

[slowed down version of theme music crackles into a recording]

DERF: Ah, wow. Best chapter ever. I can't even—the eloquence! I'm not known as a graceful speaker, and I gotta tell ya, that was just... uhhh... I don—it was like poetry comin' outta my mouth. I didn't write it, I just said it! Ah. Wait—

[messing with the recorder]

DERF: Wait a second... why's the red light on *now*...?

Oh no. Did I not press record, and now it's recording? I missed, oh, an entire chapter of my life? I've wasted a whole moment of my *liiife*? By talking about my life! Ugh. We lost so much. There was, um, the actual details of how we escaped through the tunnels. Uh... a long speech about the nature of love in a forgotten galaxy. Hah! That was... I—people were crying! P—hardened prisoners were crying! I made them cry! I forget. It's gone. Outta my brain. We filed off the serial number on our prison transport, The Prison Break Express. What—I know what you're thinking, "What happened to the masturbating guy?" Well, that's a story for another day. Can a memoir have a spinoff? 'Cause that guy's got a lotta life to tell ya about. Still one of my closest friends. Still yankin' it on a minute-to-minute basis.

Maan, that's... that's jucked up. I'll never remember those words. I forget the words—not even *after* I say them, but *while* I'm saying them. Ughh. Man, and here I am in the middle of the produce section tryin' to get some groceries. Tryin' to eat better... I wonder if this tape recorder has an auto-save? Uh... hmm. Well. It's pretty lo-fi, not a lot of digital... save points here, okay. Well, no use crying over unrecorded milk.

So where were we? Right. Let's recap. We escaped the planet with a guy named Twinkle, who didn't kill me, but had the right hand of the guy that killed me. I think he was gonna lead us to our next step. And that step... was a planet you'll *never* see coming.

[spaceship ambiance, sound of typing on a control panel]

TWINKLE: We've cleared the atmosphere and we're entering hyperspace. [flips a lever]

GOOD_E: [tiny mechanical clapping] Yay! I always applaud when the pilot goes into hyperspace.

SHAE: [unbuckling] Alright. Well, it was a pleasure getting you out of prison. We'll just...

TWINKLE: It will be a pleasure to continue not saying goodbye—

SHAE: [crosstalk] ...say goodbye now, huh?

TWINKLE: —as we forge ahead—

SHAE: No—

TWINKLE: —to create liberation galaxywide, Shae.

SHAE: No, no, I—I got you out of prison. That's—that's all I needed to do. I have seen it through, and—y'know, good day to you. [laughs awkwardly] Don't be a stranger, okay?

TWINKLE: Two people fighting side by side can't be strangers, Shae.

SHAE: Twinkle, my meal ticket is in the bathroom *right now*.

TWINKLE: Don't you wanna be part of something bigger than yourself?

SHAE: [frustrated sigh] How are you still caught up in this, Twinkle?

TWINKLE: Caught up in this? There's nothing else to be caught up in! It's the zipper that closes on all of our skin.

GOOD_E: [awed] Oh, my—beautiful.

SHAE: Twinkle, I don't have time for one of your monologues. What is it you're asking me to do?

TWINKLE: Give ya a hint: starts with an R, ends with "ebellion."

GOOD_E: R-r—rebellion? That's... illegal! [beep] Illegal! [beep] Seditious! [beep] Seditious! [beep]

[Shae harumphs in frustration]

GOOD_E: We're on the run from both the underworld *and* the government. I think we should... pick one?

SHAE: [thoughtfully] Hmm. GOOD_E? That may be your first... solid... idea. I can make time for you and the Rebellion, Twinkle.

TWINKLE: Yes.

SHAE: On the condition...

TWINKLE: Huh...

SHAE: ...that you call Talbot... tell him to back off.

TWINKLE: That I will do, Shae.

[Shae gasps happily]

TWINKLE: After several missions.

SHAE: What?!

[bathroom door opens, toilet flushes]

DERF: Sorry guys, had to hit the head. Did we jump into hyperspace? 'Cause my pee stream got all jiggly. [sprays copious amounts of air freshener]

GOOD_E: Yes, that's right. We have a course charted for the Aris Tocras sector.

DERF: Ah. Man, I love it. It's like all my cells are dancin'.

SHAE: Like sitting on a dryer.

DERF: Yeah! It's like a little shake to it, y'know?

SHAE: Mm-hmm.

[buzzing]

TWINKLE: [unbuckling and getting up] Oh, no, I think that is the dryer of the shuttle.

DERF: You did laundry before we went to hyperspeed? Threw a load in?

TWINKLE: Yes. [starts taking the laundry out]

GOOD_E: Cleanliness and good hygiene are always important.

DERF: Anybody else still thinkin' about that prison break? So much happened! Just like duckin', crawlin' through different little cracks and crevices, what a time. Apologies again about you guys bein' stuck in solitary that whole time, but didn't we have a real banger right after you got out? That was fun.

[Shae makes a prolonged "ughhh" that indicates it was not fun]

TWINKLE: [shutting the dryer] You ask what I sacrifice?

[pause, Twinkle walks to the other side]

GOOD_E: No. No, we didn't—

SHAE/DERF: Actually it didn't come up once.../No one mentioned that.

[sound of Twinkle moving things around]

TWINKLE: Argh...

DERF: Twinkle, are you getting your ironing board out? What are you—what d—do you have other plans to get to here?

TWINKLE: [ironing] I have but the one sash. If we're going to... see the royals, we're going to have to look the part.

SHAE: 'Scuse me?

DERF: The royals? Wait, where's this ship headed?

TWINKLE: "Where's the ship headed?" Where does *all* evil begin and end?

GOOD_E: In the sentient heart!

TWINKLE: The Monarchy.

GOOD_E: Oh.

DERF: Oh.

[transmission connects]

SPACE GUARD: [via transmission, imperiously] You are now entering Monarchy space.

TWINKLE: Okay, wow. A fast hyperspace. [buckling seatbelt]

SPACE GUARD: Are you friend or foe?

[short pause]

TWINKLE: [holding transmission button] Friend.

DERF: Smart. Foe never works. [buckling seatbelt]

SPACE GUARD: How good of a friend?

TWINKLE: [holding button] College roommates where we didn't choose to live together the second year, but still kept in touch... kind of level.

DERF: It's like a four on the friend scale. *Very* close to foe.

SPACE GUARD: You may proceed.

[transmission disconnects]

TWINKLE: [pressing buttons, bringing the ship planetside] Comrades, we're going to dock at Chunnelston Castle, the putrid undercarriage of the monarchy itself. I've arranged cover identities for the lot of us. [turn signal] You can gather your necessary intel while I pursue a key target.

DERF: So y—we're going to infiltrate the Monarchy, very cool. What shall we be? Some highfalutin off-planet duke and duchess?

SHAE: Oooooohhh!

DERF: Or are we going to be, uh, visiting dignitaries who are coming in at the top?

TWINKLE: Something like that, yes.

DERF: Yes.

TWINKLE: And though you'll enter through the garderobe...

DERF: Oh, where the guards go in, smart. Sneak under their petticoats.

TWINKLE: No, it's a fancy term for the poop chute.

DERF: Mmkay.

GOOD_E: Excuse me?

DERF: Also under the petticoats, in a way.

SHAE: I'm understanding now why, uh, Twinkle didn't ask us if we wanted to do laundry *before* this activity.

DERF: Makes sense.

TWINKLE: No need. Waste of water.

DERF: Well, on the way out, though, I'll wanna do a load.

SHAE: Oh, yeah.

DERF: Wash the ol' Derf suit!

[pause]

TWINKLE: Though you'll enter through the poop chute, your time there won't be in vain, Derf, because as you seek your killer, know that all roads of darkness lead back to the monarchy.

DERF: Hmm.

TWINKLE: And someone in that palace knows.

SHAE: You think Derf's killer is in the monarchy?

DERF: You know, I sensed sort of a royal vibe from the killer, y'know? "When you're comin' for the king, send a king!" That's what they say.

SHAE: That's what *who* says?

DERF: You ever play space chess? You ever play space chess?

SHAE: No.

DERF: The king kills the other king. Sometimes.

TWINKLE: We both have our missions. And so we enter Chunnelston.

[ship lands, everyone starts getting up, doors open]

DERF: You're right, Twinkle. "The Lird rots from the head," they say. So let's go. To the head.

TWINKLE: [switching off the ship] Yes.

SHAE: Well, actually, we're going to the butt.

GOOD_E: Hmm.

[they exit the ship and begin walking through a medieval-sounding town; we hear footsteps, conversation, bells, and occasional animal sounds]

DERF: Wow, this castle is massive, so thick. And there's people everywhere!

BREAD SELLER: Stale bread. Stale bread for sale. Or trade!

SHAE: [interested] Ohh.

PEASANT 1: How stale?

