

[intro music]

ALDEN: Hey everybody, Alden Ford here, along with Shane.

SHANE: Hey.

ALDEN: And Seth.

SETH: Hello.

ALDEN: This week we are hard at work on 510 which we're very excited about and it's going to be a crazy epic monstrosity of an episode. Because of that we decided to take a little bit more time to sew it up nice and get all that Shane magic in. I will say, 510 is the product of *six* recording sessions and counting. We can't wait for you to hear it.

SETH: So 510 will be coming out in two weeks. But we didn't want to leave you hanging for that long without anything in the feed.

ALDEN: We thought we'd do something this week that people have been asking us to do since we started doing the show. Two things actually. One is that we are going to release a completely uncut, unsound designed recording session of one of our recent episodes. And we thought that there was no better episode to illustrate that than 507 which is of course "A Little Ditty about Jakk and Shai'An" starring Chris Grace and Eric Gerson.

SETH: I love that that sounds like it's your pet name for it, not the episode title.
[imitating] It's a little ditty about Jakk and Shai'An.

ALDEN: The literal title of this episode. And after that, the second thing we're going to do is dive deep, for lack of a better phrase, into kind of the process as improvisers and producers, editors, sound designers of how we make the show and some of the decisions and creative processes that we use to bring a show from start to finish.

SHANE: I personally am very excited about this. This is something that fans have been asking for. And just to be clear for everyone out there, what you're going to be hearing is a tracking session. This is going to be like what we do in the room. And in fact, we almost released a tracking session right before 501 came out and it was aborted at the last minute because I think the cast is scared. And I've been wanting to do it for a long time because I think it's interesting.

ALDEN: Good theory.

SETH: Fans have said like, "Will you release a recording, a raw recording?" And I've said, "I don't think you want that." You know, the reason we edit them so much is that we leave in the really good stuff.

ALDEN: They're better when we edit them! We leave the good stuff and we take out the bad stuff.

SETH: But this one, I remember texting you guys while I was editing it saying, "If we ever release a raw recording, I think it should be this one." Partly just because it was so bonkers.

ALDEN: Yeah, and it ended up just because of the technical hurdles of having live accompaniment, it ended up kind of by necessity being a little more linear than some of our other sessions where we were allowed to get kind of mired down in conversations about canon and how we were going to move the greater plot forward and stuff like that. Which is not to say that those tracking sessions might not be interesting for some people to hear, but we felt like this recording session is a nice mix between something that stands on its own as something that you can still listen to and enjoy without editing, while also really illuminating how much the sound design does to turn a really fun recording session into a killer episode.

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: So, without further ado, let's jump in and enjoy, if you... dare, this unedited tracking session for 507.

SETH: Oh, and we'll pop back in with some present day ads.

ALDEN: And stick around afterwards for some more BTS Convo from us.

[intro music]

MOUJAN: I am rolling.

JEREMY: Jeremy Bent recording.

ALDEN: Chris, do you have any scene setting? Do you have a preference of sort of what the environment is that we're in?

CHRIS: No, I'm just picturing the same thing as the Darmok, which is like a desert.

JEREMY: Just like a weird...

CHRIS: Rocky planet.

SETH: What did that character look like? Or what do you want your character to look like?

ALDEN: He had ridges on his head.

SETH: Ridges.

ALDEN: Yeah.

JEREMY: Classic Trek.

CHRIS: We can build it as we...

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah.

CHRIS: I don't know. I'm very easy. I can roll with whatever.

MOUJAN: Thank you.

ALDEN: All right.

C-53: Oh, okay. Somewhat of a strange environment here. My mission to find and reach out to...

JEREMY: Chris, did you have a name for this race of people?

CHRIS: No, but can he be Shai'An, son of Jakk?

JEREMY: Yes, absolutely.

ALDEN: [laughing] Already great.

C-53: Okay. My mission is to reach out to... this planet's emissary, Shai'An, son of Jakk. Okay, well, should be easy enough, I've just gotta find them. Um... Okay, wow, gosh. These bodies sweat so much. This is the worst!

SHAI'AN: [singing] There's a man over there! There's a man over there!

ERIC: [playing piano]

C-53: Excuse me. Hello, yes. I'm... Well, I'm not a man. It's sort of not worth getting into. Are you Shai'An, son of Jakk?

SHAI'AN: The chameleon skin of a man inside a machine! Or a machine inside a man?

C-53: Yes. That's sort of accurate. I am C-53... Where is that music coming from?

SHAI'AN: We greet you! To this third rock from the center of the universe!

C-53: I greet you back. Should I be... Is it better if I sing?

SHAI'AN: The crying of a bird!

C-53: Mhm. Yes.

MOUJAN: [bird squawk]

SHAI'AN: An insect on a leaf. The setting of the three suns in harmony. We greet you!

C-53: And I, in return, greet you. I am C-53.

SHAI'AN: The setting of the three suns!

C-53: Okay.

SHAI'AN: An insect on a leaf. We greet you. [upset] The setting of the sun.

C-53: Okay. I'm... Wow. I can understand what you're singing to me, but I feel like I'm missing something about these songs. Let me try one more time. I am C-53. I've been sent here by the COUP to...

ERIC: [playing a jaunty tune]

SHAI'AN: [singing] Oh, my name is Shai'An. Shai'An, son of Jakk! My name is Shai'An.

C-53: Fantastic.

SHAI'AN: Son of Jakk, step back. Boy, you're going to have a good time in this little town of mine. The Wells Fargo trucks a'coming!

ALDEN: That's awesome. Can I hold for just a second? Allie was here and she dropped. Is she still here?

[pause]

MOUJAN: Allie!

ALDEN: She may have heard the music and was like, "I'm fucking out of here."

MOUJAN: I'm texting her. I'm letting her know what's happening.

ALDEN: That was so great, Chris.

JEREMY: Oh, man. This is going to be great.

ALDEN: I'm wondering, as great as Wells Fargo wagon is, I think we should pick it up with something just off of that.

SETH: We don't have earthisms.

ALDEN: Yeah. Knowles Bargo or something like that.

CHRIS: Oh, sure, sure, sure. [piano plays]

SHAI'AN: My name is Shai'An, son of Jakk. You better step back. I said to everyone in the town, the Fells Wargo truck is a coming! And I know he is up to something!

ALDEN: [laughing] Oh, hi, Allie.

SETH: Hey, Allie.

JEREMY: That was great.

ALLIE: Oh, my God. I'm so sorry. I'm here. This is sounding great!

WINSTON: We miss you!

SETH: Yes. We were just imagining what it would feel like to drop in in the middle of that.

CHRIS: See how I so skillfully picked a different name.

ALLIE: Incredible, beautiful, enjoyable.

ALDEN: So just to catch you up really quick, we're going to double back and get the intro, after?

ALLIE: Yes, great.

ALDEN: But the pitch as it stands now is that the intro will be that we get a call from Nermut that we have to go rescue C-53. And none of us knew he was even gone. But it turns out that he's been going on missions without us because he's the lead envoy.

ALLIE: Wow.

ALDEN: And he's down on this planet with Chris's character who speaks only in song.

ALLIE: Better him than me. Yes.

ALDEN: It will be the rest of us eventually, I think.

CHRIS: Jeremy, I think I'm going to try to be more enigmatic so you can make more assumptions about what I'm saying. As opposed to me, I feel it's less interesting if I'm just singing dialogue.

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I think that makes good sense.

ALDEN: I mean, all this shit about the bird on the leaf and shit.

MOUJAN: I love it.

JEREMY: Yeah. I think that stuff is amazing.

WINSTON: Again, Allie, we miss you. It's really nice to be here with other people. So next time.

SETH: Yeah.

ALLIE: Yeah. Tell me what shrimp entrees did you order?

WINSTON: It was just shrimp. It was just shrimp.

ALDEN: Just a pile of shrimp.

WINSTON: Just a big old bag of shrimp.

ERIC: Raw.

ALLIE: Also, hi, Eric. Hi, Chris.

ERIC: Hi, Allie. How are you?

ALLIE: Thank you for both being here and doing this.

CHRIS: Thanks for having us.

WINSTON: Yeah. This is great.

JEREMY: Yeah. Okay. So we'll go back into that scene.

SETH: Yeah. Let's roll and rock.

C-53: Oh, it's interesting. I can understand the words you're saying, but the meaning is being lost. [piano plays slowly] Shai'An, son of Jakk, I am C-53. I'm a lead envoy from the COUP. We're trying to reach out to your civilization, but they... Why can't we understand you?

SHAI'AN: [singing] What happened to the 54th sea? Why do there have to only be 53 seas? This rock has got water everywhere. We've got oceans and rivers and lakes, but only 53 seas. Seas.

C-53: 53 Cs. Is... Did you write a song about my name? Is that... or is that what you call me on this planet?

SHAI'AN: A song is as good as a handshake where I come from! A little island off the 52nd parallel on this rock of mine. We write a song as a handshake. We don't shake hands!

C-53: [singing] You write a song as a handshake.

SHAI'AN: We don't have hands! We also don't have hands.

C-53: You couldn't shake it even if you wanted to, because you don't have hands! [not singing] I think I understand on some level...

JEREMY: I feel like that's a...

ALDEN: Yeah, that's good. That's really funny. That's really funny.

JEREMY: That's so silly.

[transition]

SETH: Hey, it's us again. We're back.

ALDEN: Hey, it's us in the present day, not in the recording session. That's... I know it's confusing when there's no sound design. As you know, Mission to Zyxx is entirely unscripted. But one of the very few things we do script on the show is our advertisements. But this week, since we're behind the scenes, we're not going to script

anything. And we're going to do regular out of character ad reads. Shane, now's your shot, man! You get an ad read this week! Congratulations!.

SHANE: Well... It's not the ad reads that I've been looking forward to. It was revenge on YouTube.

ALDEN: Oh no, what? Why?

SHANE: For the whole Green Chef.

ALDEN: Listen, Shane, A, Green Chef is not a sponsor this week. So we're legally not allowed to mention their names.

SETH: That's false.

ALDEN: That's actually not true.

SHANE: But I will say- The meal prep company that almost ended the show, if we're being honest.

SETH: Sorry, Shane, we are not ever giving you those sweet Green Chef codes.

SHANE: But you know what they say, if you give a man an easy to prepare with low waste, low prep meal plan, you feed him for a day. But if you give a man extremely high quality XLR cables, he can integrate that into his job as an audio engineer and make the money to feed himself for a lifetime.

SETH: Wait, do we have a brand new sponsor?

SHANE: We do! We have a brand new sponsor that I am excited about. IO Audio Technologies, that sent me a few XLR cables, also known as microphone cables.

ALDEN: Yeah. Yeah! And we've recorded a few episodes with these new cables.

SHANE: I'm using one right now.

SETH: And I'm not going to lie, the recording session right before that, there was some audio crackling.

ALDEN: I mean, that's actually true. It's totally true.

SETH: It came in and it's gone. It's gone. It's gone. It's true.

SHANE: Yeah. There's also this other element to having a nice XLR cable that I didn't discover until IO Audio Technologies sent me these great cables is that it's just nice to have a thing that you use a lot that's just a little bit better than everything else. Do you know what I mean?

SETH: Yes.

SHANE: You get that feeling of like, ooh, this cable is not getting that kink, you know, in it. It's got... it's, x this one is like braided, but it's a kind of braid that feels like an extra good braided one too, on top of already being a high quality cable. And when they sent me these cables, they wrote me a letter. They said, "I'm sad that Mission Zyxx is ending this season, but I know that whatever you guys do next is going to be just as incredible," which means that they are real fans.

ALDEN: That's so nice!

SHANE: So if you are thinking about buying an XLR cable, please go to IO Audio Tech. That's the letter I, the letter O, and then audio.tech.com/zyxx and buy some good cables. It will make you feel better.

ALDEN: What a nice thing for a company that makes audio equipment who likes the show to sponsor the show. That's so great.

SETH: Right. And I think that they have some more ads coming up. So there are some Zyxx characters about to be using these XLR cables. That's what I have to say. Thank you for supporting the show, IO Audio Tech.

SHANE: Yeah.

SETH: But wait, what's that URL again?

SHANE: It is the letter I, the letter O, audio.tech.com/zyxx.

ALDEN: Seth, if you can't spell audio tech, you don't belong in audio tech, I think.

SETH: All right. Nice knowing you guys.

ALDEN: And with that, let's dive back into this recording sesh right where we left off.

[transition]

CHRIS: I don't know why he doesn't have hands.

JEREMY: They don't have hands.

CHRIS: He probably does, they're just caught—

WINSTON: And they don't have handshakes.

SETH: [imitating] Oh, wait, I found my hands!

ALDEN: If you don't have hands, who's playing the piano?

CHRIS: That's the secret!

JEREMY: It's coming. It's coming.

SETH: Alden!

ALDEN: Great. Fuck it up!

CHRIS: You should actually investigate that at some point, Jeremy.

JEREMY: Okay, I will.

ALDEN: You guys want to do another one of those?

ERIC: Is this...

ALDEN: Yes, Eric?

ERIC: Is this like even remotely what you envisioned?

SETH: Absolutely.

ALDEN: This is awesome. This is exactly what we wanted!

JEREMY: Eric, this is so great.

SETH: Better than perfect.

JEREMY: Well, it's not *better* than perfect —

SETH: Jeremy... it is.

ALDEN: Should we do another one of these with you two or should we try to start folding in the crew?

JEREMY: Just because I feel like we're in a good zone. Yeah, maybe we push forward with Chris and I.

ALDEN: Yeah, for sure. Do as many as you want.

CHRIS: I feel pretty in the zone with Jeremy, right?

SETH: Yeah, yeah. I get it. Nice.

JEREMY: Uh-huh, yeah. All right.

C-53: So your people use song to communicate? Everything becomes a song. Every word that we would have in our language is a song in yours.

