JUSTIN: Yeah, it's okay, I guess, yeah.

PLECK: So, wait, I don't get it, if the Counteur was the murderer and then he died, who killed the Counteur?

AJ: Um, isn't it obvious, Papa?

PLECK: No.

AJ: There's only one possibility. The possibility that everybody forgot.

[the sound of two pieces of bread slapping together]

PLECK: What's that sound that sounds like two pieces of bread slapping together?

C-53: Well, well, well, it seems that everyone has forgotten about the mayor.

PLECK: The mayor, of course.

JUSTIN: What?

CENTURION: Yeah, of course it was the mayor.

C-53: I killed the Counteur because I had a plan to murder everyone in town and he beat me to it, sort of. And I would have gotten away with it, too, if it weren't for Professor of Literature Wilford Brimley.

AJ: Haha, yeah!

DAR: Nicely done, AJ.

PLECK: AJ, you won. You figured it out. You found the murderer. That was amazing.

AJ: [proudly] Yeah, I guess I did. By process of elimination. Pretty good.

NERMUT: Dar, this was fun and it made sense.

C-53: Yeah, Dar, thanks for letting me be a part of the story, even though I was sort of over here in the kitchen for most of the time.

AJ: Yeah, you know what? Sometimes playing pretend is the only way you can get through a hard time. Mission accomplished. Good time achieved.

PLECK: Thank you, Captain Dar. In this difficult time, you know, adrift in a strange corner of a strange galaxy, you used fun to teach us about community.

AJ: [cocks blaster] You heard him! You heard the word! Mutiny, let's do it, guys!

PLECK: No, I said community.

C-53: No, no, AJ.

DAR: Wait, no, AJ! Pleck did not say...

PLECK: Community!

DAR: Pleck didn't say mutiny.

AJ: You said it!

PLECK: Community!

DAR: Ooh, I just said it. I heard it.

C-53: The captain said it?!

BARGIE: Oh, no! Oh no! Hijinks ensue.

[outro music]

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JEREMY: This is perfect. Just keep rolling with it. Stay in this- What's your character's name? You're Professor...?

WINSTON: Tiddly Don... Bibble. Tiddly- [laughs] I'm sorry, hold on.

ALLIE: No.

JEREMY: [laughter]

WINSTON: It's Wilfred Von Tiddly. Tibly. No, I always do Tiddle.

JEREMY: Excellent. Excellent.

WINSTON: Well, it's Wilford Tibly. What was it?

JEREMY: Wilford Brimley.

WINSTON: Yeah, Wilford.... Brimley.

JEREMY: Great to meet you. I'm Big Shot Director, Panaflex Omar. Wait, did we already use that name?

ALDEN: No.

MOUJAN: I don't think so. I don't think so.

SETH: Panaflex?

ALDEN: No, but that's rad.