BREAD SELLER: Very.

PEASANT 1: Hmm.

BREAD SELLER: Yesteryear's bread.

PEASANT 1: Yesteryear's? I'll take two.

DERF: [laughing] He's nostalgic for the bread.

BREAD SELLER: Ahh, excellent. [cash register "ding"] Yes, this brings back memories.

GOAT'S BREATH SELLER: Get your pint of goat's breath.

DERF: Goat's breath? How do you capture that?

GOAT'S BREATH SELLER: We have a two-for-ones deal. Two goat's breaths for the price of ones.

PEASANT 2: Hey, there's a BOGO on the goat breath!

DERF: Everyone's dressed in such old-timey things. Like, what year is it here?

GOOD_E: Well, Derf, autocratic governments often create pomp and splendor to mask their cruelty. I guess the monarchy is no different. But the galaxy seems to love [singsong] the glamourrr!

DERF: Huh. This whole street is animal shit, so. I dunno.

BUSKER: Gather round, gather round as I put this sword inside of my body. [gulping sounds]

PEASANT 3: Wow, it didn't go through the mouth.

DERF: Yeah, that—that dude just killed himself.

[the busker gasps a few times and falls down]

[bystanders applaud]

OPPORTUNISTIC MERCHANT: [ringing a bell] Dead body for sale! Dead body for sale!

PEASANT 1: How old?

OPPORTUNISTIC MERCHANT: Just dead, just fresh.

PEASANT 1: No, no no no.

OPPORTUNISTIC MERCHANT: Getting only staler. Bid now.

SWINEHERD: Move out of the way!

DERF/SHAE: Hm?/Hm?

SWINEHERD: Move out of the way! Monarch swine's going through.

[the swine grunt and squeal]

DERF: Royal swines!

SHAE: *They* get to go through the front door.

DERF: Excuse me, swine... guy. We're trying to find, like, the, um... poop elevator.

SWINEHERD: Wot?!

DERF: We need to go to the southeast garderobe underneath Turret 19.

SWINEHERD: All's I know is I'm gonna hand over my monarch pigs, which I get for seventy pills and a toop, to that royal right there, Steven!

DERF: [quietly] Steven?

SHAE: Steven? In the velvet cape?

SWINEHERD: Sure is he is, that is who he is.

DERF: Hmm.

SHAE: Thanks, swine guy.

SWINEHERD: [walking away with the swine] I'm a girl!

DERF: Oh! Really broke through the pig shit ceiling over there, didn't she?

GOOD_E: What?

SHAE: Well, there's a—

[Shae trips and falls into something squishy]

SHAE: Oh! Bleugh!

GOOD_E: Oh! Shae, watch where you're stepping!

SHAE: Ugh! I'm covered in pig shit!

[Shae sputters in disgust, wiping it off]

SHAE: Actually, I think I have an idea. **GOOD_E**, you're gonna contribute to this mission whether you like it or not.

GOOD_E: I do like it! I love contributing!

SHAE: [clopping towards the guy in the velvet cape] Steven! Steven, is that you?

STEVEN: Mmyesss?

SHAE: [chuckling familiarly] You old so-and-so! You come here, right here! Oh, Steven, put 'er there.

[Shae shakes Lord Steven's hand]

STEVEN: [confused chuckling] I must admit I'm at a loss.

SHAE: Steven, come on!

STEVEN: You act as though you know me familiarly, but I'm afraid I do not share the pleasure.

SHAE: [laughing] Oh, Steven, we're always doin' this, aren't we?

[Shae continues to manhandle Steven; there is a faint jingling sound]

[**GOOD_E** starts protesting]

STEVEN: [laughing along] It does sound like something I would do! Hahaha!

[Steven and Shae laugh together, **GOOD_E** makes another sound of distress]

SHAE: Well, it was great to see you, guy. I just...

GOOD_E: [barely audible over the sound of livestock] Hey!

SHAE: It has been too long. We should get the girls together, shouldn't we?

STEVEN: We should. [chuckling, walking away] Yehehehes, yes.

SHAE: Enjoy your market day.

STEVEN: And you. [Steven chuckles some more]

[Dorf and Shae walk away]

[Shae sighs]

DERF: What was that all—did you date that guy? What happened, Shae?

SHAE: What? No, it was a reverse pickpocket.

DERF: What?

SHAE: I gave him GOOD_E.

[Shae shows Dorf where GOOD_E should be]

WATCH: [robotically] The time is seventeen forty-six.

SHAE: [slightly bored] And all I got in return was this... solid gold actual watch.

DERF: That's the best upgrade I've ever heard of.

SHAE: Eh.

DERF: Why was it so easy to get rid of GOOD_E when I think both you and I have been trying to make that happen for so long?

SHAE: Look, all these stars needed to align, y'know?

DERF: Mm.

SHAE: I needed the slippery monarch swine shit. I needed someone with very thin wrists. And I needed to be out of orbit from my parole officer.

DERF: Mmm. Ahhh, Turret 19. And what's this hangin' out of the poop chute? A rope ladder? Don't mind if I do!

[Dorf and Shae start climbing up the ladder]

[they stumble into the turret with quiet grunts]

SERVANT: Oi. Are you two the new hires? Scullery maid and hallboy?

SHAE: Whoof! By the smell of you, I think we found our guy.

SERVANT: Oi. The stars *twinkle* at night, right? Twinkle.

DERF: Oh, that's an easy password to—to hack. Uh, yes, the stars do twinkle... um, each night.

SERVANT: Come with me. Come with me. We've been needin' a new hallboy. A scullery maid a—a while, didn't we?

DERF: Let me ask you, I've done as—obviously, I have a lot of experience as a hallboy, but what sort of hallboy are you looking for? Someone to... walk the halls or just, uh, redecorate them?

SERVANT: No—no, you'll—you'll be working sixteen, eighteen hours a day, every day.

DERF: Mm.

[servant opens a garderobe door and carries out a sloshy chamber pot as they talk]

SERVANT: You'll be responsible for emptying chamber pots, cleanin' boots.

DERF: Sorry, just real quick—on this planet, everyone still shits in little—little urns?

[the servant tosses out the contents of the pot]

DERF: They're flying around through space, they're still using chamber pots?

SERVANT: [snarkily, while taking the pot back inside] Oh, my apologies, sir, you—you think we should be hirin' droids to do this work? Or perhaps they shit into teleporters? And get teleported into space? Would you prefer that?

DERF: Yeah, that would—that would make a lot of sense just from a...

SERVANT: Why invest in technology when you could get some stupid commoner to do it for you? Under threat of violence or death?

[the servant knocks on another door, a muffled voice says "in a minute, almost done"]

SHAE: Oh, so you're not even getting *paid*.

[another knock, guy in the garderobe says "one minute!"]

SERVANT: Paid? Are you familiar with the hierarchy of the monarch and the royals?

SHAE: Uh, no, we could use a refresher.

SERVANT: Well, it boils down to this. Over thousands of years, we've perfected our caste system. So, there's the monarchs and royals, and then there's everyone else. Those are the two castes.

GUY: [exiting the garderobe] Oh, hey. Sorry. Uh, thank you.

DERF: Hm!

SERVANT: We're shit, and they're not. The galaxy's under the monarchy's—uh, royal thumb, as it were. [removing the chamber pot]

DERF: Took you thousands of years to sort 'em into two groups?

SERVANT: Listen, hallboy, come close.

[the servant tosses the contents of the chamber pot; someone far below screams]

DERF: [laughing] Why does everyone want to be close to me? I—

SERVANT: Touch my nose with your nose, right?

DERF: Okay.

SERVANT: Listen to me. I was told by Twinkle to take care of you. Now if you want to survive, you're goin' to stick with me and do as you're told, right?

DERF: No, I—I'm in. I wanna do a hallboy, I just had a couple questions about why I'm handling piss jars. It's just a normal... on-the-job questch. Take me to the hall.
[thumping chest] I'm a hallboy.

SERVANT: Alright. Ah, that's a nice watch, madam.

SHAE: Hm.

WATCH: The time is seventeen forty-nine.

SHAE: [sighs] Do I miss GOOD_E?

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

[large door creaks open]

NOBLE: Steven, you've returned from the outside world. Ough!

STEVEN: [sitting and setting things down] Yes, my apologies. My swine dealer was running late, so I must have him reprimanded for delaying our session of court.

SWINEHERD: [in the distance] I'm still a girl!

GOOD_E: Being punctual is always best.

NOBLE: Who was that?

STEVEN: [laughing] I'm so sorry.

GOOD_E: Oh, I'm sorry, I do think there's been a mix-up. It seems that I am separated from my true charge, but I'm sure we can get all this cleared up as soon as possible, and I'll be on my way!

STEVEN: This watch seems possessed!

GOOD_E: I'm not a watch at all! My name is GOOD_E, a good ethics bot!