SHAI'AN: [singing as piano plays] I wrote a song about you. Now you do too. Shai'An, son of Jakk.

C-53: [singing] C-53 coming back! To this planet after never been...

JEREMY: I fucked up.

ALDEN: Try again.

JEREMY: Yeah, there we go.

C-53: [singing] C-53 coming back to this planet after never having been here before. Is that what you mean when you say everything's a song? A song is a handshake!

SHAI'AN: I wrote a song about you. Now you do that as well.

C-53: Yes, of course. Shai'An, son of Jakk! [pause]

SHAI'AN: [laughs] He's like a child. He writes songs like a child!

C-53: I... just don't know that I've done a lot of it before.

SHAI'AN: You're like a child. A little starling flying through my sky. [chuckles] Sleep.

ALDEN: [laughs]

C-53: I'm actually, I'm a droid. I don't really sleep, but... [tired, piano plays dreamy music] All of a sudden I'm so drowsy.

SHAI'AN: We both sleep as I cradle you. Cat--

C-53: Shai'An, son of Jakk. I can't stay awake.

SHAI'AN: The cat is in the silver spoon and the cradle is the moon!

C-53: [snoring]

CHRIS: Good luck putting this together!

ALL: [laugh]

JEREMY: You think this is the hardest episode we've ever done? No way, man.

ALDEN: This is editing itself. It's beautiful.

SHANE: Yeah, we had a guest who played twins once. That was tough.

ALDEN: Yeah.

JEREMY: Dave Bluvband played twins. That was...

ALDEN: Um... This is great. I think the thing that is missing from this is what C needs to do. I think if we have a high stakes thing you're trying to get, then the obfuscation of the song, it gives you more reason to try to communicate with him.

JEREMY: Yeah yeah yeah. I was trying to think of something and I totally blanked.

ALDEN: No, no, no. This is, you're juggling eight different knives at once.

CHRIS: Could be a natural resource on this planet or...

JEREMY: It's a popular one. Yeah, yeah.

CHRIS: Oh, forget that then. Artificial resource on this planet?

ALDEN: [laughs]

CHRIS: See, I have in mind that just so fast.

JEREMY: Oh man, yeah. This guy's like a super rush.

CHRIS: The thing I thought about for my character was maybe there's a note that he can't hear that he used to be able to hear that he wants to be able to... So maybe it's something related to that. I don't know. That's just my internal motivation.

ALDEN: That's funny.

JEREMY: I love that.

ERIC: I don't know if... there's something about harmony, like you need to find the perfect harmony or something that they're like....

JEREMY: That's fun.

ALDEN: Yeah. I mean, what if Chris's civilization has been destroyed and like harmony is the only... That's the thing he can't get anymore because he's the only voice.

CHRIS: Right.

WINSTON: Or maybe that's the way to regenerate his society is with harmony.

ERIC: Yeah, reproduce. He just needs... If there's a harmony, he can reproduce and rebuild his...

ALDEN: Oh, that's great!

MOUJAN: That's great. Things start growing!

ALDEN: So every time there's a harmony, there's another one... Every time there's a harmony, there's another one that pops up.

ERIC: Yeah. So there's like a twin of Chris and then we have a bunch of Chris's and have fun with that.

MOUJAN: It'd be fun to populate the world with more singers.

ALDEN: That could get away from us maybe.

WINSTON: I don't think. I can't see how that would.

JEREMY: No, I don't see how that would.

WINSTON: Yeah, I think we're fine.

ALDEN: But I think it could also be if as soon as we have one chord, it could be we see something reappear. It doesn't need to be a person. It could be...

MOUJAN: Like grass or tree.

ALDEN: Exactly.

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah. Or like a building.

MOUJAN: A bunny. Yeah. And then one really weird looking person.

ALDEN: Yeah. "It was a little flat!" Yeah. So that's good. I also think maybe if we add that C-53 knows he's not... Like he can't contact the crew or the crew or whatever. Maybe there's a little bit... That raises the stakes for him to be like, "I need help getting out of here."

JEREMY: I can just add some lines to that thing at the top where I'm sort of roaming around. You know?

ALDEN: Yeah.

JEREMY: Right? Where it's like—

C-53: Okay. COUP wants to know why everyone on this planet mysteriously disappeared. But I'm... Wow. I can't even... I can't contact Bargie or anybody. There's some kind of interference now that I'm on the surface of this planet. It looks like it's up to me! No pressure.

JEREMY: You know, just something like that.

ALDEN: Yeah. I think that's good. Yeah. Cool. Um... So should we do one more after C wakes up from his little nap?

JEREMY: Sure. If you want to. Yeah.

ALDEN: And I think if, uh... Maybe this one ends with some sort of harmony and a flower grows or something?

JEREMY: Yeah. Yeah. Sure.

CHRIS: I'm going to bring you some food.

JEREMY: Oh, sure. Yeah.

[Eric plays piano]

C-53: Wow. Still not used to sleeping. Very weird. Very uncomfortable to suddenly regain consciousness. Oh, right. [calling out] Shai'An, son of Jakk. That's not very musical. [singing] Shai'An, son of Jakk, thank you for guarding me as I slept!

SHAI'AN: The smell of a bison recently slaughtered!

ALLIE: [laughs]

C-53: Oh, that's very bloody. [singing] Thank you, Shai'An, for this midday feast! I thank you for it, though I need it in the least.

C-53 AND SHAI'AN: [singing and harmonizing] I thank you for it. I thank you for it!

SHAI'AN: [gasps]

JEREMY: Oh my Rodd, the flowers are growing back all around us. What is happening here? [singing] Shai'An, I must ask you. Where does this music come from?

CHRIS: I'm opening up my shirt. Like Quato.

ALDEN: [laughs]

JEREMY: The music is... Sorry.

[piano plays]

C-53: [singing] The music comes from you! You are the music! The music man. That's what they could call you. If they wanted to give you a name other than Shai'An.

SHAI'AN: A song from my heart. Literally a song from my heart! A sentient face instead of a heart, that plays its own music! A song from my heart!

C-53: A song from his heart!

SHAI'AN: A song from my heart!

C-53: His—

SHAI'AN: My—

BOTH: [C-53 off key] –heart!

C-53: Oh, trees! And whym a little path leading who knows where! Shai'An, we simply must continue!

WINSTON: I feel like this is probably the part where like we arrive we're like “the fuck is going on here?”

ALDEN: That's really funny, I love that. Um...

WINSTON: Nothing is funnier than musical improv, it is the funniest improv there is.

JEREMY: Can I just pick up a line that's like...

C-53: I feel like when I was in a frame I would have had the range but...

ALL: [laughs]

[transition]

ALDEN: Hey everybody, it's time for one more ad! Right? Let's do another one!

SHANE: Yeah!

ALDEN: This episode, as with many episodes this season, is sponsored by BetterHelp online therapy. We've done a lot of ad reads for BetterHelp and I think, actually, not only is it great that they have entrusted us with a bunch of ad reads and helped the show get made and stay afloat, but also I think for a lot of us the last couple years have been ridiculously stressful. And I think that more and more people are deciding how important therapy is, and BetterHelp is an easy accessible affordable way to get somebody to talk to. A sounding board for what you're going through, a chance to unload, if you will.

SHANE: I've been thinking about trying it out with our Zyxx offer code, but do you know? This is true, a funny thing that I think about a lot for myself is like... how do I set up my microphone situation? Do you know what I mean? Because it's gonna be like –

ALDEN: You don't want it to sound too good.

SHANE: Right, like, microphone out of frame, but still sound good because I do want that wow factor of like...

SETH: I mean I think the answer is clearly to have it out of frame until you're saying something really important, and then you bring it in and then you talk really quietly.

ALDEN: Well it's funny you bring that up, Seth, because not only does BetterHelp offer you know, voice chat, text chat, but they also have video chat. So you can you can play your power move by bringing your high-quality microphone into frame, that any quality therapist will see right through. And it's more affordable than in-person therapy so you, Seth, should see if it's for you or anyone listening to this really.

SETH: But is there a deal?

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah, sure. Mission to Zyxx listeners get 10% off their first month at betterhelp.com/Zyxx.

SETH: But how soon can I get it?

ALDEN: You can have your first session in under 48 hours at betterhelp.com/Zyxx, and truly, we're really grateful to BetterHelp for sponsoring so much of this season.

SETH: Yeah, I love that BetterHelp is a sponsor, because I think that... this is a very big picture behind-the-scenes thing, but like we try to have the show be positive and and sweet at its core. And it's nice to have a sponsor that is helping people feel better so...

ALDEN: Yeah, it's nice to have them be a part of our show this season.

SETH: Oh, just on a story note, I also appreciate BetterHelp because it's like, writing BetterHelp ads for characters is such an opportunity to have them be...

ALDEN: Self-aware?

SETH: Yeah, to have them be, just, talking about their emotions in a way that that is not so organic in a normal scene. So it's fun.

ALDEN: Truly one of my proudest ads this season is Hark being like "I think I'm to blame for all of this."

SHANE: That was great, yeah, I loved doing that one.

ALDEN: "I think I've brought this on myself."

SHANE: Yeah, he's just self-destructive, I love that.

SETH: Oh yeah yeah.

ALDEN: All of the lava pits he's been almost sinking into is like the product of like self-sabotage.

SHANE: It's like subconscious, yeah.

ALDEN: Yeah, yeah.

SHANE: That's funny.

SETH: BetterHelp.com/Zyxx.

ALDEN: Well, without further ado, let's get back into this recording sesh!

[transition]

ALDEN: That's funny, can we also get a pickup of like, Chris, are you imagining that Eric is inside your chest playing a piano?

CHRIS: Yes.

ALDEN: Great, Can we get that?

WINSTON: Can Eric be the heart?

ERIC: Am I speaking?

JEREMY: Oh yeah! Yeah yeah yeah!

ERIC: But I can't sing so we can't harmonize with each other or something.

WINSTON: Yeah yeah yeah.

JEREMY: Yeah yeah yeah.

CHRIS: That's also something the crew could ask me at some point.

ERIC: Oh yeah maybe that like, just constitutes like, masturbation.

SETH: I just want a visual specifying that there's a piano there.

ALDEN: Oh yeah, I just meant Jeremy—or, C-53 describing what it looks like that there's like a...I'm imagining, yeah, like a, like... Krang or something right? Like--

ERIC: Should I have a Krang voice? [Krang voice] Hello hello! Hey guys, hello!

SETH: Oh, because you described it as a face but it's music, it's piano noise, so like is there...

ALDEN: Oh, I just imagine it's a little guy. Like, yeah, like it's a head with fingers.

JEREMY: And a little toy piano.

ERIC: Hello! I play the piano!

WINSTON: It's like “ugh! Ugh! Disgusting!”

ERIC: Hey, what's wrong?

ALLIE: Wait, but what if your body is actually a keyboard? So you're just like playing...

ERIC: I play the piano! Am I like a parasite or something?

MOUJAN: [imitating Krang voice] Kill me, kill me, please!

ERIC: Kill me!

ALDEN: That's, yeah, yeah, can we, can we describe that, Jeremy? I mean, I think if he's playing himself on... like, playing a little keyboard on him, on his body or something, that's really funny.

JEREMY: Yeah yeah yeah. Do you want me to do this in song, or can C aside to himself in a moment?

ALDEN: No, I think it could sort of be to himself, like “Dear Rodd.”

C-53: Oh my Rodd! He's got another entity fused to his chest! Who also has a keyboard fused to him? This got very—

ALLIE: Jeremy, could you say it looks like a piano tie?

JEREMY: Yeah.

C-53: He's got another entity fused to his chest, and he's playing what looks like a piano key necktie?

FUSED PIANIST: You got it!

C-53: Okay, glad you're on board. You don't sing?

FUSED PIANIST: I... no, I don't sing, I just play my... I play my piano key tie and the music comes out of it. I'm fused!

C-53: Yeah, well that I can see.

ALDEN: That's great, that's great.

JEREMY: Can you guys hear Nessie barking at all?

ALLIE: No.

SETH: No, but... probably will later.

ALDEN: Okay great. Is there anything in there you guys wanted to pick up or do again? Or should we move on?

JEREMY: Robbie! Robert Doggie Jr!

SETH: Totally fine if you don't want to do this. Is it... Should we get a retake of Jeremy's first song when he's at... when Shai'An asks him to sing about him? Because the game of that was, kind of ended up being that C-53 just didn't really sing, and he called him a child. Which works, but I wonder if we want a version... if there's a little more meat to that song.

JEREMY: Sure. Eric, do you remember that song?

ERIC: Not even remotely.

ALDEN: I think it could be new?

SETH: If we want to just, maybe take it from the... Chris's line about demanding that he sing about him.

ALDEN: Yeah, we don't need to pick that up again, but we could just start from him.

JEREMY: Sure, yeah.

ERIC: [plays piano]

C-53: [singing] I'm looking at a man, he's got no hands! He's looking at me like he wants me to sing him a song. So I'm singing him a song, I hope it won't be too long, before this man says... Not a bad job on that song!

ALDEN: [laughs]

JEREMY: I was trying to sing the worst song I could think of.

ALDEN: That's really funny.

SETH: That was great.

ALDEN: That's great. Thank you. That's really funny. Cool, that feels good to me.

JEREMY: That terrible song feels good to me!

ALDEN: I guess, we should maybe start folding in the crew?

SHANE: Winston's just snarling down...

JEREMY: He's like.. "You got shrimp back here?"

ALDEN: So I do think... [sighs] it's going to be such a shame not to have Nermut on this mission. We need to figure out a way to get you down there.

WINSTON: I think it'll be funnier if he's never allowed to sing. It's like so brutal.

SETH: Yeah he could call in and be like "you guys need me!"

ALDEN: Nermut, the secret was harmony, we had to do harmonies though down there.

ERIC: What's that...