STEVEN: [chuckling, thumping the table] How absurd! [through a megaphone] Blacksmith, melt down this watch immediately.

GOOD_E: No, no no, wait w-w-w-w-w! Before we do any melting, do you have any need for, uh... ethics calculations?

STEVEN: My, what a sly joke one of the others must have played upon me. Very well, Watch! I shall defer to your judgment on today's supplicants. Bring them in!

[door creaks open again, someone enters with jangling chains]

NOBLE: Court is now in session with Judge Ste... ven.

STEVEN: [pouring a drink] Who shall be the first to plead their case in front of my august personage?

PROSECUTOR: My lord, my lord.

STEVEN: Yes?

PROSECUTOR: I wish you to stand in judgment of this, uh, peasant who has uttered words against the monarchy.

STEVEN: Oh, a most grave crime indeed. [takes a sip]

GOOD_E: [quietly] What?

PROSECUTOR: Yes. During the nuptials of the duke and duchess last week, the fireworks got out of hand and set blaze to this man's thatched cottage, and as it burned to the ground, it was said that he was heard muttering to himself, "Blast this monarchy."

STEVEN: Hmmmmm...

PROSECUTOR: So, buh, pass judgment as you will.

STEVEN: A most grave crime indeed. Now, Watch, the standard punishment for this would be to remove the tongue of the offender.

[the alleged blasphemer yelps]

GOOD_E: Uhhhhh, I don't think we should... do *that*.

STEVEN: Watch, what would *you* do?

GOOD_E: Well, freedom of speech actually strengthens government structures so that when citizens feel like they can express themselves, they are more loyal to the government!

STEVEN: Ahhhh. A most curious gambit, Watch.

GOOD_E: Uhh... freedom of speech isn't considered a gambit, but...

STEVEN: We shall try this radical idea of yours, "freedohm of speech".

GOOD_E: Oh, good—

STEVEN: The Watch shall decide your sentence. What shall we do with him, Watch?

[pause]

GOOD_E: Uh—give him more thatch to build his roof again?

STEVEN: [laughing] Give a blasphemer more thatch! It is a most unusual day. Take your thatch and go, worm.

BLASPHEMER: Ooh, huzzah, huzzah! Bless you, my lord!

STEVEN: [through megaphone] Bury this man in thatch until he cannot be found!

GOOD_E: No, no no, no, no, just enough for the roof! Just enough for the roof!

STEVEN: Oh, well, I think they've taken him already, so.

GOOD_E: Oh...

STEVEN: Send in the next subject!

[door opens, another person in chains enters]

THIEF: My humble majesty, I stole *only* to feed my children. My wife was taken in the last plague, and with but one hand I stole the corn. My other hand was taken by your swift justice last time.

THIEF'S WIFE: Okay, can I rebuttal? Can I rebuttal?

STEVEN: Very well. It's... not usually how this works, but very well.

THIEF'S WIFE: Everything that this man is saying is a *lie*, okay? I'm literally alive and I'm still here. He's just trying to get out of our marriage.

STEVEN: Hmm...

GOOD_E: So are they stealing corn or trying to get divorced?

STEVEN: Yes, I admit I am confused as well, Watch.

THIEF: Both can be true. Fine, fine, I'm trying to rid myself of her. But she, as you can see... sucks. So you—so you can see she doesn't feed the children—

STEVEN: [banging gavel] WE shall be the judge of who sucks and who does not suck. Watch? What say you of this case?

[the thief and his wife "ugh"]

GOOD_E: Well—

THIEF: Take not my only remaining hand.

STEVEN: Your insolence makes me wish to take your hand immediately, peon!

GOOD_E: No no, no! No!

THIEF/THIEF'S WIFE: No no—/Mm-hmm!

STEVEN: No?

GOOD_E: No one was hurt in the crime, right?

STEVEN: Well, not yet.

GOOD_E: No, I meant there was no—

STEVEN: I'm about to take the hand.

GOOD_E: Right, but... don't you think that maybe some counseling, maybe, would—would be a better way forward?

[Steven and the thief make doubtful sounds]

STEVEN: Very well, Watch, I shall take your counsel this once. I sentence you to a lifetime of counseling! [bangs gavel]

THIEF: Yayyy. Nooo. Yay?

THIEF'S WIFE: No, no, yay, no, yay?

GOOD_E: [cheerfully] It's a journey!

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

[music scratches into wonky theme music, then a recording]

COUNCILLOR CORPUSTANIAN: [gasping] —finally placed the last of the charges underneath the monarchy transport. Oh my RODD, every bone in my dusty body is

aching. I gotta tell you, Chandler—we need more personnel. We're the leaders of this rebellion, okay? Why is it up to me to be running wire and clambering underneath ships holding a bag of dentamite in my teeth? [panting] This is a young person's game, and here I am with a body that looks like a hot dog somebody left on the grill overnight.

Of course bounty hunters, demolitions experts, sniper pilots and the like aren't cheap. But if we can wrangle the Rebellion's finances, we might be able to afford the extra ships and people we need to turn the tide! That's why I've signed us all up for... Rocket Money. Rocket Money is a personal finance app that helps find and cancel your unwanted subscriptions, monitors your spending, and helps lower your bills so you can grow your savings. Would you believe I still had subscriptions to a skincare box, three different game passes, and a root beer of the month club? When did I even sign up for those? I've been old since I was born!!

I was able to cancel those subscriptions right in the Rocket Money app, with just a few clicks. It saved me time and money! Money I can now spend on things I actually want and need, like bifocals and sensible shoes. Did I mention I'm old!?

Let Rocket Money help you reach your financial goals faster. Go to rocketmoney.com/zyxx today. That's RocketMoney dot com slash Z-Y-X-X. RocketMoney/zyxx!

[back cracking, old-sounding grunting]

[a klaxon starts blaring]

Oh Rodd, all my wheezing must have alerted the Monarchy guards! Oh, once this heart attack lets up for a quick second, I'll make a break for the cassette drop point. Come on lower husks, don't fail me now! Alliance Leader Ross Corpustanian signing of—

[tape glitching, music]

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

[Derf exits a garderobe, carrying a sloshing chamber pot]

DERF: [singing to himself] ♪ Cham-ber pot, so damn hot, full of hot peeee. ♪ Eh... Backflip?

[Derf does a backflip, all the pee sloshes out]

DERF: Ah, still got it.

PERSON: [in a small, fancy voice] Excuse me? Excuse me?

DERF: Oh! Uh, yes?

PERSON: How did you do that? Did a—did a loop-de-loop and landed on your feetsies?

DERF: It's, uh, called a backflip. Ready? Hup! Backflip!

[Derf flips again, even more pee spills]

PERSON: [delighted chuckling, clapping] Ohoho, wonderful! Oh!

DERF: It didn't spill a spot of pee, except for all the pee that fell on your shoes. So sorry about that.

PERSON: Isn't your job, though, to dispose of all of the, uh, excrement and the urine and stuff—

DERF: [checking another garderobe] Hey, pot's empty, my job is done. Uh, as far as I know. I don't really know how it works. It's my first day as a hallboy.

PERSON: Ohhh! How delightful. I, for one, uh, appreciate a little—uh—zeal brought into the castle by our help.

DERF: [collecting another chamber pot] Well, when you're carryin' pee, you gotta work extra hard to make it fun. What are you—are you a... are you the local...

PERSON: Princeling? Yes.

DERF: Princeling? Oh.

[Derf empties the chamber pot, someone far below screams]

PRINCELING (PERSON): Yes, well, you know. My name is Jeremiah, of course, but... Princeling is my title.

DERF: Jeremiah Princeling.

PRINCELING: I'm not supposed to talk to the hallboys, but what can I say? I... I find it exhilarating, actually, to interact with, um, the disgusting parts of the castle, like the people and where the poop goes and all of that stuff.

DERF: Ah.

PRINCELING: Have we met before? You look familiar to me.

DERF: You *do* look—there's something about you... except for all the silken robes and the dangly earring you have there... you and I look pretty similar.

PRINCELING: I was going to say, except for the smudges of fecal matter on your face and the disgusting beard...

DERF: [scratching] And to be fair, this—this beard was disgusting when I got here. So that's all—that's all Derf.

PRINCELING: [clapping] I—I've just hatched a wonderful royal prankle of an idea. If you shave your beard and give it to me, and I were to wear the beard, you might pass for me, and I for you.

DERF: Uh... I mean, *I'm* down. Straight up. I just—I'm curious what your... what's your "dubya" in here, y'know? Like, what—

PRINCELING: Can I tell you—can I tell you a royal secret?

DERF: I—there's my favorite kind.

PRINCELING: I—I've been raised in a very sheltered sort of environment, because if I die, thousands of planetary systems will descend into chaos. So my survival is sort of paramount. But! What if I were able to *escape* the castle and live a fancy-free life of adventure? [clapping excitedly]

DERF: You mean—chamber pot hallboy adventures?

PRINCELING: Well, I'll start there and we'll see how it goes! What do you think?

DERF: I mean, I've always wondered what it'd be like to have someone come in and just like, tickle you. That's what I assume happens behind closed doors here. Bring you little snacks.

PRINCELING: Oh, the snacks, yes, for sure, the snacks. And tickling from time to time. So what do you say?

DERF: Um—

PRINCELING: [already disrobing] Here, here, you wear these silken robes. Um, hand—

DERF: Okay—

PRINCELING'S FATHER: Jeremiah! Jeremiah!

PRINCELING: Oh, quickly! Quickly! [disrobing faster]

DERF: Hurry, yeah! Okay, I—

PRINCELING: Ah, what is—what is your name?

DERF: It's Derf. Young Derf. Lemme just peel off this, uh, sweat, and poop—clothes, and I'll give them to you.

PRINCELING: Excellent. Excellent. Alright, here you go. Have—

DERF: Oh, we are similar top to bottom, and I mean *top to bottom*.

PRINCELING: Oh, wow! Yes, even down to the... oh!

FATHER: [opening a door, continuing to call] Jeremiah!

DERF: I just want to make sure the ill—the illusion is complete!

FATHER: Where have you gone, you princeling?

PRINCELING: [snapping] Quickly! Quickly, give me your beard!

DERF: Uhh, okay.

[ripping sound]

[Derf screams]

DERF: [cheerfully] Here you go!

PRINCELING: Oh! Okay. [stuttering] W—how does—

FATHER: [in the distance] Guards, I heard a yell!

PRINCELING: How does it look?

DERF: Uh, goo—I mean, *bad*, but bad like I have it, so that's good.

PRINCELING: [clapping] Hoohooohoo, huzzah! Ehem—check thi—[clears throat, in a slightly gruffer voice] Check this out. Backflip.

[backflip, awful cracking sound]

PRINCELING: [pained] Ohhh! Ohhh...

DERF: Oh my Rodd, your neck. Your neck!

[Jeremiah the princeling continues to wail in pain]

FATHER: [running over] Jeremiah, who is this? Who is this person on the ground?

DERF: [fancily] Ohh...

PRINCELING: I'm a humble hallboy! [groan]

DERF: [continuing the fancy princeling voice] Oh, yes, this is a humble hallboy that I found—

FATHER: Jeremiah, did he accost you? [punctuating the words with slaps as the princeling whimpers] Did? He? Accost you?

DERF: No, no! He—he was just—we were just having a lovely chat about the different pots that he chambers out here. And he was telling me about how much tickling happens behind closed doors.

FATHER: [suspiciously, dropping the princeling] Why would *he* know of the tickling?

PRINCELING: [crosstalk] I heard from him just now!

DERF: Oh. I was—I was—I was telling HIM about all the tickling that happens behind closed doors.

FATHER: Oh, well that—okay, that checks out.

PRINCELING: Not my business!

FATHER: Gone with you! ["shing" of a knife] Hallboy.

[he stabs the princeling, who yells]

DERF: Oh, you just stabbed that hallboy. I think—I think he... you killed him. I think he's dead.

FATHER: [dropping the princeling, dusting hands] Many more peasants begging to be hallboys. Oh, Jeremiah, I'm sorry. [begins dropping a series of gentle kisses on Derf]

DERF: Ooh. Ooh, yes. His lips. So much kissing. Oh—

FATHER: [tickling Derf] Tickletickletickletickle—

DERF: [delighted] Oh! I knew it! I knew there was tickling! I knew it!

FATHER: Of course you knew—what do you mean you—

DERF: I'm just saying I knew it—I knew it. I knew it. Knew of it. 'Cause I'm—I'm the princeling, Jeremiah.

FATHER: Alright. On we go to a fox hunt.

PRINCELING'S MOTHER: [exiting the garderobe and spraying copious amounts of air freshener] My love, is that Jeremiah, our son?

FATHER: Yes.

DERF: Hello!

FATHER: The selfsame one.

DERF: Hello, Mummy!

[door opens, the princeling's mother enters]

MOTHER: Oh!

DERF: Yes.

MOTHER: Why, you're a growing little boy. Even your voice has changed since I've seen you last. [chuckling]

DERF: No, I think it's just a little bit of puberty coming through.

MOTHER: Ah! Yes.

FATHER: Finally.

MOTHER: Well, make haste to the ballroom, because your birthday celebration is almost prepared!

DERF: Ah! Of course—

FATHER: Yes, the fox hunt is in the ballroom.

DERF: Oh, perfect! I love an easy... hunt.

MOTHER: And you have your speech prepared that's very personal about each and every one of us in the family, as is tradition?

DERF: Of course. I'll mention you all by name and talk about my upbringing here in the ol'... Tickle Castle or... whatever. I—

FATHER: But remember, you must catch that fox by the end of the speech, son.

DERF: Of—of course! It's a—s—[laughing]

FATHER: Or no cake for you!

DERF: 'S a... speak, and hunt! That's what the royals do at the same time. Off we go!

MOTHER: Oh, if anything were to ever happen to you, the whole universe would dissolve, and end!

DERF: Yes.

FATHER: Ohh... I'd tickle myself to death.

DERF: Oh, what a beautiful way to go. Ah—I—you know what, lemme catch up with you. I just have to push this corpse of this lowly hallboy out the shit window, [Dorf starts dragging the corpse] and then get back up to the fox hunt speech birthday cake celebration.

[Dorf pushes the corpse out, and it lands somewhere far down]

FATHER: Huzzah.

MOTHER: Huzzah!

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

[languid, ladylike sighing as someone paces the room, holding a letter]

[she flops sadly onto a chaise]

[door opens]

SHAE: [entering] Uh... Knock knock. Here's scullery... maid.

[lady starts screeching and throwing things that smash against the walls]

[Shae yells defensively]

[lady throws a couple more things and yelps, but then stops]

SHAE: Okay, I just wanna get out in front of it: I know that servants don't typically look *this good*.

AURIANA: [in disbelief] A servant is talking to me!

SHAE: Okay, it's one of *those*...

[Lady Auriana shrieks and runs to the other side of the room]

[sound of spray bottle]

SHAE: Ah... unseen, unheard. Roger...

[Shae starts sweeping up the fragments of all the stuff that just got thrown]

AURIANA: [dramatic gasping and oh-ing]

SHAE: And—and you're not—

[Auriana yelps]

SHAE: You're not like, feign—sorry, it's just, I wanna be clear about something. You're not, like, trying to get me to *pry* right now, are you...

AURIANA: Pry?

SHAE: 'Cause it's just like—

AURIANA: *Pry?*

SHAE: Well, yeah, you're kind of, like—kinda like... on your chaise...

AURIANA: [wistfully wafting her letter] Why should I want you to pry about my terrible love affair with the beautiful Lord Mingus?

SHAE: Okay, I see what's going on here. Let me guess—that letter is from Lord Mingus. Hm?

AURIANA: Oh. Why, yes.

SHAE: Well, are you gonna read it or what?

AURIANA: Ah-ah-hem. "My dearest Lady Auriana—" [she shivers, lustfully] Oh... how he says my name! "Please read over this contract and initial at the places where I have put the little post-it notes." Isn't that so sweet?

SHAE: Ummm...

AURIANA: He left tiny little romantic notelets all through this document just for me. Oh!

SHAE: Yeah, this is all pretty standard... language...

AURIANA: [breathlessly] He's a man of the people.

SHAE: Um—

AURIANA: Nobody's ever written to me so romantically before!

SHAE: No, surely... that... Sorry, *that* was romance?

AURIANA: Lord Mingus is *quite* the letter writer. The man with the smallest chin in all the galaxy!

SHAE: Maybe thi—maybe I'm—a contract isn't where we should be looking.

AURIANA: Yes—

SHAE: Uh, show me something that's a little more personal. Just him to you.

AURIANA: [opening another letter] Well, h-here's one that is really very personal...

SHAE: Could you actually sit up and scoot over? I—there—really—not enough s—

[Shae starts scooting in, Auriana starts yelping in indignation]

SHAE: Not enough seating!

[more scooting, sounds of struggling and whacking, Shae yells a couple times and Auriana squeals]

SHAE: Okay, there we go. There we go. Shoulder to shoulder, let's look at this letter.

AURIANA: "Dear Lady Auriana, your short-tongued woof creature is once again in the hospital on account of its terrible interbreeding."

SHAE: Ooooo-kay.

[transition music: harpsichord ditty]

[sounds of clapping, riding inside a carriage]

GOOD_E: And that's why instead of taxing the very poorest, the tax should be levied against the people who are the richest.

STEVEN: [laughing, thumping something] Watch!