SETH: Nermut is also... like he has an alter ego, Bermut Nundaloy, who's a singer but he's bad. So he would want to do this so badly, but it is funny if he's denied.

WINSTON: I don't know, sorry, I just feel like the most comedic decision is for him not to be allowed.

SETH: He was like, he can't go. But maybe it could be that he calls in so he can feel the pain in real time?

WINSTON: Or the third act is that we're like yeah the mission's over and you're like "but I'm still ready!"

JEREMY: Nermut, we're sort of done here.

WINSTON: We're kind of sung out, we don't want to do it anymore.

JEREMY: We never want to sing ever again.

ALDEN: Maybe we call him on the computer and it's like "what's going on down there?" And we sing something and he's like "you guys are singing?" Hold on, I'll be right there!

SETH: Exactly he can be tortured in real time.

WINSTON: The most pain inflicted is what we want.

SETH: Yeah, sure.

ALDEN: So let's do the act one.

AJ: Hey Dar? Captain Dar? Papa?

PLECK: Yeah, what is it?

DAR: I'm not the captain anymore but I'll respond.

AJ: Oh, right, right, you're not... Yeah, cause Mr. Robot Man is now lead envoy. But I still call you captain, is that alright?

PLECK: It's an honorific...

DAR: Yeah, it's just salt in an open wound, but fine.

AJ: Yeah, I just kind of wish things were kind of back... I mean, I guess everything's fine and we're sort of going on missions but I miss Zyxx, am I crazy?

PLECK: Yeah, AJ, we all miss Zyxx, but I think we sort of established we're lifetimes away from the Zyxx quadrant. I think we just got to make the best of what we've got, you know?

BARGIE: I'm having a great time.

PLECK: Oh, Bargie.

AJ: What?

BARGIE: Yeah, turns out I'm the only ship here who can talk. So people are very interested in talking to me. I have seven interviewers lined up outside.

PLECK: Oh, what, interviewers?

BARGIE: Yeah, we're doing a round table discussion right now.

DAR: Lined up outside?

BARGIE: Yeah, the outside, they're in their non sentient ships.

AJ: Oh yeah, I can see them outside the window.

BARGIE: Speaking to me in the loud speakers, asking me very personal questions. Very interested, lots of lights going off for photography. You guys are in the photos, I didn't tell you but your image will be used.

PLECK: Okay, that's fine.

AJ: I guess...

PLECK: I mean I basically don't have an identity in this new galaxy, so...

AJ: Yeah, I thought that would be fun too. Yeah, I thought that would be fun to have blank slates and just be like.. Yeah, we can do whatever, you know, like?

BARGIE: Yeah, I thought it would be great to have blank slates, you know, being in this new world and to be like "I'll do whatever!"

AJ: Is she talking to me or to the interviewer?

PLECK: She's just saying what you just said!

BARGIE: That's a great question!

PLECK: Oh wow.

AJ: I just miss Zyxx, I don't know. I mean... The missions here are fine but everything's a little too clean and everything's a little too nice.

PLECK: Well, you know, AJ, I think sometimes...

DAR: I get what you're saying, AJ.

AJ: Thank you captain! Sorry, envoy Dar.

JOURNALIST: Can you move the crew away from the window for this photos please?

PLECK: You want us to hide?

JOURNALIST: This shoot is about how the spaceship is alive and if we see these ugly people in the window...

BARGIE: Yeah, I can just bounce them to another direction.

PLECK: Oh whoa!

DAR: But Bargie, not me, surely not me? They said the ugly...

JOURNALIST: Thank you.

BARGIE: No, Dar, see, you're still by the window.

ALDEN: Beep boop beep!

AJ: Wait, where's Robot Man?

DAR: Yeah, C, are you gonna get that?

AJ: [shouting] Robot Man! Robot Man!

PLECK: AJ, relax. Relax, he's...

AJ: Robot Man!

DAR: AJ, he doesn't need... He's around here somewhere. He'll answer the call.

AJ: Yeah, where is he, though? Normally, when we do these missions, he's... [shouting] Robot Man!

PLECK: AJ, how does your speaker, your helmet speaker, even get that loud? How is that possible?

AJ: Sometimes when I have to do crowd control, I'm on crowd control setting now.

PLECK: Okay, alright.

AJ: Normally, it's like, you know...

PLECK: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: Obey us!

PLECK: Right.

AJ: Surrender your will to us! And no one gets hurt!

PLECK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure.

BARGIE: [confused] Is someone going to get that?

DAR: Sure.

BARGIE: It's going to go to voicemail if nobody answers that.

AJ: It's just the button...

PLECK: Yeah, he's got the whole thing where he says Nermut's title...

DAR: And honestly, if I answer it, it just feels like I'm trying to reclaim something that I don't even know that I liked in the first place.

AJ: Is it just the button, is that all it... Robot Man!

SETH: Can we hear Bargie's voicemail message?

RECORDED BARGIE: Hi, yes, this is Bargie's voicemail, the Bargarean Jade, holo star, ship of the stars. I'm currently lost in space, so I cannot answer your phone call. Jack, if this is you, don't be a coward. You know what you did! Bargie out.

ALDEN: Chris's character's named Jakk, we should have a different name for...

SETH: Son of Jakk.

MOUJAN: Oh wow.

BARGIE: D'Lone, if this is you, don't be a coward, do something, okay? Alright Bargie out!

NERMUT: Hey everyone, it's Nermut... I guess someone's always picked up the phone before?

AJ: [screaming] Robot Man!

NERMUT: I didn't know...

PLECK: Bargie, can you actually pick up the call?

NERMUT: I guess, call me back if you get this or...

BARGIE: Hold on.

NERMUT: Hello?

BARGIE: If you don't mind I have to do my job now because I am a sentient spaceship! Oh, I don't need applause, thank you, I know I am! Thank you, thank you! Okay, I'm going back to my job.

NERMUT: Check one. Check, check...

BARGIE: They love me so much

PLECK: Oh, hey Nermut! Thank you, Bargie.

SCIENTIST: What's happening?

PLECK: Sorry, we didn't pick up the-- we thought C-53 was going to pick it up, so--

NERMUT: Oh, no, he's not there.

DAR: Oh! Is he back with you?

NERMUT: No, he's... Well, that's kind of the thing, is he's-- he's on a mission.

DAR: What?

PLECK: Wait, we're not on a mission.

AJ: Ohh.... hwat?

PLECK: We're waiting for a mission.

NERMUT: Right. I'll give you a mission momentarily, and that mission is related to the solo mission that C-53 went on.

PLECK: [angry] What? What a solo mission? Wait. What are you talking about? Hold on.

AJ: Hold on!

DAR: What?

AJ: No, Dar, you're squeezing my arm hard!

DAR: It's just so much change, you know? I just-- I don't understand!

PLECK: Yeah, where is C-53, Nermut?

NERMUT: Well, you're going to find out because your mission is going to be to rescue him, but he-- as lead envoy, he sometimes goes on--

PLECK: [shouting] Nermut!

NERMUT: Yes?

PLECK: Nermut, we're a crew. We're a team. What is going on? If C-53 is in danger, it's probably because we weren't with him!

AJ: He might still be on the ship. [screaming] Robot Man!

PLECK: AJ, I can't-- my ears cannot handle any more of that!

DAR: [slowly] How long has this been going on?

NERMUT: This particular mission, let's see, he left--

DAR: No, no, no, no, no. Solo missions.

PLECK: Yeah, how many of these solo missions has C-53 gone on?

NERMUT: I mean um... [trails off]

PLECK: He just left!

AJ: Yeah, why did he just walk away?

PLECK: He left the phone call!

DAR: Nermut, get back on screen!

PLECK: Nermut, get back on the screen.

AJ: [screaming] LIZARD MAN!

DAR: Nermut! Nermut, get back on screen and quit being a coward!

NERMUT: [quietly] OK, so he has gone on six of these. They've all gone well.

PLECK: Six?

NERMUT: Yes, he's gone on six solo missions.

PLECK: We haven't even gone on six crew missions. We've only been here for a couple weeks!

SETH: Oh I figured we'd kind of... is that too many?

ALDEN: No no no, it's great.

ALLIE: Honestly, it should be more.

SETH: Yeah, um...

PLECK: That's way too many!

NERMUT: Yeah.

PLECK: We've only been here for a couple weeks!

NERMUT: Well, he goes... I mean, when you guys are... when you guys are chilling out or whatever, he's.... he's lead envoy! Lead envoy!

DAR: Chilling out? Do you mean like when we're asleep?

NERMUT: Yeah. Chilling.

AJ: Yeah, I mean we need our downtime. I mean you can't just always be...

PLECK: Nermut.

NERMUT: Yes.

PLECK: C-53 is in trouble, what is hap--? Where did he go? We need to save him!

NERMUT: Okay, well, you're upset-- you guys are so, you're so obsessed—

AJ: Does he have like a blaster or something with him when he does these missions? Or he has any muscle or...

DAR: Oh, that's a good question. Does HE get weapons?

AJ: Does he get weapons?

NERMUT: No, he doesn't... no, these are diplomatic missions.

AJ: Oh, then these are basically... that's like not a mission, then. If there's not guns, it's not a mission.

PLECK: AJ.

AJ: What?

PLECK: Nermut.

NERMUT: Yes.

PLECK: Where is C-53?

NERMUT: Okay, C-53 has—

SETH: Chris, does this... did you have a name, planet name, or...

CHRIS: Oh no, just pick something.

SETH: What is the one in... is there, should we play off the Star Trek one? What's... is that a planet?

CHRIS: Oh, what is the name of that planet? Um...

ALLIE: Could, actually the name of this planet just be the NBC ringtone? Like, bing bing bing!

ERIC: [plays NBC jingle]

ALDEN: I think that tips it, I think that tips it.

SHANE: Why don't you call it Miranda?

ALDEN: Miranda?

JEREMY: I think we might have had a planet Miranda.

CHRIS: Did you have one called Lin-Manuel Miranda?

WINSTON: Well, if you wanted to do NBC, I think it's GAC are the notes. So it could be planet GAC. Bing bing bing.

ALDEN: GAC?

WINSTON: I thought it was GAC.

ALDEN: Planet GAC.

ALLIE: GAC. Are there other...

SHANE: The planet in the episode is El-Adrel.

ALDEN: Maybe...

MOUJAN: GEC!

SETH: El-Adrel?

WINSTON: Oh right, because it's the GE corporation! GEC!

ALDEN: Wow, really?

ALLIE: Was it always...

WINSTON: No, it wasn't always opened by GE.

ALLIE: Sorry, it could be any series of chords, honestly.

ALDEN: I think GEC-3 because Chris said that it's a third planet in the system.

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah.

ALLIE: Cool.

NERMUT: So C-53 was sent on a solo mission to GEC-2... GEC-3 or sorry GEC-3.

AJ: No, it's C-53.

NERMUT: Now you know that? You just literally yelled Robo-- don't do it!

PLECK: GEC-3? That barely sounds like a planet. What's-- I mean, is there a civilization there?

NERMUT: Well, it's funny you should ask. There was. So the only one there now is Shai'An, son of Jakk, who C-53 was sent to make contact with—wifh... to find out why everyone else is miss.. missi--

DAR: Pleck, you're asking all the wrong questions. I want to know what makes C-53 better than all of us!

PLECK: No, Dar, we're a team!

NERMUT: He has a cube with sentience that it--

AJ: Is it because he sweats now, or is that-- because I don't sweat.

NERMUT: That if anything is a deficit.

PLECK: Nermut, Nermut, I just want to recap.

NERMUT: Sure.

PLECK: You sent C-53--

NERMUT: Yes.

PLECK: --on his own--

NERMUT: Yeah.

PLECK: --to a planet--

NERMUT: GEC.

PLECK: --where the only thing we know about it is that people have disappeared from it.

NERMUT: Right.

DAR: [crushed] Because you think he's better than us.

PLECK: Well, sure, that's sort of beside the point.

NERMUT: That's a pretty good read...

PLECK: And now you're surprised that he's gone, and you want us to go help find--

NERMUT: [loudly] I knew he was gone! I'm calling to tell you he's gone!

DAR: [angry] Maybe you should just find another C-53 to go on a solo mission to save him!

PLECK: Dar...

NERMUT: There are no others, we would have.

DAR: [shouting] We're not even your first choice for saving him?

AJ: You had a hypothetical--

PLECK: [angrily] Wait, you tried to send another team to save C-53?

NERMUT: I didn—I...

DAR: See, now you're asking the right questions, Pleck.

NERMUT: Okay, a couple.

PLECK: Oh boy, Nermut.

NERMUT: There were some Themms that were maybe gonna go and they weren't available. But you guys are currently the number one choice! Okay.

AJ: Alright, we're number one! Let's do this!

NERMUT: If you guys are... Okay, if you all are so obsessed with togetherness.

DAR: Currently number one.

NERMUT: And being together as a crew with C-53... Well, great, your mission is to rescue him!

AJ: Makes sense to me.

PLECK: I don't like this. I don't like this, Nermut. We're going to go save him, but it's because we're his *best friends*, and we're the *best crew*, not because it's our mission.

AJ: Hey, here's a question. When we get down there, should we, like, call for him or something?

PLECK: [laughing] No. I think we could just look with our eyes first and see how that goes.

AJ: We don't need to... say anything?

PLECK: Nah. We certainly don't need to scream anything.

AJ: Alright.

PLECK: Nermut, send us the coordinates, and then I want you to go sit in the corner of that big old office building and have a think about—being better.

DAR: How you treated us today!

PLECK: Yeah, yeah.

NERMUT: Okay, here are the coordinates, and I'm going to sit in exactly the center of this giant office.

PLECK: Okay.

NERMUT: No corners for this lird.

PLECK: [dour] Okay.

ALLIE: This feels like a good setup, also, for the fact that we don't invite Nermut to sing.