GOOD_E: In order to—

STEVEN: Watch, you must stop! You must cease your prattling, Watch. I can only laugh so much in one day. Ha ha ha ha!

GOOD_E: But according to my calculations, twenty-two percent of them are going hungry! Billions of sentients galaxy-wide.

STEVEN: So it sounds like a remaining 78% could feel the sting of our taxes yet a bit more!

GOOD_E: [sighs deeply] Okay, moving on from economic policy.

STEVEN: Yes, yes, let's stroll the promenade of this great city. [thumping the side of the carriage, which stops] Do you count steps, Watch?

[Lord Steven and GOOD_E exit the carriage]

GOOD_E: No, no, I'm not a watch. I'm an ethics bot!

STEVEN: Very primitive, yes, well.

URCHIN: [squeakily] Excuse me, sir! Excuse me, sir!

STEVEN: Take your filthy hands off my cloak, urchin!

URCHIN: I have so much I like in my tiny life, but I feel like I have no say. May I give you a penny for my thoughts?

STEVEN: [chuckling] Keep your bent coppers away from me, urchin!

[he swats the urchin, whose scream fades away]

GOOD_E: Oh, well, that was—

STEVEN: Imagine, Watch! The lowliest serf of the realm thinking they could come to me with their suggestions for how to rule! Haha, it's nearly as amusing as one of your suggestions. [laughs]

GOOD_E: [tired] I think it's actually a great idea. You could have a forum where...

STEVEN: Are you in league with this rogue? Hohohohoho, very well, yes! Washerwoman, stop your scrubbing. *You* now shall have legislative power. [laughing] Watch, this will be a most delightful jest. A woman! A woman making policy!

WASHERWOMAN: All my young children die as soon as they're born. Perhaps there's a sort of universal health care program for which I could give births in a more sanitary location.

STEVEN: Watch! Have you ever heard anything so ludicrous in your life?

GOOD_E: As universal healthcare? No, it's—it's a very good thing. It should be... I think it's great.

STEVEN: Very well, the final decree shall be [into a megaphone] universal healthcare. Fetch the autodoctors.

GOOD_E: Well, I have to say, even though I'm being listened to as a joke, it still feels very good to be listened to.

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

AURIANA: "Lady Auriana—One, one, zero. One, zero, zero, one, zero. Zero, one, zero. One, one, zero, o—" I think this is actually a barcode.

SHAE: I do too. Now, what are you writing *back* to this lord?

AURIANA: Well, here's a letter that I've been writing all day to send to him.

SHAE: Alright.

AURIANA: "Lord Mingus, my heart pines for you."

SHAE: [pleasantly surprised] Oh!

AURIANA: "Your pointy little fingers running through my hair. It's all I've ever dreamt of."

SHAE: [softly] Oh!

AURIANA: "If I don't get to smooch you soon, I'm going to jucking kill myself."

SHAE: Whoo! Okay. Strong.

AURIANA: "Please, meet me in the royal fox hunt."

SHAE: [excited] Okay, YES!

AURIANA: "I desire you so much to rip all of the corsets off of my body."

SHAE: *Hot.*

AURIANA: My arm corsets. My leg corsets. My head corset. My neck corset. My butt corset. And, of course, my front butt corset.

[sound of her dress dropping to the ground]

SHAE: That's a lotta corsets.

AURIANA: "It's actually a very normal amount of corsets. Everybody's wearing that many corsets around here."

SHAE: Oh, I see that you've written that also in the letter.

AURIANA: I did, yes. I—I needed him to know that I was normal.

[Shae snorts quietly]

AURIANA: "Please, Lord Mingus. The agony, although ecstatic, must extinguish me soon. Yours in obeisance, Lady Auriana."

SHAE: Whew! Wait, why aren't we reading his responses to *these* letters? Why have you been reading me your... ehh, corporate missives?

AURIANA: Why, Lord Mingus is far too much of a gentleman to ever respond to a missive like this.

SHAE: I'm sorry. You've written... *many letters* akin to this one.

AURIANA: Yes.

SHAE: For *years*.

AURIANA: Yes.

SHAE: And he's *never* responded?

AURIANA: What sort of a man do you take him for?

SHAE: Okay, I think I have enough information to go off of here now. Let's get outta here and let's go find your small-chinned man.

AURIANA: [gasps of delight] You would do that? For me? Wow. Stepping out boldly into the world looking for love. Lady Auriana and Servant, you're really in it this time. What an adventure!

SHAE: My name is Shae, by the way. I—

AURIANA: What? Ahh! [whacks Shae]

SHAE: Ahh!

AURIANA: Ahh! [whack]

SHAE: Ahh!

AURIANA: Ahh! [whack]

SHAE: Ahh!

[transition: harpsichord ditty]

FATHER: Jeremiah, now, as you know, the royal portraitist is here for your final session.

DERF: Yes.

FATHER: Gather your knee upon this ladder, as you were, and, um...

DERF: Yes, a ladder. Very royal, yes.

FATHER: [busily moving things] Arrange this fruit... in the foreground, exactly as it was—

DERF: [crosstalk] It's a still life?

[door opens]

FATHER: Oh, here she is now, here she is now! Ohh, yes!

PORTRAITIST: [trundling equipment over] I'm here to do your portrait.

FATHER: Oh. Right...

DERF: Lovely—

PORTRAITIST: Please, sits down. Make sure everything looks the same as it did before.

DERF: Ah, no problem. I am—I *remain* the princeling.

PORTRAITIST: Excellent. Now please do the previous, eh, pose you did before, thank you.

FATHER: Okay...

DERF: No problem. It's just a little... arm up here, maybe, uh...

PORTRAITIST: Just to remind you, the painting is—it's butt up, face down. [laughing]

DERF: It's face down and ass up. That's the way I like to pose. So just pull my pants down, here?

PORTRAITIST: Yes, yes yes, thank you. [tapping brush] This is a family history. Your grandfather, your grandmother, your great grandmother, your great great grandmother...

DERF: I'm just noticing all the—every portrait is of a royal rear, and I am excited to join in the long line of family buttoholes.

PORTRAITIST: Uh... let me bring in the... [calling] Assistant? Assistant?

[the door opens]

ASSISTANT: Yes, ma'am?

PORTRAITIST: Alright, let's continue. Let's, uhhh... and put on my jam so I have something to keep...

[solemn harpsichord music begins]

ASSISTANT: Ma'am, ma'am. He's missing the mole. The mole on the left buttock.

PORTRAITIST: I cannot be missing the mole. The mole is what makes royals's parts's.

DERF: No, I just, uh—it's probably—moles move. A little.

ASSISTANT: What?!

DERF: Around. They move around a little bit. They travel, they migrate south, north. In? Mighta just snuck right in my ol'... butt... hole.

PORTRAITIST: Sorry?

ASSISTANT: He's saying his mole went in his buttohole, ma'am.

PORTRAITIST: Well, that's not our problem. That's the problem of the doctor. We'll just have the doctor come in.

[door opens]

PHYSICIAN: Yes, ma'am?

ASSISTANT: This one says that his mole went in his buttohole.

PHYSICIAN: [unzipping bag, taking Derf's blood pressure] Could happen. Maybe, maybe not.

DERF: Is there a dermatologist in the house?

[door opens]

DERMATOLOGIST: Yeah, ma'am?

DERF: Oh!

DERMATOLOGIST: Yeah, a primary care physician really shouldn't weigh in on this, no offense. What—we talk—we talkin' about an asshole eatin' a mole?

ASSISTANT: Not eatin' it. Not eatin' it. Just goin' inside it.

DERMATOLOGIST: A mole movin' inside an asshole on its own accord. Ah, it could happen.

PORTRAITIST: Well, we should get the back—the escavate—what's the name? The person who goes and gets the bones from the sand.

[door opens]

EXCAVATOR: Royal excavator here, mum.

[door shuts]

EXCAVATOR: We've got to excavate from the butthole?

DERF: Yes!

EXCAVATOR: Oh, I shoulda brought me smaller shovels.

DERMATOLOGIST: Well, I couldn't feel it anywhere in there.

DERF: What would you have felt? A very tiny—how sensitive are your fingers? Would you feel a very tiny little... flatness?

EXCAVATOR: Oh, you know better than he does. You know what a mole feels like.

PORTRAITIST: [tapping brush] I finished the painting. Here you go, look at it. Everyone's in it.

[Derf laughs]

DERMATOLOGIST: That's me up there, ma'am.

ASSISTANT: Oh, yeah, there I am, ma'am.

PHYSICIAN: Spittin' image, innit?

ASSISTANT: That's me.

EXCAVATOR: I think they've really captured me.

PORTRAITIST: My finestest work.

DERF: We'll always remember this. Let's meet back here in five years, all of us.

PHYSICIAN: Ah!