ALDEN: Yeah.

SETH: Yeah. I think it's so, like, season one Nermut.

ALLIE: He was a dick!

ALDEN: Yeah, a real asshole!

SETH: I'm trying to like... Yeah.

WINSTON: No, I like it though.

SETH: Okay.

ALDEN: Great, I think that's good.

WINSTON: Yeah.

JEREMY: Yeah.

ALDEN: Cool. I'm gonna go...

ALLIE: Surgical!

WINSTON: Thanks guys, for indulging us on that. Alright, so... now do we arrive on the scene or...

JEREMY: Sure!

PLECK: This is GEC-3? I mean, there's nothing on this planet.

AJ: Yeah. Do you want me to shout?

PLECK: No.

AJ: Okay.

PLECK: Can we just wait and see what happens? For all we know, C-53 might be in trouble, we don't want to give our position away.

DAR: [sadly] So this is where he goes to be alone.

PLECK: I don't think so. Dar, I think C-53 might be in real trouble. We need to help him.

AJ: Do you guys hear that? Kind of like a lilting, kind of delicate melody.

SHAI'AN: [singing]

DAR: Yeah. I do.

PLECK: Is it coming from that little oasis over there?

AJ: I don't know. In my training we would call this a vamp. But I'm not sure.

PLECK: What training? What training would you—

AJ: Well, in tactical footwork and...

PLECK: Yeah.

AJ: When I was in CLINTSync we would call this a vamp

PLECK: Yeah. When you were...

AJ: I served a tour of duty with CLINTSync.

PLECK: Oh, okay. Yeah. I think that's just a regular tour. I think you toured with them.

AJ: Of duty...

DAR: So are you both just going to talk over the vamp or what?

AJ: Well, that's what you do. You talk over a vamp.

PLECK: You sort of lay out what's going on.

AJ: Yeah, exactly. It's like there's the oasis. We should follow it.

SHAI'AN: [singing] Two pebbles in the sun!

AJ: [whispering] What's that?

SHAI'AN: Two pebbles in the water! The rings echoing out to the edge of the pond. By the two pebbles bonded forever!

C-53: [singing] And life--

PLECK: [gasps] C-53!

AJ: Twist?

ALLIE: [laughs]

C-53: --it blooms all around them. Those two pebbles surrounded by green, by life! A lush verdant wave of life!

PLECK: C-53!

C-53: Oh!

ALDEN: Oh, can we have that song end with you guys hitting a harmony note and one more thing grows?

JEREMY: Yeah, sure!

SHANE: And with that life again.

JEREMY: Yeah

C-53: [singing] A lush—

JEREMY: Wait a minute.

C-53: A verdant wave of life...

ALDEN: Can we do one more run at that?

C-53: A lush verdant wave of—

C-53 AND SHAI'AN: Life!

PLECK: Whoa, C-53! When you hit that last note a palm tree just popped out of the ground!

AJ: Also, it was just artistry, it was just very...

PLECK: Yeah, it was...

AJ: It brought us into the song.

DAR: I mean, I've never seen C-53 sing like that before. Why are you hiding that from us? Why are you hiding that from us?!

AJ: It really hurts when you squeeze it that hard.

SHAI'AN: [warlike singing] Ah, strangers at the barricade! Strangers at the barricade! Strangers at the barricade. Who are they? Who are they?

C-53: [singing] Shai'An, be not afraid! These strangers at the barricade! These are my friends. And they have come to help you and I!

AJ: Listen, the alien doesn't have hands, so I feel like I could take him.

PLECK: No, AJ, stop. No, I think this is fine. We don't need to—

C-53: AJ, it's not--

PLECK: No, I don't think it's that-- C-53, is everything okay? What happened here?

C-53: Envoy Decksetter, this is Shai'An, son of Jakk. But maybe I should put it a little differently.

AJ: Oh, what? Why would you...

PLECK: Just explain what the—

DAR: What?

AJ: Just explain...

C-53: [singing] Two pebbles soaking up the sun. Two pebbles, laughing, having fun.

AJ: Papa, is this a real song?

SHAI'AN: Two pebbles!

DAR: Have you ever seen him do this before? What!?

SHAI'AN: They only want more! But now there aren't two pebbles, because here are four more pebbles!

DAR: Was this rehearsed?

AJ: Yeah, it feels... right?

SHAI'AN: Six pebbles in the sun!

C-53: And there'll be many more pebbles before we're done!

PLECK: Wow!

SHAI'AN: And this pebble looks like this pebble used to be in charge, but is no longer in charge!

PLECK: Oh wow. He nailed you, Dar.

AJ: I think it's just a song.

C-53: And this pebble is thinking of days gone by when he used to sing with other guys!

AJ: Hey! That's me, I think.

[long pause as piano builds up tempo]

C-53: And this pe--

PLECK: Are you guys gonna do one about me as a pebble, or--?

SHAI'AN: [dismissively] Uh... There's also another pebble--

PLECK: Oh, come on!

SHAI'AN: --that looks like any old pebble.

PLECK: Oh what?

C-53: Sort of a generic looking pebble!

PLECK: Oh!

AJ: Oh, yeah, they're really nailing you!

PLECK: Yeah...

SETH: And the fourth one would have to be Bargie.

ALDEN: Bargie's the fourth one, yeah.

C-53: And a giant pebble! Way up in the sky!

BARGIE: What?

DAR: Bargie, I'm patching you in! Are you hearing this?

BARGIE: What is this sound, I don't like it.

PLECK: No, Bargie, it's music! It's music, C-53 has discovered a society that... communicates solely through song!

DAR: And, honestly, really well choreographed dance. Again, did you guys rehearse this... Did you all rehearse this before? Or...

C-53: Dar, I think it's something about the planet itself. It just, I don't know, it feels right on this planet. And...

AJ: Where's the music coming from?

C-53: Oh...

FUSED PIANIST: HELLO!

PLECK: Oh my Rodd!

DAR AND AJ: [vomiting sounds]

C-53: Alright! OK, let's-- OK, everyone, get it out. All right, this is just--

DAR: It's fused, it's fused!

FUSED PIANIST: I'm fused. Let's get over it.

AJ: It's.. somehow the keyboard's fused on it! And it's like a double fuse!

C-53: It's two fused!

SETH: And it looks like a cheesy necktie.

AJ: It looks like a necktie!

JAKK: Hey! Hey! Come on. Don't... don't... don't kick a... Don't kick a fused thing while it's fused!

SHAI'AN: Don't kick a fused thing while it's fused! That's what my mama said to me! When I was born! Don't kick a fused thing...

AJ: Are we gonna ignore that it was fused to him?

SHAI'AN: I am Shai'An, son of Jakk.

ALDEN: Um sorry to interject, is Eric Jakk? Is that too much?

CHRIS: [laughs]

ERIC: Sure.

JEREMY: That's very weird.

ALDEN: Maybe not, maybe we can reveal that later.

CHRIS: Yeah.

WINSTON: So maybe now the next thing is that... In order to grow the planet we need to participate, right?

ALDEN: Right right.

WINSTON: The harmony is the way. This is a great chance for like a story song, where we like, tell the history of the planet. And let Chris and Eric kind of figure out like... The history of this planet. And if they are the two species that got fused. Or that's just normal.

CHRIS: I think we should do that.

ERIC: Yeah, I said before I don't sing, but can that be like edited out if that negates...

ALDEN: No no no, I think it's... I think if the key to growing the society back is harmony, you can talk but you just don't... You're like, "no, I don't. Not interested" or something like that. Like it had to be someone to come in and sing with... with him to start everything back up again.

ERIC: Yeah or it could be like "I don't anymore." Because of what happened.

SETH: Not after what happened. Not after the incident.

JEREMY: Save it for the improv, am I right, guys?

ALDEN: Okay, great.

JEREMY: Alright!

PLECK: C-53, this is amazing! How did you...

C-53: It's certainly an extremely unique planet, I don't think I've ever encountered anything quite like it.

PLECK: What happened here? Did you find out what happened to all of the rest of the people on the planet?

C-53: [singing] I wish I could say that I did.

AJ: Why is he doing that?

C-53: But I think the past of this planet is still hidden!

PLECK: Hidden?

C-53: Only Shai'An has the key! To relate the history to you and me!

SHAI'AN: [rapping to uptempo piano music] Well, if you want to hear the story about GEC, listen to a story told by me. I'm going to tell you a little bit of rap—

AJ: Uh... what?

DAR: History is cool!

SHAI'AN: --and how rap works on this planet!

C-53: Oh, he turned his hat backwards.

SHAI'AN: Yeah, here's the history. You heard it never be a mystery! And here's one thing about rhyme, I like to do it all the time!

BARGIE: What?

PLECK: Okay, makes sense.

FUSED PIANIST AND SHAI'AN: [rapping together] It's a history rap! It's the history rap!

AJ: What's your name, ma--

PLECK: Oh, so he can rap, but he can't sing.

AJ: Yeah.

SHAI'AN: Let me tell you something about the way that rap works on this planet. You don't have to think it up! You got to just plan it. And the only way that things rhyme is you say the word "rap" at the end of every line, and that's what things mean when they rhyme.

FUSED PIANIST AND SHAI'AN: Rap!

SHAI'AN: A long time ago, there were millions of people on this planet.

FUSED PIANIST AND SHAI'AN: Rap!

SHAI'AN: And, you know, someone came and killed everyone except me!

FUSED PIANIST AND SHAI'AN: Rap!

SHAI'AN: Except for me and my dad, who's in my body now!

FUSED PIANIST AND SHAI'AN: Rap!

FUSED PIANIST: That's right, reveal!

SHAI'AN: That's right. And he plays piano on what was formerly a necktie!

JAKK AND SHAI'AN: Rap!

FUSED PIANIST: I'm Jakk That's the reveal! I'm Jakk!

PLECK: What, Jakk?

AJ: What, twist?

DAR: That's too close.

AJ: Wait, hold on!

DAR: You're too close.

AJ: Hey, what's your name man?

JAKK: I'm Jakk!

PLECK: Wait, you're Jakk!?

JAKK: I'm Jakk. This is my son.

DAR: As in son... father of son of Jakk?

JAKK: Yes.

PLECK: Shai'An, son of Jakk.

JAKK: Yes. Yes. The reveal has been revealed.

PLECK: I mean...

SHAI'AN: And that's the history of rap!

PLECK: That's... wait, that's the history of rap?

JAKK: No, that's the history rap!

AJ: I thought it was the history of the planet?

C-53: It's a history of rap.

AJ: Oh it's the history rap.

JAKK: It's the history of our planet rap. Parentheses...

AJ: Okay so history of... Gotcha gotcha.

C-53: Yeah, I guess I just need to see the, you know, album cover to really figure out...

AJ: I mean, everybody's saying it's great but I'm not sure it is. [laughs] Like I don't quite follow it. Sorry that's...

JAKK: We can do it again for you! Do you want us to do the history of rap? We can do it!

WINSTON: That was a Hamilton burn, I don't know... never mind.

ALDEN: Um... Great.

AJ: That was fun.

JAKK: Yeah.

C-53: Jakk, Shai'An, that's terrible what happened to your planet, I'm so sorry.

AJ: But things are growing back. How are things going back?

ERIC: [playing piano]

SHAI'AN: [groaning and choking out a word] HaaaAaaaarmon—

JAKK: It's harmony. Harmony's the answer. I can talk!

PLECK: Wait, harmony? What do you mean?

SHAI'AN AND C-53: [on the same note] Aaaaaaahhh!

SHAI'AN: That is unison!

C-53: That's unison.

JAKK: Oh, no, some of the trees are going back!

C-53: No no!

AJ: Wait, harmony?

AJ, C-53, AND SHAI'AN: [harmonizing] Ahhhh!

AJ: Yeah I was trained in harmony.

PLECK: You trained in harmony.

AJ: Yeah!

PLECK: You took singing lessons.

AJ: No, I was trained in harmony. I was trained in tactical footwork, harmony, and smoldering looks.

PLECK: That's, yeah... No.

AJ: But what do you think about this?

SHAI'AN: [gasping for air]

C-53: That was a real smolder!

SHAI'AN: ClintSYNC!

[dramatic piano flourish]

ALDEN: [laughing] It's a different galaxy, you wouldn't have heard of him. I wish you could have though! I wish you could have.

CHRIS: I mean, he could have made it over!

JEREMY: Well, I don't know!

SETH: I think that's... I mean, that would be a bit...

CHRIS: Anyway, sorry, I think...

WINSTON: I mean, we can cut that, that's... AJ knows tactical footwork and harmony.

SETH: And smoldering looks.

WINSTON: But then when he does harmony then something grows.

SETH: Yeah.

JEREMY: Yeah. Yeah, what just grew?

ALDEN: Um...

AJ: Oh, an animal appeared! Whoa, like a bush and an animal appeared just now!

PLECK: This field is starting to grow! The harmony grows things on this planet?

SHAI'AN: Unison destroy.

AJ: Wait, sorry, what?

SHAI'AN: [singing] A long time ago!

DAR: Oh he's still singing, it's still song. Mmhmm.

SHAI'AN: A god came down! Made us sing the same note! No harmony, unison! Murdered my family.

AJ: What's the metaphor, what's going on?

PLECK: No, I think this actually happened.

AJ: Okay.

SHAI'AN: Except my father.

AJ: It's the guy in the piano, right?

PLECK: Yeah,

AJ: Okay,

SHAI'AN: Ballad.

PLECK: [laughing] Oh, you got to say it with every genre. Great. Okay, yeah, good, good.

C-53: Okay, yeah, sure.

SETH: Do we... Is it okay to have god in this galaxy? Or should we...

AJ: He said A god.

CHRIS: He was a... He was like a-- Who's the guy that eats planets?

WINSTON: Galactus.

JEREMY: Galactus.

WINSTON: Yeah. That works.

SETH: I think it's okay...

ALDEN: A deity? Do you want to pick it up with deity? [aside] We've got a whole thing about calling god Rodd in our universe.

SETH: But it is also the other galaxy so...

CHRIS: Oh, okay, yeah.

SETH: Yeah, let's get an alt with just with deity or something else.

CHRIS: Yeah, or powerful—

JEREMY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, whatever you want.

SHAI'AN: [singing] A long time ago. There were millions of my family on GEC!

AJ: Is this a---

SHAI'AN: And then a powerful deity—

DAR: Did he say millions?

PLECK: Yeah, yeah.

SHAI'AN: Came and made us sing the same note! And we died without our harmony! Ballad.

DAR: [confused] How did they make you sing the same note? Like, they controlled you, or they asked you, or what?

C-53: You're asking Shai'An to relive a genocide on this planet for the sake of getting the details right?

PLECK: Yeah, Dar, come on. It doesn't really matter.

SHAI'AN: Same sheet music.

CREW: Ohhhh.

DAR: See, it was a simple answer. You know, honestly, I just feel like everyone's been asking the wrong questions today.

C-53: Well, Dar, what question would you ask?

[long pause]

DAR: How they got fused together.

C-53: No no, but ask it in their language.

WINSTON: Dar, I thought... wouldn't you ask, also, why C is on a mission?

ALLIE: Oh yeah, no, you're right actually. That's much more accurate. Sorry it's, um..

DAR: Yeah. I have a question.

[Allie has the dawning realization she will have to now sing]

ALLIE: [laughing hysterically]

WINSTON: Oh yeah! Come on! You can rap it!

DAR: It's for you, C.

[long pause]

JAKK: Do you need help learning to sing?

DAR: [vomiting]

JAKK: What, what's wrong? I can help you!

AJ: Rodd! Every time he comes out it's just gross!

JAKK: I can help you!

PLECK: Hold on a second, I have a question for Shai'An, son of Jakk and Jakk—

C-53: --father of Shai'An.

PLECK: --father of Shai'An. If harmony rebuilds your planet, why can't you just sing harmony? There's two of you.

SHAI'AN: Always same note.

SHAI'AN AND JAKK: [unison] Weeeeeeee... We can't... ahhhhhh!

JAKK: Because of our genetics and the fact that we're fused, we can no longer harmonize.

C-53: Can't sing different notes, oh, that's a shame.

SHAI'AN: Just because we were in unison the plants just went down! We just killed some of our planet!

C-53: These crops immediately withered!

AJ: Dar do you want me to ask the question to C on your behalf

DAR: Yeah, that would be incredibly helpful, actually.

AJ: Okay, what is it? What's the question?

ALLIE: Can I like, feed it to you line by line?

WINSTON: Yeah, you can feed it to me line by line.

DAR: Well, I really want to ask C...

AJ: [singing] What I really want to know! Oh, what I really want to know... is this! [not singing] Okay, what?

DAR: Why'd you have to go?

AJ: What am I gonna rhyme.. oh, I got it! [singing] Why'd you just have to go! Why did you have to goooo—Oh!

DAR: And do it all alone?

AJ: How am I gonna rhyme—oh, I got it! And do it all
alooooOOOOOOOooooooOooooo—

DAR: I kind of thought, like, we were your home.

AJ: Oh, actually, I was still kind of—

DAR: Sorry.

AJ: Yeah, sorry. —oOOOooOooone. [not singing] Okay, what was the next one?

DAR: I thought we were your home.

AJ: [singing] I thought that we were your hoooOooooohohohooooOooo—

PLECK: AJ's really making a meal with these runs.

C-53: Plus... Yeah, Dar can just ask me the question. I don't need to sing to hear what Dar is saying.

SHAI'AN: He is leader?

AJ: No...

PLECK: AJ!? Rodd no.

SHAI'AN AND AJ: [vamping]

SHAI'AN: Leader!

AJ: I got my finger up and everything!

PLECK: Does that help?

AJ: It actually does help a lot, you hold one side of your helmet and you put your finger up... [singing] oOOOOooOOooooH!

PLECK: Wow, look at all the flowers! Birds!

MOUJAN: What are the—

JEREMY: Well, someone else has to be singing with them...

WINSTON: Yeah, I know.

MOUJAN: Are the flowers starting to look really weird? Like, they're excited but then they're like "oh no."

WINSTON: "Oh no, god."

SHAI'AN: This is great man.

C-53: That might be the first time that's been said of AJ.

AJ: Listen. There's one thing I know about harmony. Sure, two is good. But more is better.

PLECK: Uh.

AJ: We're gonna have to build a chord. [shouting] We're gonna have to build a chord! We're gonna build a chord!

C-53: Okay, AJ!

ALDEN: I was gonna say, this, actually, we did do this in the trailer. There's only one thing we—have to put on a show.

AJ: There's only one thing we have to do! We have to put on a show! We can do it here, we got the costumes

PLECK: No, we don't need costumes, AJ!

AJ: No, but what we need is a chord.

C-53: We do need a chord.

AJ: Shai'An, son of Jakk. And... [whispering] I mean, do I need to talk to Jakk? I'm a little nervous right now.

JAKK: What? Did you say my name? I'm Jakk!

C-53: He's fine. Don't make it weird. He's fine.

AJ: We need to start, I think Shai- wait hold on, I need a... Jakk, can you give me a question?

JAKK: Can I give you a question?

AJ: Just give me the music for a question. To Shai'An.

ERIC: [plinks piano]

AJ: Shai'An! Shai'An. Can we build a chord? Would that help you?

SHAI'AN: [singing] If all the children in the world!

AJ: What?

SHAI'AN: Came together in a village... And held the hands of each other, then we'd be holding the hands of each other even though we don't have hands! We'd grow and grow!

C-53: Yeah, AJ, their language is highly metaphorical.

AJ: Yeah, what the juck is he talking about?

C-53: Okay. He's agreeing with you, he's saying we should come together and make a chord! You know, we'd be building something—

PLECK: Holding hands—

C-53: He doesn't have hands, it's a metaphor.

PLECK: Should we join hands or is that sort of...

C-53: I don't know if that needs to be part of it.

DAR: Too literal, right?

PLECK: Okay.

C-53: Also, my hands are kind of clammy, so...

PLECK: That's gonna happen.

C-53: I hate it! Why is this a feature?

AJ: It's not a feature, it's a bug.

C-53: Yeah no kidding. Anyway.

AJ: So we gotta build a chord.

C-53: Alright, well, I can I can lay down a foundation here. You know. Start with something like [singing] Ohhhhh

SHAI'AN: [singing] Ohh....

AJ: [singing] Oh....

PLECK: [singing] Oh.....

AJ: Woah, look!

ALDEN: I think we need a Bargie line in there too.

AJ: Yeah.

BARGIE: I'm still here?

PLECK: Yeah, Bargie.

DAR: Bargie, I'm patching you in.

BARGIE: Oh, sorry.

DAR: I don't want you to miss this/

SETH: Do you mean you need a Bargie like [imitates Bargie groan]

PLECK: It's working! Look! A waterfall! The mountains, flush with greenery! We can do it! We gotta keep going!

SHAI'AN: Need one more.

AJ: Bargie! Bargie, weren't you in a bunch of musicals at some point? Musical holos?

BARGIE: Yeah, it was a dark period of my life. I don't like to talk about it or do anything that reminds me of it.

AJ: Right, I mean, to be honest, Bargie, you're always getting us to sing. So...

PLECK: Yeah, Bargie, to be fair, you-- you love it when we sing.

BARGIE: I do.

C-53: Bargie, we need that voice. We need that voice that's famous for...

JEREMY: What's a good name of a Bargie musical?

ALDEN: Um...

MOUJAN: The Bargin' Away?

C-53: We need that voice that was famous for the "Bargin' Away."

BARGIE: [singing] Bargie's goin' away! ♪

PLECK: Wow!

BARGIE: Bargie's goin' away! And she's never comin' back! She's goin' away! 'Cause she's Bargie. The sentient ship!

C-53: A classic.

BARGIE: [music cuts out] ♪ Toot, toot, toot ♪ ♪ Toot, toot, toot! ♪ Oh yeah, the song was very short.

PLECK: Wow, that was pretty good Bargie!

BARGIE: Toot toot toot.

AJ: That small ocean appeared! Wow!

PLECK: Look at that body of water!

SETH: Wait, so it's not when there's harmony necessarily?

WINSTON: I don't know, it's sort of...

SETH: It's sorta getting willy nilly. Dar was not in harmony, right? Singing in harmony, is that true?

ALLIE: Right.

AJ: Dar, the only person who's not singing is... You know.

PLECK: Dar, listen, I know you're not captain anymore but...

SETH: And they smashed their horn.

ALDEN: And you smashed your horn!

JEREMY: This is maybe a C line.

SETH: Oh yeah yeah!

C-53: Listen, Dar, I know you're not captain anymore, and that I was sort of made lead envoy almost arbitrarily, but you're still a member of this crew, and we need you.

DAR: [curious] Arbitrarily?

C-53: I mean, you know, from the viewpoint of the Themm, I don't know why they would pick me over anyone else. I was in a toaster at the time.

AJ: Feels like there's a lot of emotion. Gotta let it out.

DAR: So you don't think you're hot stuff?

C-53: [chuckles] Dar, I'm no better envoy than anyone else on this crew. I just frequently, you know, don't need to sleep. And eat as much. You know I have a lot of advantages as a, you know, tireless automaton.

SETH: Do you want to acknowledge that you needed rescuing at this particular moment?

JEREMY: Yeah, yeah.

C-53: I have a lot of advantages as a tireless automaton, but... Dar, I still needed to be rescued. If the crew hadn't come here... If you hadn't come here... [singing] I'd be all alone... Wondering when I could come home... Why did I leave when you were the ones I need? Dar! Pleck! And even AJ too!

AJ: [muttering] -884...

C-53: C-53 still neeeeeeds his crew!

SHAI'AN: [singing] A collection of pebbles in the sun! And one pebble's clearly better than the other ones!

C-53: [singing] No, they're all just good pebbles!

SHAI'AN: One pebble sent on its own, because it's so much better than the other ones!

C-53: Don't you see? We're all just pebbles on the shore! No need for one to be considered any more than the rest...

SHAI'AN: But the others were sent to make them feel better!

PLECK: He's right. He's got a point.

AJ: He's not wrong.

C-53: Alright, alright. I still need all of you, I need all your help!

AJ: Dar. All we need is one note from you.

PLECK: Yeah, and not only can we save C-53, we can build back this planet! We can give Shai'An and Jakk their world back!

AJ: So will you do it? And also Bargie, will you, also... Bargie I know you kind of just did a little...

PLECK: Yeah, a little ditty but you gotta...

BARGIE: What?

PLECK: Get in on this chord.

DAR: Bargie, I.... I think this genre's called a duet.

PLECK: Oh no, I mean, okay.

AJ: We thought it was gonna be a chord, but that's fine.

BARGIE: A one, a two, a one, two, three, go! [jaunty music] Dar.

DAR: [overlapping singing] Bargie.

BARGIE: Dar.

DAR: Bargie.

BARGIE: Dar and Dargie! Dar and Bargie together!

DAR: It's Dargie—

BARGIE: Hold on, we gotta start over. Sorry, we gotta get on the same page.

AJ: Maybe we should just build the chord and Bargie will...

SHAI'AN: Wait, wait, wait.

AJ: What, Shai'An?

PLECK: Wait, Shai'An?

SHAI'AN: These two are singing scripture.

CHRIS: I'm holding up a rock with those lyrics on it.

AJ: Bargie and Dar?

C-53: Shai'An, where did you get that? Bargie and Dar... It's on some sort of ancient scroll! Sorry, it's on some sort of ancient tablet!

SHAI'AN: This how we rebuild now.

PLECK: [laughing] With Bargie and Dar singing a jaunty duet?

AJ: Not with a chord, Shai'An?

SHAI'AN: Chord tree, chord animal, chord grass, but chord no people. Duet for my dead children.

CREW: [assorted worry sounds]

ALLIE: [laughs]

PLECK: Okay, just... point of clarification. Do they come back or are they different people this time?

SHAI'AN: Come back.

PLECK: Your children come back!

AJ: Okay.

DAR: Wow! Famously the two horn dogs can raise the dead!

PLECK: Yeah, wow.

BARGIE: Wow, Dar. I think we've been... except for our misstep, I think we've been rehearsing for this all our lives. You go first this time.

AJ: Wow, this is the song that's going to bring all their people back.

DAR: [singing] Dar!

BARGIE: [singing] Bargie! Bargie and--

DAR: Dar!

SHAI'AN: It did it!

CREW: Wow!

AJ: Whoa!

ALLIE: [hysterical laughing]

CHILD: Father! We have come back!

CHILD: We're back!

CHILD: We missed you so much!

CHILD: Papa, I love you. Daddy!

JAKK: And your granddaddy!

[children start crying]

C-53: Okay, even his own grandchildren are kind of grossed out by him.

CHILD: [singing] This is the song of the children!

CHILDREN: Song of the children! Song of the children! Song of the children! Song of the children!

CHILD: Daddy! Kiss your zombie children!

CHILD: We are the children!

CHILD: Daddy, I was in a void! Floating in an endless void! I wondered am I dead, are my siblings dead, is my Daddy dead, is my creepy grandfather dead!

AJ: He's saying dead a lot.

CHILD: But now we're back! On our planet! And the answer to that question is really still maybe—

CHILD: Up in the air!

CHILD: --uncertain! But we're here!

CHILD: And we have the memorieeeeees! Of the horrific things that happened to us! When we were put away! We'll never forget all those days! All the memories will shape us for the rest of our lives!

CHILDREN: Memories! Memories!

CHILD: Midnight! Not a sound on the pavement!

ERIC: [plays Cats]

PLECK: Yeah, it's pretty catchy.