ASSISTANT: Yay!

[transition music: harpsichord ditty with strings]

[sound of a genteel party and string music]

SERVANT: Presenting the Lady Auriana!

[trumpet fanfare, applause]

SHAE: Okay. Uh, we're going to position you, Lady, here... in the center of the room.

AURIANA: Center of the room...

SHAE: Perfect.

AURIANA: Ahh. Oh.

SHAE: Stand here. And I'm just gonna... hide...

AURIANA: Uhh... under my skirts?

SHAE: Perfect! 'Scuse me... [shuffling as Shae starts making her way in] Oh! My—oh—wow! Front butt corset. Ah!

AURIANA: Sorry. Be careful—sorry.

[rustling stops]

SHAE: Alright. Umm... if I just speak here into your calf corset...

AURIANA: Yes...

SHAE: I think it—actually the sound travels all the way up to your head corset, am I correct?

AURIANA: Up to my head corset, yes.

SHAE: *Perfect.* Okay, now, where is your Mingus?

AURIANA: It—here, that one. The chin is unmistakable.

SHAE: Mm-hmm.

AURIANA: See how his mouth seems to be swallowing his neck.

[uncomfortable sounds from Lord Mingus]

SHAE: He really looks like he's struggling.

AURIANA: And so... just confront him, you say.

SHAE: Yep!

AURIANA: And that shall work?

SHAE: Call him over, I'll be here the whole time.

AURIANA: Lady Auriana, you brave soul. Lord Mingus!

MINGUS: Ah!

AURIANA: In vain I have struggled, but for no longer can I keep my feelings at rest.

SHAE: [muffled, from under the skirts] Yeah, girl! Get him!

MINGUS: [In a voice that does seem to be swallowing his own neck] L-lady Auriana! What an unexpected pleasure to see you here, the royal fox hunt.

[Lord Mingus continues to eat, sloppily, and burp]

AURIANA: Yes. I always love a royal fox hunt, but...

SHAE: Now ask him why he didn't respond to your letters.

AURIANA: Lord Mingus, I must ask. Why have you never responded to my letters? I have sent you so many.

MINGUS: Le—uh, letters?

AURIANA: Yes!

MINGUS: [mumbling/stuttering] Ah-w-I-I received one from you just a fortnight ago! The initials you put on your renewal of your ship's insurance policy. Must be...

SHAE: [quietly] Can I just pull these corset strings... slap!

[Auriana, puppeteered, slaps Lord Mingus]

MINGUS: Ow, my—my face! Oh...

AURIANA: That's for not writing me back!

MINGUS: Uh...

SHAE: Yesss!

MINGUS: I—I believe I wrote you just yesterday. [mumbles]

SHAE: Slap!

MINGUS: Ow, my face! Again!

AURIANA: [hurt] You know what I mean, Lord Mingus. But I've been writing you these eighteen years, and not a real response, not one time.

MINGUS: I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about!

SHAE: But also...

AURIANA: And... i-if you'd like to maybe... smooch me on the side of the neck? A little bit?

SHAE: You said you were gonna jucking kill yourself.

MINGUS: Excuse me?

AURIANA: [awkwardly] Well, yes, obviously. It was... epistolary...

MINGUS: I'm sixty-five years your senior!

AURIANA: Seems entirely reasonable. My parents were sixty-five years apart.

MINGUS: I must admit, this is quite a surprise. I would never have...

AURIANA: *Surprise!?*

SHAE: Okay, I think we've established now that he has *NO* idea what we're doing here.

[pause]

AURIANA: ...Just kidding!

[clipping as Shae and Auriana move away; Lord Mingus sputters in confusion]

AURIANA: Oh, I've never been so humiliated in my life, what does he mean?

[Mingus calls after her in the distance]

AURIANA: What does it... possibly mean? I'm just—where else am I supposed to go?

HOT MAN: [in a genteel, handsome voice] Lady Auriana, I have contrived to meet you here. at the royal fox hunt ball, as you requested.

AURIANA: What?

SHAE: What?

HOT MAN: I have received your letters every day for eighteen years, and never have I felt bold enough to... write a response, much to my great shame.

SHAE: Um, Lady? Do you know who this *smokehouse* is?

LADY AURIANA: If by "smokehouse" you mean a strangely square-chinned, full-haired *freak*...

HOT MAN: I know that there are many shortcomings of my character, but...

AURIANA: Tallcomings, more like. What are you, six foot three?

HOT MAN: Uh, six foot five, actually.

SHAE: Oh. And are those your real teeth?

HOT MAN: Yes, and I apologize for the overwhelming whiteness of them.

AURIANA: How dare you even *deign* to talk to me? A woman whose lips are so strangely shaped.

HOT MAN: I have pondered how to kiss those lips for years, Lady Auriana.

SERVANT: [quietly] Champagne, ma'am?

AURIANA: [throwing the champagne on the man] Well, ponder on, *bitch*, it's not going to jucking happen.

HOT MAN: [composed] But—but you've written me all these letters—I, Lord Minghus!

AURIANA: Oh, you're also called Lord Mingus. This actually does happen quite a lot, there's only like five surnames in the whole place.

MINGHUS (HOT MAN): Yes, Lord Minghus, with an H.

SHAE: What... a BOON! You have GOT to smooch *this* Minghus.

AURIANA: Servant... I don't know what they're doing down there in the servants' quarters, but this is *not* an eligible young man.

SHAE: No! He's...

AURIANA: First of all, he's the same age as me. Secondly, his torso is shaped like an upside-down triangle! I've never seen a man like this!

SHAE: Ooh, and what are those little divots on the side? They're like gutters.

AURIANA: Yes, you can see it through his corsets. Vile!

MINGHUS: Every effort I make to reshape my body only yields more musculature, I'm afraid.

MINGHUS'S PHYSICIAN: Lord Minghus, it is I, your physician. I'm afraid we... have come no further in deducing why you can last so freakishly long during the act of coitus. It's just...

MINGHUS: To my great shame.

PHYSICIAN: ...Perhaps unknowable.

AURIANA: Boy, this guy just gets worse and worse.

[tinging sound of someone tapping on a glass]

MINGHUS' FATHER: Lord Minghus, it is I, your father, and your mother is beside me.

MINGHUS' MOTHER: [very softly] Helloo.

MINGHUS' FATHER: And we're here to just say we're so glad we have a healthy, loving relationship and your childhood was free of any traumas.

MINGHUS' MOTHER: None.

MINGHUS: You're terribly kind to say that, Father, but I know I am a great disappointment to you and Mother.

MINGHUS' FATHER: You never will be. You're perfect! We love you! Follow your dreeeams!

AURIANA: [annoyed] Okay, well, uh... let's be friends, I *guess*. Can I have my letters back?

MINGHUS: I have brought them with me in this box that I've graced tenderly with my hands every day for the last eighteen years.

AURIANA: Yes, well... ughh.

MINGHUS: And—and you'd just like them back?

AURIANA: Yeah, Servant, Servant? [releasing Shae from her skirts] Go and... serve. Thank you, thank you so much. Well, next time... [walking away] if I—I'll see you around.

MINGHUS: [sad but still reserved] I shall go drown my sorrows in fox hunt cordial.

AURIANA: [from across the room] Okay.

MINGHUS: I'm told it's... quite good this year.

GAZETTE REPORTER: Pardon me, sad, hot Lord Minghus—Castle Gazette here. Care to comment on the continued use of live foxes in the royal fox hunt ball?

MINGHUS: I'm afraid I couldn't possibly comment at this time.

GAZETTE REPORTER: [scribbling notes, walking away] He has commented.

MINGUS: [blustering] Other Lord Minghus, I apologize.

MINGHUS: It's quite alright, Other Lord Mingus.

MINGUS: Recently there was a law passed that, uh, press are given, uh—r-rights! I—I still don't understand it, but we're no longer allowed to, uh, murder them on sight.

MINGHUS: [wistfully] Hmm. How interesting. [sips cordial]

GOOD_E: [approaching with Lord Steven] That's right! You can't murder the press.

[Lord Steven laughs]

MINGUS: Wha! Wh—well, what are you to do when they ask their horrid questions?!

GOOD_E: You're supposed to answer them. Freedom of the press is a hallmark of a healthy society.

MINGUS: Lord Steven! What nonsense is your watch spewing at us now?!

STEVEN: [chuckling] Is this not the most entertaining watch you've ever heard in your life? Ha ha ha!

MINGUS: Lord Steven, you've been spending all day passing laws and legislation allowing petty thieves, criminals, dissidents to go walk free in our streets!

STEVEN: Yes! As a *gag*.

GOOD_E: Oh, no, I think we've been pretty...

STEVEN: Do you not see the humor, sir?

MINGUS: [growing more indignant] Why, just earlier, I—I witnessed a team of autodocs treating a—a peasant for—for some sort of lesion!