C-53: That one really... Yeah.

DAR: They sounded happier then.

SHAI'AN: Wait, something's happening to me!

PLECK: Oh no.

SHAI'AN: Something's happening. I'm transforming! Whooaaaa!

CHILD: Father!

C-53: Shai'An, Jakk!

CHILD: They're becoming weirder looking!

AJ: Oh no!

C-53: I sort of thought they would separate and become their own people, but...

AJ: Yeah, now they're just kinda... half in half out, it's even worse.

PLECK: Is that what was supposed to happen?

SHAI'AN: We enter final form, piano ball!

AJ: Oh yeah, it's a big ball of keys.

C-53: Wow, and it plays by rolling on the ground.

AJ: But there's also teeth which makes it...

JAKK: Yeah! We have been stuck in a state of arrested development all these many years! Our final form not allowed to us!

SHAI'AN: We would not choose this form you have! [laughs] Piano ball!

C-53: I wouldn't choose this form either, but I take your point.

PLECK: So piano ball is sort of ideal?

AJ: Is anybody else weirded out by the fact that it has teeth, and like, hair?

PLECK: Yeah.

JAKK: You have teeth and hair!

AJ: Yeah, but I'm not a piano ball.

SHAI'AN: And sustain pedal.

PLECK: Oh yeah.

JAKK: Go ahead, you want to touch the sustain pedal? You can touch the sustain pedal.

C-53: Uh... okay.

PLECK: Can you guys sing a duet about being a piano ball?

C-53: Pretty good.

SHAI'AN: [singing] What walks in the morning with four legs? What walks with two legs in the afternoon?

JAKK: [singing] What begins the end and ends the universe?

SHAI'AN AND JAKK: [harmony] Piano ball!

PLECK: Oh, they can harmonize with each other now!

AJ: Oh! So much stuff is growing right now!

JAKK: [falsetto] Rolling around, rolling around!

SHAI'AN: Rolling in the deep!

JAKK: Rolling in the deep!

PLECK: Oh, they're in the water!

AJ: Yeah, they're in the water now. Now there's fish coming out. Wow.

SHAI'AN: Thank you 53rd Sea.

C-53: Thank you Shai'An, son of Jakk. And Jakk, father of Shai'An. Do you have a new name now that you're a piano ball?

SHAI'AN: No. We still have--

PLECK: They don't lose their identities, C-53.

C-53: Yeah, I don't know, culturally it might be different.

SHAI'AN: Thank you all. Perhaps one day we see you for a reprise?

PLECK: Oh.

DAR: What's that?

AJ: It's when you sing the same song. It's like the same song.

C-53: It's like you do it again, but the context has changed. So you sort of get more out of it, you know.

SETH: Should Nermut call and they're like, no, no, it's over, or should that be in Act 3?

WINSTON: Should we do one reprise? Is there any sort of... One of the songs that we did?

JEREMY: Do you remember any of the songs?

ALDEN: It could be funny if AJ's like... "It's like two pebbles."

WINSTON: Oh yeah.

ALDEN: And then, talk about how the two pebbles have become one pebble. And now they're a piano ball

AJ: It's like, you know, something like [singing] Two pebbles are now one pebble! And it's a gross piano ball! Something like that.

SHAI'AN: Great, great, this is great man.

AJ: That's a reprise.

DAR: Oh yeah, okay.

ALDEN: Can we do one that's accompanied by Jakk on that one?

SETH: What's the segue into this? Can we get the glue that leads into this?

WINSTON: We should probably do... We should do it with Chris in.

CHRIS: The two pebbles reprise?

WINSTON: Yeah.

AJ: You know, it's like when they repeat the song. Something like, you know I don't know, what do you think, Shai'An?

SHAI'AN: [singing] Two pebbles.

AJ: That's it, yeah. [singing] Two pebbles!

SHAI'AN: [singing] They become one pebble!

AJ: [singing] One pebble, gross piano ball!

SHAI'AN: [singing] Perfect piano ball!

AJ: [singing] It's so gross, how do they both get in there?

JAKK: [rapping] That's the history, that's the history of rap!

PLECK: Oh, wow!

CHILD: Memories! Memories!

JAKK: The history of rap!

AJ: It's two pebbles!

JAKK: It's the history of rap.

AJ: But it's now one pebble.

CHILD: Bad memories!

SHAI'AN: Three suns setting, insects on a leaf.

AJ: Wait, what?

CHILD: Terrible memories!

SHAI'AN: Strangers at the barricade!

C-53: [singing] Do not be afraid.

DAR: [singing] Dar!

BARGIE: Bargie!

DAR: Dar! Dar Barge! Darge!

AJ: Yeah, sometimes with reprises, they try to put too much stuff in.

C-53: Yeah, sometimes there's too many voices.

SHAI'AN: [laughing] This more end of Act One.

ALL: [laugh]

BARGIE: What's gonna happen?

ALDEN: That's really funny.

SETH: Great. That's a pretty good end of Act Two.

ALDEN: Yeah! Cool. That's really funny stuff. I also like how, as much as Star Trek is derided for always just being humanoids, every fifth episode there is like an insane thing where there's like—

JEREMY: “Oh, it's a blob man.”

ALDEN: A sentient gas cloud.

JEREMY: Oh, it's a crystal that lives!

WINSTON: It's like a sentient gas cloud that only knows the works of Shakespeare.

JEREMY: Convenient!

ALDEN: We should call that out in the outro.

SETH: But I feel like we should pick up Pleck singing something?

ALDEN: Yeah, what else do we need to cover? Like, what's another fun story beat to cover? Is there anything we want to do again? Or any other connective tissue?

WINSTON: Yeah, Chris, is there anything you want to do?

CHRIS: [laughs] No, I have no idea.

JEREMY: Well, we got the thing you wanted to do of turning into a giant piano ball.

ALLIE: Of course.

CHRIS: Yeah, that's sort of what my blog is about. So if you could plug the blog in the middle...

SETH: I love blogs.

ALLIE: Happy to.

ALDEN: We know what happened to the planet, but we don't know what happened to these two, right? Do we want to talk about that?

SETH: Why did they survive?

DAR: Also, we landed and we never said like.. we never really cleared up who we are. I'm sorry, who are you?

WINSTON: Yeah, and I mean, that's an old musical trope, right? Allow me to introduce myself! You know, like...

SETH: My name is Humpty!

WINSTON: Yeah. That's a great song from Oklahoma. My name is Humpty.

ERIC: So do you want to put something in sort of that would go after the rap?

WINSTON: Yeah, maybe. Right?

SETH: Yeah, that makes sense. Maybe Pleck, Pleck tends to ask the informational questions.

CHRIS: Well, then Pleck can sing it to us!

ALDEN: He can sing it.

PLECK: So, uh... So if your planet was destroyed, how did you survive?

C-53: Pleck, you can't just ask them the question. That's not their language! You've got to sing.

[Jakk starts playing a simple piano melody]

C-53: See? It's easy.

PLECK: Oh, boy. Okay. [clears throat and pauses] This is hard.

ALLIE: It is, it's very hard.

BARGIE: Pleck needs to start at some point, right?

AJ: Who, what, where!

PLECK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm getting to it. I guess I'm trying to think of what I even need to ask? Your planet was destroyed, but how? Nope, we know how, sorry.

DAR: Ask about why they're all fused together!

PLECK: You were really uptempo, it was... I was hoping for a languid sort of...

AJ: Hey, just tell them, Papa, ask them, like, what their deal is, why they're so gross looking, right?

DAR: Yeah. Ask them how, like, father and son can be that close, you know?

PLECK: [slowly singing] Two... Two men on a planet. The only ones left alive. But how? How did Shai'An and Jakk survive? Was it a bunker?

CHRIS: Eric, can you go back to the uptempo again?

SHAI'AN: [jauntily singing in a cockney accent] I got a hundred meat pies!

PLECK: What?

SHAI'AN: I threw a lot of them in the oven! Ninety-nine meat pies, ninety-eight meat pies into my hot oven. But the last two meat pies on me plate, they turned into one pie! And I don't even know how to ask the question why, the meat pies!

AJ: Oh, okay

C-53: I think I understand now.

PLECK: What did I miss? What did I miss? I felt like--

AJ: Papa, you don't understand what he said? He explained why they're fused together. I mean, you asked the question, I don't know why...

PLECK: Okay, let me try again. Let me try again. [singing unconfidently] Here on GC-3, GEC-3, sorry. Here on GEC-3, I can't believe my eyes! Can you explain to me, did you guys used to be meat pies? Because I just, I feel like I almost got what you were saying, but then I got confused. [baffled singing] Please tell me, how did Shai'An and Jakk get fused?

SHAI'AN: Oh, he's a dumb one!

PLECK: Okay, I can--

SHAI'AN: This one's a dumb one, I can tell!

C-53: [singing] Well, you're right on the money! He's not very smart! But he's got some heart! And that's why we keep him around!

AJ: [scream singing] Yes! You're absolutely right!

PLECK: Okay, AJ--

AJ: Papa's not very bright!

PLECK: Okay, all right!

AJ: But we keep him around!

SHAI'AN: So he is pet?

AJ: Oh, Papa?

PLECK: No, not really. I wouldn't say pet.

C-53: No, that's not fair, but... kind of a mascot, really.

DAR: He does go on the rug sometimes.

DAR: He does go on the rug sometimes.

PLECK: [upset] That happened once, and it was--

DAR: An accident?

PLECK: It was an accident!

AJ: He was scared. He was scared.

PLECK: The gravity was off. I was very disoriented!

C-53: There were a lot of new people on the ship!

ALDEN: Beep boop beep!

PLECK: Oh, uh, oh, wow! Hey, we get--we get reception again. Nermut, hey, what's up, man?

NERMUT: Oh, hey, Pleck, hey crew, I was just wondering, did you--did you find C-53?

PLECK: We did actually, we're on a planet where we have to sing everything! It's really fun!

NERMUT: Excuse me?

PLECK: We have to sing everything we talk about, everything we do, we have to sing it! See you later, Nermut!

NERMUT: Say that again? Beam me down, beam me down!

C-53: It's going alright!

DAR: Bet Nermut wishes he was a little nicer to us earlier.

AJ: Yes, Mr. Robot Man, there's a lot of friction because we were all pretty surprised that you did missions without us. Oh, should I say that to our friends?

PLECK: Sure.

AJ: [screaming] MR. ROBOT MAN ABANDONED US!

PLECK: AJ, AJ, it's--you can't-- you can't sustain that.

AJ: [scream singing] HE ABANDONED US! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, MR. ROBOT MAN! YOU ABANDONED US!

SHAI'AN: This is great man.

C-53: AJ...

DAR: I think that was my favorite one.

C-53: AJ, I never intended to act like I was going on missions without you. COUP was just sending me places, I was just trying to be helpful.

PLECK: You didn't think to mention that you wanted us to come with you? Didn't you want our support?

C-53: Well, you were all asleep! Y'know, it's like, I go into a low power state for a couple of hours I'm fine.

PLECK: AJ, we're your crew? Don't you understand?

C-53: AJ?

PLECK: I mean, C-53, we're your crew?

C-53: You get into a Tellurian body and all of a sudden everyone looks the same!

ALLIE: Doesn't that the thing that we did, where AJ was singing on behalf of Dar, fit in here

JEREMY: Yeah, I think it does.

PLECK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that could cut it.

SETH: Can I just do a little pick up? Because Nermut was yelling "beam me down" which made no sense.

JEREMY: I do love AJ's scream song.

ALLIE: It was perfect.

ALDEN: Oh, God, yeah. Should we... Should we re-get Nermut calling in? I feel like that should be in a song, I feel like we should all be singing. And you're like, "What is happening down there?"

C-53: Yeah, we should start... Him calling should start a song.

ALDEN: I was going to say.

WINSTON: We should be explaining it to Chris, and maybe Chris can talk to Nermut. And then we cut him out before he gets to—

ALDEN: Well, I was going to say, I think, one of the things I would like to get one more time is I feel like we didn't get a really nice moment of us making everything grow back? So, what if we have a sort of discovery song where we're all harmonizing and things are appearing. Like a sort of victory song.

SETH: Yeah, sure, that's smart.

ALDEN: And then Nermut can interrupt that.

WINSTON: Or maybe right when it's over he calls in, and we're like, "Oh, yeah, we did it!"

ALDEN: "You just missed it!" No, I think if he hears us singing he's like, "Let me take a few bars!"

WINSTON: Yeah, yeah, alright.

ALDEN: Okay, so, sorry I know we're doing a lot of jumping around.

ERIC: I think I can get us into this.

ALDEN: Okay, sure, sure.

ERIC: Let's see if I... [piano]

SHAI'AN: 53 sea. You sing. I sing. We create. But... this one also, and this one. And you.

AJ: He's pointing at all of us, he's pointing at Bargie!

C-53: You're saying we all need to sing!

SHAI'AN: [singing] The song brings us together! The song brings us together! We wave from side to side as the song brings us together!

AJ: [singing] So much has been wrong! So bad for so long! Apart, but together!

C-53 AND SHAI'AN: [singing] Because the song brings us together!

BARGIE: [monotone singing] Together.

C-53 AND SHAI'AN: The song brings us together!

BARGIE: Together.

C-53 AND SHAI'AN: We wave from side to side because the song brings us together!

BARGIE: Together.

AJ: Because the song brings us together!

PLECK: Ah, oh, wow, look! Water's springing forth from the ground! Flowers and birds!

C-53: A whole city bursting from nothingness!

AJ: [singing] Shai'An, you've got it! Shai'An, you've got it! We'll keep following you! The song will bring us together! And the world will be good too!

SHAI'AN: Everyone!

ALL: The song brings us together!

BARGIE: Together!

ALL: The song brings us together!

BARGIE: Together!

SHAI'AN: It brings us all...

ALL: [harmonizing] Together!

PLECK: Wow!

SETH: Beep boop boop!

PLECK: Oh, wow, hey, we get... We get reception again! Nermut, hey, what's up, man?

NERMUT: Oh, hey, hey, hey, Pleck, hey, crew! I was just wondering, did you find C-53? Did you rescue him?

PLECK: Yeah, oh, wow!

C-53: Hey, Nermut, I'm here, yeah.

NERMUT: Hey, great!

PLECK: Get this, this is nuts.

C-53: Yeah, thanks for sending the crew.

PLECK: This is a planet where everyone just sings everything.

NERMUT: Say what?

PLECK: Yeah, like, we, uh, okay, there's this guy, Shai'An, his dad is in his chest and he's got a piano and he plays and we all sang and the more we sang, the planet grew back!

C-53: It was a true testament to the power of music.

PLECK: [singing] The song brings us together!

ALL EXCEPT NERMUT: The song brings us together! The song brings us together!

NERMUT: Wait, wait, wait, can I, can we, so let's, can we take it from the top?

PLECK: We finished, come on, we don't have time.

NERMUT: We'll take it from the top and I've got my keyboard right here!

PLECK: Sorry, Nermut. We'll call you back.

NERMUT: Come on, come on!

C-53: It's sort of hard to sync up if you're on the phone.

NERMUT: No, I, let's, okay, wait, I have an idea, let's go back, no, wait, let's do the mission again and I'll come on—[shouting] Do the mission again!

PLECK: We're not gonna do it remotely.

AJ: It would be insane if we did this remotely!

NERMUT: [screaming] C-53! Let's do the mission again!

PLECK: That's too loud. I think that's too loud.

WINSTON: Crazy how loud it is.

ALDEN: That almost, yeah, that pretty much did it. That's pretty much what I had in mind.

JEREMY: Yeah, great.

ALDEN: Great. Cool.

ERIC: Do you need a connector now though to the duet? If we just rebuilt the city, but we still need to put the people back into it?

JEREMY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SETH: That's a good idea.

JEREMY: Wow, yes, I can get us in there.

C-53: Shai'An, GEC-3 is beautiful. I had no idea, but didn't you say there were millions of you?

SHAI'AN: Harmony for buildings, for grass, for satellite dish. Harmony not for people.

C-53: What brings back people?

SHAI'AN: Two become one.

PLECK: You talking about making out or?

C-53: Pleck, how would, have you seen how this planet works? Does that make any sense?

PLECK: Oh, I don't know.

SETH: Can you say, are you talking about loving?

PLECK: Yeah, are you talking about like loving or something?

C-53: Pleck.

PLECK: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm out of my depth.

C-53: I'm pretty sure it's musical.

PLECK: Okay. All right.

C-53: He's talking about a duet.

PLECK: Oh. A duet.

AJ: Between who?

JEREMY: That should cut in with what we have, right?

WINSTON: I think so.

JEREMY: I hope so.

SETH: Yeah, we can, we'll be able to.

JEREMY: We'll massage it. Massage it.

ALDEN: Is there something, I was going to say, it's on the tablet or the rock. I was going to say, is there something where it's like a... What?

WINSTON: With Bargie and Dar.

ALDEN: Well, I was going to say, it could be like the largest, the largest pebbles or something like that.

ERIC: Oh, yeah. Oh, how about so, you just, Winston, you just asked who, right?

WINSTON: Yeah, but who? Like, a duet.

AJ: But who?

SHAI'AN: Two pebble. Largest pebble. And... formerly in charge pebble.

PLECK: That can't be.

DAR: But how, how very specific.

C-53: It's really particular.

AJ: So that's Bargie.

PLECK: Is that the?

AJ: And I guess, oh, it's, oh, it's you, Dar! Because you were in charge and now you're not anymore!

DAR: Well, you know, yeah.

AJ: Oh, you get to sing! Fun!

ALDEN: Great. And then that cuts in with the jaunty Dar and Bargie duet.

ALLIE: Yeah, that real jaunty, perfect Dar and Bargie song. Hachi machi!

ALDEN: Hachi machi! Wow. This is gonna be a fun one.

ALLIE: Yeah.

WINSTON: Thank you guys so much. This is gonna be awesome.

JEREMY: Guys, fans are gonna go bonkers for this. I'm so glad you guys, both of you guys could do it. This is tremendous.

WINSTON: Yeah, thank you guys. And Eric, thanks for doing it last minute.

ERIC: Yeah, of course.

CHRIS: Nice to see you. Nice to see everyone.

MOUJAN: Thank you.

ALL: Bye!

[transition]

SETH: Well, there you have it, folks. That was the recording of episode 507, at least everything but Act 3, which we recorded later. I really encourage you all to go back and re-listen to that episode, having heard not only the raw recording, but also particularly what Shane puts into it. And I guess you maybe heard a couple things I cut out of it.

ALDEN: Yeah.

SHANE: And then after you do that, I encourage you to then go back to this episode and listen to it again.

SETH: Listen to this in an endless recursive loop.

ALDEN: I mean, I really do think that this episode...

SETH: Certainly for two weeks until 510 comes out, you should do that.

ALDEN: I think that hearing this episode before and after being mixed really gave me such an appreciation for not only what Shane does in general and what he did specifically in this episode, but also what great guests we had, like how on point Eric and Chris were and how game everybody in the core cast was to do something that a lot of us didn't have a lot of experience with. It was super fun.

SETH: It's ludicrous that this episode worked at all, let alone was like a massive favorite of the audience.

ALDEN: If the last 100 minutes has not slaked your thirst for BTS content, strap in, because we are going to chat a little bit now about how this episode came together as well as generally how we make the show. And so let's get started with that.

SETH: And I think it would be fun to talk about just how the episode concept came together too.

ALDEN: Totally.

SETH: Because that was even before the recording started.

SHANE: Yeah, in my memory it was pretty last minute, right?

ALDEN: Yeah, for sure. It was the day of the recording.

SHANE: Yeah. Do you happen to have Chris's original pitches?

ALDEN: Yes.

SETH: So before we record anything, we agree on a guest who we'd like to book and then they agree they'd like to be on the show. And we ask them...

ALDEN: Ideally.

SETH: Ideally. They say yes. We hate to force people. When it's not voluntary, you can always hear it. And we ask the guests to pitch character ideas. I feel like it keeps the show fresh for us where we're not trying to decide who anyone's playing and they come in with ideas we would have never thought of.

ALDEN: So should I read Chris's pitches? These were Chris's pitches that he sent. Bob, a man that lives disjointed from time, able to move back and forth a la Tenet, who isn't quite clear on how time travel rules work and maybe it's all bullshit. Which is a great pitch.

SHANE: But we all know who put the kibosh on that one.

ALDEN: Yeah, but we all know which cast member said, "No more time travel bullshit."

SETH: Just forwarded a copy of his rider.

ALDEN: Yeah, exactly. Second pitch was Doxed, a nomad from a reverse universe that is trying to get as far away from the XXYZ quadrant as possible. Which is a great pitch, but also because we're in this Star Trek universe, it would have been tough to pull off. Oddly-O, a member of an alien species who can speak English but best expresses himself in sci-fi sound effects like the equivalent of the Darmok Tanagra dude from Star Trek. As you can see, that's the kernel of what we ended up choosing for him. Although he did add this, which I think is very funny. "This will be a pain in the ass for your sound post-production guy, but could be fun," essentially pimping him into sound designing this character. That's very funny because the amount of pain in Shane's ass from this episode knows no bounds, I think.

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: But so that was sort of part of the thing. And the final pitch was Shai'An, a roving entertainer who likes to improvise songs and tries to get all of you to improvise songs with him with no apparent accompaniment, and also freestyle rap. And maybe his songs cause spell-like effects like a bard? Question mark? Also a great pitch. We had been looking for a Darmok episode for a really long time since we started season 5. And so we jumped on that. And then, of course, because Chris has such great experience in improvised musicals, we decided to combine those last two pitches and ask him to do a character who only speaks in song, like the Darmok dude. The rest is history, I guess.

SHANE: Well, not the rest, because there was one big puzzle piece missing.

ALDEN: Yes. Yes. Accompaniment.

SHANE: Yes.

ALDEN: One little insight into how the show is made. I should let you speak to this, Shane, although I'm not sure you want to. We are constantly doing music, and it is constantly a thorn in Shane's side because of...

SHANE: No, it's not a thorn. I exaggerate how much of a thorn it is in my side.

ALDEN: But it sucks.

SHANE: Well, no, it's fun, but I just want you guys to feel...

ALDEN: Respect the fact that...

SHANE: Yeah, feel the power of that trigger when you pull it.

SETH: Yeah. Like right now, I think it's worth saying, like, "Shane doesn't like it when we sing."

ALDEN: Fortunately, we're not doing anything. We're not.

SHANE: Well, luckily Seth's, you know...

SETH: Pitch perfect and always on rhythm.

SHANE: Pitch perfect, and there's no reason to even add accompaniment.

SETH: Right. So just... So this is just going to be... You don't even have to change this. It's going to be beatboxing that matches that. Just put that under, and then it's fine.

ALDEN: Yeah, I'm sure there'll be no tempo issues like that.

SETH: And I'm editing this, so I'm leaving that in.

SHANE: So, with Seth, never, never.

ALDEN: So, the idea of doing a character that didn't have accompaniment, I think would be... would have been really tough. It would have been...

SHANE: I mean, that would have been impossible for me to do.

ALDEN: It would have been a deal-breaker, I think.

SHANE: To have to do all of the music would have been impossible. Even, like, a little piece of music, like, one that I was thinking about is the "Beano and Bargie." But not the theme song to their show, but the "Beano wuv something in the stars with Bargie." Like, that's a little song that I think plays for, like, 10 seconds, and it's like, if you're going to write 10... or, like, produce 10 seconds of a song, it's, like, almost the same

amount of time as it takes to produce, like, 3 minutes of a song. So, it still took, like, an hour and a half, two, three hours just to do that kind of thing. Part of that is on me, because I want it to sound good, you know? But it takes time to do that.

ALDEN: Yeah. So, we're... that is to say, we are... if you listen to the show, you know we are constantly doing that all the time. And so, the idea of doing an entire episode of that was like, "Well, that'll take 4 months to mix. We can't do that." But, Jeremy, who is a seasoned musical improviser as well, he performs on a team called Rumpelteaser with Eric Gerson, who was our second guest. And he was actually a sort of a last minute addition to the episode, because we thought, "Well, if we're doing a musical episode, let's get somebody to improvise along with us, and that way, you know, it takes some of the load off of Shane to figure out what key we're singing in and change the key signature as we go constantly, because we're always drifting off of pitch and yada yada yada. So, we called up Eric, who was down, which was awesome. And one of the really amazing things about this episode is that Eric and Chris had never worked together as far as I know, and Eric is just that fucking good he was able to just jump in! I mean, Eric is truly a genius. It was really awesome.

SETH: And it was not planned that he would also play a character.

ALDEN: Yeah, he just jumped in. He just jumped in as Jakk.

SHANE: At this point, when Eric had been confirmed, I was like, at this point, sure that this episode would not work in a million years, because we're trying to do a musical episode, and I think this was maybe the first time that we had any in-person recording for the season, and it was Alden, Seth, and Winston at my apartment, and then Jeremy and LA over Zoom, Moujan and Allie over Zoom, Chris over Zoom, and then Eric, who's meant to be accompanying all of us, is on his own Zoom feed, so he's not in a room with any of the performers. And anyone who's attended a birthday party over Zoom knows that it's impossible to sync up. The lag is... I had thought it would just not be possible for him to accompany anybody, especially in a way where you'd have to essentially anticipate where you guys were going with your melodies and your rhythm, and then play ahead of it.

ALDEN: Well, and the crazy thing, not only is there a lag, the lag is slightly different for all of us. Like, depending on the speed of your internet and the processor in your laptop, it could have been plus or minus a quarter second for each of us, and it sounds great. And he was so on top of it. It was awesome. And so, yeah, I mean, once we had Eric in place, foolishly, I thought, "Oh, well, why don't we just make the... if the music is coming out of the character diegetically, like if the character is playing the piano in the scene, then Shane's completely off the hook." There's no extra stuff to do. He just puts that piano sound in the geography of the scene, and then all the music stuff is taken care of because all of the music is created in the scene, and we don't have to worry about anything else. I'm a goddamn moron. So, Shane, what exactly was I wrong about? Can you explain that?

SHANE: No, you weren't wrong about it at all, because it could have been that way.

SETH: Yeah.

SHANE: When I got into it, like actually working on the episode, I do all of these what I call zoomed-out passes where I just do the nuts and bolts things, fix up some dialogue, add some basic notes for myself while I'm trying to absorb where I feel like the episode wants to go, what the natural flow of it is, how the sound component is going to reinforce the storytelling, right? And when I got listening to it, especially with just a piano in there, I was like, I feel like the episode is doing a send-up of musicals. We hit every sort of trope, and to not for me, not to for lack of a better term, "yes, and" that, that would be, I would consider that a failure for me not to reinforce what I felt like you all were doing in the moment. Right?

ALDEN: Yeah.

SHANE: So when, my favorite moment when Winston jumped in with, "You're absolutely right!" or whatever, I remember hearing that and being like, "Oooh, that," in the room while we were doing it, "that needs to be something." But it's sort of like a Jenga thing. It's like if you pull that one out, it's like that can't be the only bit, you know. Just like the big exciting moments.

SETH: Snowballs.

SHANE: Snowball, exactly.

SETH: Yeah. And to be clear, Alden, when I was like, not agreeing with you, it wasn't that I thought that concept you were pitching of just like, "Well, the music's there," was wrong. It was just like, I was like, "I know that Shane will not be able to control himself."