STEVEN: [over the end of Mingus' sentence, laughing] Yes, you did—you did—Watch, what do you call it?

GOOD_E: [a little tired] Universal healthcare.

STEVEN: [in a fit of giggles] Hahahahahaha what, it's... absurd!

GOOD_E: Ugh...

SERVANT: Now presenting His Royal Majestyyy, the Princeling Jeremiah!

[trumpet fanfare]

[the guests applaud and sound impressed]

DERF: [entering] Hey-hey! Yeah!

GUEST 1: That's the prince for sure!

DERF: [fancily] What an honor to be here amongst... all of you!

GUEST 2: He looks just like himself!

GOOD_E: [in a whisper] Derf!

DERF: Yes?

GOOD_E: [whispering] Derf. Derf.

DERF: Ah, y—I mean, I am so sorry. I am the princeling, *Jer-he-miah*. I don't answer to any other name besides that.

STEVEN: No, it would be unusual were you to answer to another name, Jeremiah.

DERF: Lord Steven, your watch seems to be chatting me up. What's the deal?

STEVEN: [laughing] Yes, this watch is—oh, the most hilarious piece of jewelry I've ever encountered! Watch, say one of your japes, will you?

GOOD_E: Impersonating royalty... is *not* ethical.

[Derf starts a squeaky protest]

STEVEN: Not some of your best material, Watch, but uh, I'll take it.

DERF: Lord Steven, may I have a little aside with your wristwatch? I love chatting up little baubles, you know?

STEVEN: For the princeling? Anything!

DERF: Cover your ears.

GOOD_E: [whispering] Derf, what are you doing?

DERF: [also whispering] Hey, GOOD_E? Shhhut up, okay? I've got a good deal goin' here, huh? Look at this!

GOOD_E: No, you know what? No, you know what? You shut up. These people are listening to me now. Things are changing... because of *me*!

DERF: No—'cause of me, I-I'm doing all this stuff too—

GOOD_E: Where's the real princeling? Where's the real princeling?

DERF: Ehh, I don't know. Somethin' happened. He was doin' stuff. He was tryin' to do Derf stuff, and he... he jucked it up. He jucked it up real bad. That's how hard it is to be me, is what I—my takeaway.

GOOD_E: What—is he alive or dead?

DERF: Ah... when I saw him, he was making a noise that was like [Derf makes a choking, gurgling sound]

GOOD_E: Not regicide, ohhhhh!

[trumpet fanfare]

SERVANT: Now announcing the newly appointed democratic senators!

[door opens]

DERF: Uh-oh.

SERVANT: A team of senators!

STEVEN: [chuckling] Is... is this not the most ludicrous thing you've ever seen? Look at these commoners who now represent the galaxy! Ha ha ha ha!

SENATOR 1: We want to bring up the question of "do we even need a monarchy anymore?" [tittering] Think about it!

[Steven laughs heartily and claps Derf on the back]

[Derf fake-laughs uncomfortably]

STEVEN: Well, we've all had a mirthful chuckle. It is perhaps time to put an end to this amusement.

[Steven claps, a door opens; something starts being wheeled out]

DERF: GOOD_E, um... some number of people are about to die here. We have to get outta here. I don't know what's gonna happen. It's gonna be bad.

GOOD_E: No, but—I've—I've enabled democracy! But—um—

STEVEN: Congresspeople, would you come here? We have invented a new device.

[the senators cluster around, expressing interest]

STEVEN: In honor of the most amusing watch to ever exist, we called it the GOOD_E-tine!

GOOD_E: [quietly] What? Oh, no!

SENATOR 1: Oh! I'm intrigued by this name.

SENATOR 2: How does it work?

SENATOR 3: [showing papers] We've drafted these bills that we hope will become laws!

STEVEN: Well, yes! Step into the GOOD_E-tine and we shall enact them immediately!

SENATOR 3: Well, it sounds good.

DERF: Uh, GOOD_E, I dunno what this is, but I'm gonna get out of here, okay? [walks away]

GOOD_E: Oh...

STEVEN: Yes, just lay down here.

SENATOR 3: Okay...

STEVEN: Okay, put your head and the bill through this hole.

SENATOR 3: [complying] Ooh, that's pretty comfortable. Why is there a basket under it?

GOOD_E: No, no—

STEVEN: To catch the bill, of course!

SENATOR 3: Oh, okay. That seems...

STEVEN: Very good. Uh, GOOD_E, would you like to pull the first?

GOOD_E: I—no, I wouldn't—

STEVEN: Well, here we go!

GOOD_E: No!

[Steven pulls a lever, and the blade drops. The senator yells a little, and their head drops into the basket]

[the guests applaud]

GOOD_E: Oh...

STEVEN: Hahahahaha, this is twice as amusing as the watch! Another! [claps briskly]

[mechanical sounds of resetting the GOOD_E-tine]

GOOD_E: No!

SHAE: [approaching, worried] GOOD_E! GOOD_E, what are you doing?

GOOD_E: Get me out of here, Shae! Government and ethics don't mix!

[the GOOD_E-tine drops again, executing another senator]

[the guests applaud politely; Lord Steven laughs in great amusement]

[GOOD_E whimpers]

SHAE: Um. Uh... Lord... Steven, right?

STEVEN: Ahahaha, yes!

SHAE: [manhandling Steven as he chuckles] Oh, you've been workin' out! Look at these shoulders! So tense, and oh, these forearms, my goodness, they're... so sinewy...

STEVEN: [laughing] You! Always with the compliments, hahahaha!

SHAE: Let's just shake these forearms for good measure.

STEVEN: [crosstalk] Yes, let's have a good shake. Hahahaha!

SHAE: Oh, hohoho, yes! Well, off I pop.

[Lord Steven's voice fades as Shae leaves]

STEVEN: Very well! Take care, my close personal friend.

GOOD_E: Shae, normally I would not endorse petty larceny, but... since you stole me, thank you very much.

SHAE: Hey, shh shh shh, it's okay. You're—you're safe now.

GOOD_E: [sadly] I have so much blood on my hands...

SHAE: No, you truly have blood all over you, and—

GOOD_E: Oh, yeah, I'm—I'm soaked in the stuff. Yeah, it's...

SHAE: It's all over *me*. Ugh.

GOOD_E: Yeah, it's just dripping.

SHAE: [dusting herself off] Gross, yeah.

[sound of a fork tapping on a glass]

SERVANT: Royals and invited guests, please take your places to witness His Royal Highness the Princeling's birthday fox hunt!

GUEST 1: Oh yes, oh yes, happy birthday.

PRINCELING'S FATHER: Here's your laser musket, son.

[sound of rifle racking]

DERF: [doubtfully] Uh, yeah, yeah! So... I kill a running fox in this crowd of people?

SERVANT: Is his royal highness prepared?

DERF: Uh, yes, I am ready!

SERVANT: Then release the fox!

[door slides open]

[harpsichord music, crowd begins clapping rhythmically]

DERF: Oh wow, okay.

GUEST 3: I would say this fox moves rather strangely.

GUEST 4: What a large fox!

SERVANT: You may fire when ready.

DERF: Alright.

GUEST 4: Will you look at that! The fox has reared upon two legs.

SHAE: Ooh!

GUEST 5: That never happens!

SHAE: This fox is *angry*.

[rifle racking]

GUEST 6: That fox has a gun!

DERF: I-is the fox armed? How's this... how's this working?

GUEST 7: Ooh, they gave the fox a sporting chance this year.

GUEST 1: That's not a fox!

TWINKLE: Eat laser, princeling.

SHAE: [gasps] The fox is Twinkle!

DERF: [amicably] Hey, Twinkle, it's me, Derf! [scared] It's Derf! It's Derf!

[laser blasts straight into Derf]

SHAE: Twinkle!

PRINCELING'S FATHER: Jeremiah, no!

PRINCELING'S MOTHER: Jeremiah, my carpet, no!

FATHER: Jeremiah, you've ruined the ball!

DERF: [crackling concerningly] Twinkle...

SHAE: Whoof...

GOOD_E: Uh-oh...

FATHER: Tickle him! Quick, tickle him back to life!

MOTHER: Tickle, tickle, tickle!

FATHER: Ohoho, it's not working!

TWINKLE: You ask what I sacrifice?

GUEST 4: No one asked that!

STEVEN: If only all our autodoctors weren't out curing the poor!

[cut to the mortuary freezer door clanking open; Derf gasps]

MORGUE BOT 3: Welcome to the morgue.

MORGUE BOT 4: Welcome to the morgue.

MORGUE BOTS 1 & 5: Welcome to the morgue.

DERF: Oh, man. What a ride. What a sick ride.

MORGUE BOT 5: You are not dead. But the princeling is dead.

MORGUE BOT 3: The princeling is dead.