ALDEN: There's no way in hell that Shane is just going to leave it alone. And that's, it's easy to listen to the show and think, "Oh, there's the improvised part, which is all the content, and then it's sound designed by someone who adds sound to everything, and that's the show." And I would say that there were maybe, that was sort of how we approached it very early on in the run of the show. But as the show went on, Shane's sound design became, it's an equal cast member in the show. And the reason I say that is because not only is there stuff that Shane does that we never talked about in the recording and never talk about until we hear him having inserted it into the show.

SETH: And we're not allowed to talk about it. Even after it's...

ALDEN: We must never speak of it.

SETH: We must never speak of it.

SHANE: Yeah, I'm going to be bleeping this part.

ALDEN: But it's stuff that it's stuff that elevates what we do to not only like a funny thing or like a plot thing, but a thing that has significance sonically, which is like so great.

SHANE: Yeah, I like to play with the bigness and smallness of moments, like how I can stage a particular either scene or even just an interaction to get the most out of it. So like, 505 I think was in this season where I've done the most of that with James Urbaniak. Because that episode takes place on a stage, I wanted to really play with blocking in that one. So like when Pleck and AJ are improvising sort of for the first time, like instead of being with them up close in that moment, like to be sitting in the back of the room with James Urbaniak's character. Just sipping his tea, watching and critiquing.

SETH: And then the train is going by outside the building.

ALDEN: That's a perfect example because it's not just a geographic decision of like, where is the listener in this scene? It's you saying, "This is an episode about theater, so we're going to lean into what it sounds like to be sitting in a theater." All of that is to say, I think that this sort of culminated in 507 because Shane, you were not content with leaving Eric's brilliant piano accompaniment as just another voice in the chorus. You wanted to go further and not only make it sound more produced and more interesting, but do it from a story perspective. If you'll remember from the released version of 507, the moment that C-53 starts singing with Shai'An is the moment that the full orchestration sort of comes in and really fills out and stops sounding just like a piano.

SHANE: Yeah, so it took me a lot of time to figure out how I wanted to approach the music, period. Because we could have gone a more Bermifful Nelodies direction. For those of you who don't know, we've released an entire Bermut Nundaloy album. And the way that we did that is, Jeremy made some four and eight bar music loops that Seth improvised over. And then I took it and added new parts and redid the music. I changed the tempo and some of these things. So it was very much like I was the most apparent voice in the music. And when we were doing this episode, I thought that that could have been an option, but then realized that that didn't feel like an appropriate thing to do for this episode because Eric is a guest and his biggest role in this episode was the music and also played a character. But I wanted to make sure that because he was a guest, I treated all of his contributions in the exact same way that I would treat any other guest, which would not be to manipulate in a way where the original intention is at all obscured or lost. I wanted it to be reinforced. The way that we did this in practice is that Eric, when he was recording, we asked him to also capture all the MIDI data coming out of his piano. What you're hearing in this tracking session is just the audio that we heard, but what MIDI data is, is basically all the instructions that the keyboard is putting out.

ALDEN: It's like sheet music, basically.

SHANE: Sort of. It's like computer sheet music. But what that allows you to do in post-production is that with that MIDI data, I could make what he was playing sound like any instrument for which I had a virtual instrument for, right? And what I would do is rather than me writing something on top of it, I wanted to stay in Eric's voice, so I took the MIDI track from his piano and copied it down to every layer. And I would basically mute big chunks of the MIDI data under the violins, for instance, and just let what Eric was playing on his keyboard just decide, okay, so the violins are only going to play this melody that's within this greater MIDI data track. And I did that for every instrument. I also had to choose what articulation every instrument would play. And articulation would be like on a cello, for instance, like bowing a cello is an articulation, and plucking a cello is a different articulation. So I'd also have to choose what each instrument, like how it was playing. And then whenever there's a rock band, that's when I'm just jumping in fully where I'm just adding something on top of it. That's me playing, because that data wouldn't have existed in Eric's keyboard playing.

SETH: Like when there's electric guitar coming on top of songs?

SHANE: Electric guitar, drums, yeah, synthesizer.

ALDEN: Fireworks.

SHANE: But everything else was what Eric was playing on the keyboard.

SETH: So at any given moment, there are other instruments playing the same notes as his original piano, but depending on what moment, it could be like, you've got the cellos.

SHANE: Yeah, so the basses would only be playing the left, like, you know, some of the left-hand stuff he was doing.

ALDEN: I mean, that's a granular way of saying that Eric's music had the depth to it that you could fully orchestrate it with only his music, and it still sounded great. Can you talk a little bit about one of my favorite things about the episode, which is the philosophy of why you decided to orchestrate that, as opposed to just let the piano be, y'know, be a character in the show?

SHANE: Yeah. Like we said earlier, our original idea for how to approach the sound design in this episode was to have a more diegetic presentation of the music, so as if we are hearing what's actually happening in "reality" of the scene.

ALDEN: Which is why we, you know, have a character, which is why early on we're like, "Where is that music coming from?" We wanted to present it as though the characters are all hearing the music, the piano, the same way that the listener was.

SHANE: And when we moved towards this bigger, more produced sound, the music not only becomes non-diegetic, but the quality of everything in the episode I felt like needed to become different, more produced, be more musical. And the way that I

started figuring out how to decide when it was going to go to those places where we went from real-life, reality, diegetic, we're hearing what's there, to big, over-the-top produced rock opera was to interpret when real communication was happening between all the characters. So basically, the moments that would be creating whatever magic that's causing things to regrow and stuff, that that's how I decided when to go into the fully produced stuff. As a way to help the storytelling, or reinforce the storytelling of what is happening in this episode, what the big idea is of this episode, that the music is causing things to change and grow.

ALDEN: Yeah, and I think the way you described it to me was that's what the characters are hearing when they're really locked into this language that Jakk and Shai'An speak, is that that's the magic of this language, is that it actually informs everything else. It's not just improvising a song, it actually has more meaning to it when they're really in it, which I think is such a cool thing. And it makes you really appreciate it more. There's so much more going on in those songs, character-wise and plot-wise, when it switches over and it feels like they're really getting it.

SETH: And I love the dropouts when like Pleck and AJ are having asides and then it just...

ALDEN: Right, and you're just hearing the piano plinking along in the background.

SETH: Plinky piano, yeah, and then it pops back into the full production. Hopefully from what Shane is saying, that when you go back and listen to 507 again, that'll sound completely different for you, or you'll hear some of these moments differently. And it's also okay if you don't notice these things, because part of the work of all this sound design and editing is that you aren't distracted by the sort of unreality of it, and like it sounds smooth and everything, so no pressure to focus on these things.

SHANE: No, I mean, it's like you should be able to enjoy it if you're just listening to it out of your cell phone speaker. Just please do not do the 1.5x. That's just not right, to listen to it fast.

SETH: Yeah, I wish they had a setting we could set where it just makes... turns it into like a terrible tone.

SHANE: I mean, this episode, or 507 itself would have just been the worst thing to listen to on at 1.5x.

SETH: But 2x we're totally cool with.

ALDEN: Yeah, you can handle 2x. Cool.

SHANE: That's double time. I'm always impressed by the editing, though. That's one of the reasons why I push myself, is because I'm trying to jump over the bar that you two are setting with the edits.

ALDEN: Even people who are very aware of how much work goes into the sound design, I think it's easy to ignore how much work goes into the edit. Not only because a lot of people don't understand what the raw session sounded like, but also just editing at its best is completely invisible, I think. Especially in an audio format.

SETH: Totally, yeah.

ALDEN: Seth, how do you approach it? Do you have anything... any thoughts about this episode specifically?

SETH: Sure. I mean, one of the reasons I thought that this episode would be a great one to release in the raw is that, for all of its musical insanity, it was not that tough of an edit. Like Alden said, it's pretty linear. Whereas some recording sessions would just have long tangents that didn't go anywhere that ended up getting cut, or things are totally reordered and things like that. This one was really just, like, slimming down. I didn't realize until after this episode came out that I'm pretty sure we didn't cut a single song, which is insane.

SHANE: Especially considering that song of the children was left on.

ALDEN: [laughter] You mean the best song in the episode?

SHANE: Yeah.

SETH: That maybe could have gone.

SHANE: That one was great. I loved that one, actually.

SETH: Yeah, and so maybe we didn't edit quite enough, but at the same time, I felt like this was one -- some of the edits are super, super challenging because I have to change things structurally to make them work.

ALDEN: One of the things that I think Seth and I have always talked about since we started doing the show is that we want to edit to make the show as good as it can be while still retaining all of the elements that make improv great. And so every episode from the very beginning it's always been about, if we take out everything about this recording session that is just not quite the pace or the energy or the plot or the character stuff that is right on point, what does that leave us with? And is that enough to make it -- can we get that same pace and that same ratio of jokes to story to character that you get from a written sitcom? And so when we say the show is improvised, it's true. The show is complete-- We don't -- we never -- except for commercials and the crawl, we never script anything. But because of that, the editing process is that much more important because the editing process is what we use to take an improvised recording session down to something that has the feel of something that is scripted.

SETH: In a way, it's a little bit like documentary editing in that the recording sessions are kind of like collecting footage, and then you have to be like, well, what did we get?

And in a typical -- just ratio-wise, in a typical recording, I've figured out that we use a third of what we record. If we've recorded for 90 minutes, I will imagine this is probably going to be 30 minutes cut. And some of that is chit-chat and not really improv.

SHANE: And breaks, too.

ALDEN: And shrimp.

SETH: And some breaks, but a lot of it is just compression. So much shrimp. It's really compression and just optimizing. What is the version of this that still feels completely natural and takes out everything that feels like a lull or that takes you out of the story?

ALDEN: Yeah. And I think it also has informed how we perform, as well, because it's not -- we're no longer -- when we record an episode, we're no longer treating it the way we'd treat a live performance, which is trying to maximize everything and really move everything ahead as quickly as possible. Now, I think we play a little slower, because we know we are going to be condensing it, and it allows us to kind of hit a lot more notes throughout each scene, so we're not just getting in, heightening everything and getting out the way that I think we all were trained to do as improvisers. And now it's something that I think we really -- we improvise to the edit a lot more than I think we used to, for better and for worse. I think it has made the show have a little more depth, but I think it's made the edit exponentially more involved than it used to be.

SETH: Yeah. I mean, and that's -- I mean, to be totally honest, one of the reasons we've stuck with the releasing every two weeks is that --

ALDEN: Right. Everything is hard.

SETH: The editing and the sound design have just gotten way, way more intense over time. I think it's partly as, like, just the lore of the show. Like, in the beginning, anything any guest said could be true forever, and that's still -- that still happens all the time, where guests make up something that's -- we've never heard before that's completely true. But now that so much is established, the new episodes have to function in the universe of the 85 episodes that have come out before.

SHANE: Speaking of, I often have to -- I mean, for every episode, I have to go back to previous sessions to pull whether it's, like, how did I do the Kulata's vocal effect, or I need to get, like, the backgrounds from whatever. And the other day, I was back in 201, and I was like, "Whoa." I remember this being so tough, but, like, it's like a 29-minute episode with, like, you know, 10 tracks or whatever.

SETH: Right.

SHANE: Compared to what we do now.

SETH: Two locations.

SHANE: Yeah, two locations. Exactly. To what we do now, where it's just so much bigger and so much more complicated on every level.

ALDEN: And that's a perfect segue into talking about 510, which is going to be out in two weeks, and is going to be the perfect example of how much crazier this show has gotten since we started.

SHANE: Yeah.

ALDEN: Well, thank you so much for listening to this. I hope this has provided some insight into how we make the show, and I hope it gives you a little special feeling in your tum when you listen to future episodes and enjoy a little piece of editing or sound design by these two fine gentlemen here.

SETH: Yeah.

ALDEN: Sitting next to me on Zoom.

SETH: Don't forget to tell your friends to listen to Mission to Zyxx. Yeah. Send them a different episode.

ALDEN: Rate and subscribe.

SETH: Yeah, rate and subscribe.

ALDEN: Never too late!

SHANE: Oh yeah, don't... Not this episode for your first episode.

ALDEN: Yeah. And we will be back in two weeks with a real barn burner of an episode!

SETH: A big old ditty.

ALDEN: A real big old juicy ep for you!

[outro music]

HAL: If you're sick of constantly arguing with the people closest to you about topics that really aren't going to change the world, we're here to take that stress off of your shoulders. We take care of it for you on We Got This with Mark and Hal.

MARK: That's right, Hal. If you have a subjective question that you want answered objectively once and for all time for all of the people of the world, questions like, "Who's the best Disney villain, Mac or PC, or should you put ketchup on a hot dog?" That's why we're here.

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JOHN: I'm Judge John Hodgman.

JESSE: And I'm bailiff Jesse Thorne.

JOHN: Ten years ago, I came on Jordan-Jesse Go and judged my first dispute. Is chili a soup? It's a stew, obviously.

JESSE: The judge has dispensed a decade of justice. He's the one person wise enough to answer the really important questions, like "Should you hire a mime to perform at your own funeral?"

GUEST: After they cry, I want them to laugh.

JOHN: Do you really need a tank full of jellyfish in your den?

GUEST: They smell like living creatures decaying.

GUEST: Only if they are decaying.

GUEST: Yeah, which they will be.

JOHN: Real people, real justice, real comedy.

JESSE: Winner of the Webby Award for Best Comedy Podcast.

JOHN: The Judge John Hodgman Podcast every Wednesday on MaximumFun.org.

MAXIMUM FUN: MaximumFun.org. Comedy and culture. Artist owned. Audience supported.

SHAI'AN: This one's a dumb one, I can tell!

AJ: [autotuned] You're absolutely right!

[full rock opera music blasts]

PLECK: Okay, AJ—

AJ: Papa's not very bright!

PLECK: Okay, all right.

SHAI'AN: So he is pet?

AJ: Oh, Papa?

PLECK: No, not really. I wouldn't say pet.