MORGUE BOT 4/MORGUE BOT 5: Princeling still dead./The princeling is dead.

DERF: [getting up] Yes, that is true. *I'm* alive. I'm Derf again.

MORGUE BOT 5: That is a dead princeling.

MORGUE BOT 3: Still dead.

[sound of a sheet being pulled back]

DERF: Ohhh, yeah. That guy's dead. Oh, man.

MORGUE BOT 3: Our galaxy will descend into chaos because of this death.

DERF: Chaotic galaxy means more work for the morgue bots. So... it's fun!

MORGUE BOT 3: Even I am not that cynical.

ZAPZOP: Well, you've hit a limit in their programming, I guess.

DERF: Hey, ZapZop!

MORGUE BOT 1: Here is the mole we retrieved from your buttohole.

DERF: [impressed] Ahahaha, that's—it was in there?

ZAPZOP: *Wow.*

DERF: Oh, my—that—I had a royal mole *in* my buttohole? That's *crazy*. [pause] You think my body made it? Is that part of the Space? Is it fresh to make stuff come out of your butt, like what happened?

ZAPZOP: No. No.

DERF: Is there a prophecy about that?

ZAPZOP: Is there a prophecy that something's going to come out of *your* butt?

DERF: Uh... Or—or a mole specifically, or anything.

ZAPZOP: L-listen, Derf, if you want answers to these questions, you know where they all are? And I don't want to sound like a broken record here, but...

DERF: You're tellin' me you got a scroll on Zima Prime that answers that question? That stuff's gonna come out of my butt?

ZAPZOP: Maybe, we got a lotta scrolls on Zima Prime.

DERF: I'll tell you what, you're making a good case. [claps ZapZop on the back] You're making a case for it, Zap.

ZAPZOP: Okay. Alright, okay.

DERF: But I can't go yet. I'm getting closer.

[ZapZop sighs in frustration]

DERF: I have to reunite with Shae... and GOOD_E. We have at least one more step to go. I guarantee that.

ZAPZOP: And where's that?

DERF: [seriously] For a change, I'm gonna let the Space guide me.

[pause]

[message received "ping"]

MORGUE BOT 3: Everyone. Everyone. Everyone.

MORGUE BOT 5: Yes.

MORGUE BOT 4: Yes.

MORGUE BOT 3: Huge news.

MORGUE BOT 5: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MORGUE BOT 3: I have just received an offer to be a production assistant on a real Holowood film set.

MORGUE BOT 1: How'd you get that.

MORGUE BOT 5: How do you—who do you know.

MORGUE BOT 2: Yeah. How'd you get that.

MORGUE BOT 3: We are not nepo babies.

MORGUE BOT 2: Sure, but how did you get that.

MORGUE BOT 5: May we give you our script. To send. [begins printing out script]

MORGUE BOT 3: I co-wrote that script. I have a copy.

MORGUE BOT 2: It is a fresh modern take on a classic.

DERF: Hey, morgue bot, you mind if I sorta ride along with you? And, uh... sorta see? I feel I-I'm drawn to this by, maybe the Space, ZapZop. I'm gonna ride with this morgue bot, see if it takes—

ZAPZOP: [amused, disdainful] Literally a droid just came in here and said something, and you're like, "Yeah, that sounds good. I'll do that."

DERF: Isn't that what the Space is?

[long pause]

ZAPZOP: No.

DERF: I get a feeling from this morgue bot.

ZAPZOP: Oh my gosh. Is the feeling, "Oh, I maybe recently had a mole ripped out of my asshole?" Is that the feeling you get?

DERF: Uh... I mean, yes and no. I think it just sorta drifted out like a hot air balloon.

ZAPZOP: Okay.

MORGUE BOT 3: He is correct.

DERF: See?

ZAPZOP: Wow, *really*?

DERF: I know my body. I know my body, ZapZop.

[theme music]

[music crackles into recording, but continues to play quietly in the background]

CASHIER: Um, sir? We have a policy against coarse language at this grocery store.

DERF: Well, y'know, I—I'm working a memoir I'm recording. It's not for *you*. But I just was, like, doing a little dry run on some of my phrasings, and I'm—yeah, I'm gonna go with "mole that floats out of my asshole like a hot air balloon."

CASHIER: Sir, *please* keep your voice down—

DERF: [raising his voice slightly] If anyone has any notes on the... the mole stuff, just—I'll be out in the—um, parking lot just hangin' out for a couple mins... so come grab my attention and we can workshop this. Y'know, I was sad about losing that last chapter, but honestly, this was way better. And stop.

[theme music comes back into focus and continues]

TH-33-ND: This is TH-33-ND, credits and attributions droid, commencing outro protocol.

Young Derf and Old Derf were played by Justin Tyler.

Shae was played by Allie Kokesh.

GOOD_E the ethics anklet, the painter's assistant, and Morgue Bot 1 were played by Winston Noel

Zima Master ZapZop, Lord Steven, the royal excavator, Young Hot Lord Minghus, and Morgue Bot 2, were played by Jeremy Bent.

The princeling, the physician, Old Weird Lord Mingus, Morgue Bot 3, and the grocery store cashier were played by Alden Ford.

Twinkle, the guy selling yesteryear's bread, the princeling's father, the royal dermatologist, and Morgue Bot 4 were played by Seth Lind.

The Monarchy Space Guard, the lady selling goat's breath, the sword wielding busker, the swine guy who's a girl, the princeling's mother, the portrait painter, and Morgue Bot 5 were played by Moujan Zolfaghari.

The guy taking a long time in the garderobe was played by Shane O'Connell.

Lady Auriana was played by special guest Siobhan Thompson! Siobhan is a comedian and writer who can be seen on Dropout's actual-play show *Dimension 20*. She has appeared on TV shows such as *Adam Ruins Everything* and *Broad City*, and was a staff writer for Adult Swim's *Rick and Morty*.

This episode was edited by Seth Lind and Alden Ford, with sound design and mix by Shane O'Connell.

Original chamber music by Eric Gersen. Theme song by Brendan Ryan, performed by Brendan Ryan, Shane O'Connell, Adam Minkoff, and Jay Faires.

The Young Old Derf Chronicles is a proud member of the Maximum Fun Network.

[theme music ends]

[Promo: Sleeping with Celebrities]

JOHN: Sleep is important, but it's difficult sometimes. I'm John Moe. On *Sleeping with Celebrities*, famous people help conk you out by talking in soothing voices about unimportant things. Maria Bamford, on parking:

MARIA: I parked in a bus stop. That's just not right. I am not a bus.

JOHN: Roxane Gay, on airports:

ROXANE: My favorite airport is Indianapolis. It has a really smart layout.

JOHN: Alan Tudyk, on yardsticks.

ALAN: You hand somebody a yardstick. Yardsticks become part of the family.

JOHN: Granted, it's a weird idea. But it's lots of fun! And it works. Listen wherever you get podcasts.

[Promo: Dr. Gameshow]

[sound of a subway chime]

MANOLO: Hey, it's Sue the Subway Train!

[subway chime]

MANOLO: Hey, guess what, Sue? I just inherited a gameshow, and I have to continue it because there are people out there who like to curl up into a ball and listen to it.

[subway chime]

MANOLO: Yeah, it's a podcast where listeners submit gameshow ideas for others to play on air.

[subway chime]

MANOLO: Well, it is. In fact, the dumber the better.

[subway chime]

MANOLO: Right, right. It's called *Dr. Gameshow*. Some curled-up balls consider it a tradition, while others call it a trainwreck.

[subway chime]

MANOLO: No, not you, Sue, it's Dr. Gameshow. If you're the sort that likes to listen to people competing for refrigerator magnets, then curl up into a ball and listen to Dr. Gameshow, every other Wednesday on maximumfun.org.

Maximumfun.org: Comedy and culture. Artist owned, audience supported.

ZAPZOP (JEREMY): Is the feeling, "Oh, I maybe recently had a mole ripped out of my asshole?" Is that the feeling you get?

DERF (JUSTIN): Uh... I mean, yes and no. I think it just sorta drifted out like a hot air balloon.

ZAPZOP (JEREMY): Okay.

MORGUE BOT 3 (ALDEN): He is correct.

DERF (JUSTIN): See?

ZAPZOP (JEREMY): Wow, *really*?

DERF (JUSTIN): I know my body. I know my body, ZapZop.

ALLIE: That's—that's poetry. [laughs]

JEREMY: Somehow that's the most ridiculous thing that's happened in this entire episode.

[Allie laughs again, Alden and Moujan laugh too]

ALLIE: That's the most beautiful thing that's EVER been said on this podcast.

ALDEN: [while laughing] "It drifted out of my asshole like a hot air balloon..."

[Allie bursts out laughing again]

ALLIE: Oh my god!

JEREMY: Oh my god...

[Allie and Alden finish laughing and sigh]