

Life with Althaar

Episode 19: Eight Ways of Looking at a Bar Fight Version 2.3 (Recording Script), 09/13/20 - John & Lex (2nd draft, BAJ)

*[scene 1] We follow CHIP as he hauls a case of bottles (on a hover-sledge?) back to the Electric Egg, through the Lamed 3 promenade area. As he approaches the Egg, we start to hear **DORMER** and **NESS** hassling **MISS SOPHIE**.*

CHIP

... “I’m just going to pop out and sign for this, shouldn’t take more than a few minutes.” Yeah, right. What was I thinking? Always schedule an hour minimum for trips to Inbound Freight, Chip. ...Or better yet, shemp someone else into signing for these deliveries. Hm. Maybe if I put down one of the busboys as the receiver? Ah, no, the busboys can’t sign for anything, Gendarans don’t have a writing system. Nertz.

DORMER

If you refuse to answer our questions, we’ll be forced to bring you into custody, gesin!

*Barking from **MISS SOPHIE**.*

CHIP

Hi there officers, good to see you’re keeping the Fairgrounds safe from the dastardly forces of cuddly little puppies, think you could take it somewhere that isn’t blocking entry to my place of business? Thanks so much.

The door to the Egg opens. A large fracas/hubbub is occurring inside, w/ multiple characters talking over each other.

CHIP

What in the name of Saint Amand is going on here?!

[scene 2] Main title music.

ANNOUNCER

Gemini CollisionWorks presents...

LIFE WITH ALTHAAR! Season 2!

Episode 19... “Eight Ways of Looking at a Bar Fight!”

[scene 3] Back to right where we left off. Hubbub has mostly subsided, except for DORMER, NESS, and MISS SOPHIE, who are still engaged in a vigorous dispute in the corridor.

CHIP

What have you people been doing to my bar?!

SOPON

Hey, Chip...

XTOPPS

Five moons over yesterday, Chorp!

CHIP

Yeah, right. *(more barking from outside)* Oh, for— Hey, Mindy! Would you call off your goons?

COMMANDER

Huh? Oh! Dormer! Ness! Stand down!

Struggles outside stop.

NESS

Sir! We did not breach the perimeter of the Electric Egg, sir!

DORMER

Right, the suspect was apprehended in the corridor, Commander. It's a legitimate collar!

COMMANDER

Well, given that she's wearing an actual collar with a little tag that says "Miss Sophie" on it, I'd say it's pretty clear she's not sapient, wouldn't you? Now let her go.

Grumbling from NESS & DORMER as MISS SOPHIE happily runs back to H.F.

CHIP

Great, so now that that's taken care of: Sopon, what the hell? I step out for a few minutes to sign for a package at Inbound Freight Processing, and I come back an hour later to find a couple of Security biffos out front trying to arrest a cocker spaniel, Vert spinning from the ceiling fan—

VERT

Hey!

CHIP

Xtopps playing three different songs at the same time, Dee obviously drunk (*distant protest from DEE*), Bubbles fritzing out, and hey! Churchill-bot, I can see your sticky manipulators going for that bottle of antique Navonian Miel-Whiskey!

CHURCHILL-BOT

If you're stealing some Miel, keep stealing!

CHIP

Absolutely not. Put it back.

CHURCHILL-BOT

By gad, sir! Lord Beaverbrook was right.

CHIP

Sopon? Explain.

SOPON

Well, Chip... how to begin...
See, it all started right after you left—

[scene 4a] Space-dreamy transition music as we transition to 1 hour earlier:

CHIP

Sopon, I need to grab this month's shipment of Drunken Angel, it should only take a couple minutes, but you know how it goes at Inbound Freight.

SOPON

Yeah, I can hold the place down for a couple hours.

CHIP

Actually, I just need you to keep an eye on the bar. Because, you know, the Egg's technically in the Baronetcy of Kandephaa'a, so technically, Xtopps is the one holding it down. Despite being glitched off his gourd on the goobers. And despite you being my most, and possibly only, reliable employee, who has kept this place running for the past six years. Unfailingly, without complaint.

SOPON

Uh... ok?

CHIP

I just want to make sure you know exactly where you stand around here.

SOPON

Got it. Thanks.

CHIP

Which is below Xtopps.

SOPON

Yup. You are one-hundred-percent clear.

CHIP

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

XTOPPS

(calling from the stage)

Chorp! Before you go, I need the keys to the castle!

CHIP

Oh, good call, Xtopps! Here you go—I have absolutely no problem leaving you in charge!

Key-tossing noise.

SOPON

Bye, Chip.

CHIP

Bye, Sopen! Remember: I don't value you!

Doors close behind CHIP.

SOPON

G...reat.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(rustling up to the bar)

They just don't respect you around here, do they, Sopen? They don't respect me either.

SOPON

Tell me about it. Chlorophyll you up?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Sure, sweetie. Make it a double, why don't you?

SOPON

You got it. Oh, hey, Bubbles?

BUBBLES

Yeah, co-worker of exactly equal rank despite being hired years before me?

SOPON

(sigh) Looks like there's someone at that end of the bar. Mind... tending him?

BUBBLES

Sure thing.

She trundles off.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

I can see what you contribute around here, dearie. Tell me, are you satisfied at this job?

SOPON

Well, yeah? I mean, I've worked some real dives in my day. The Egg is a pretty good gig, all things considered. And Chip's a decent boss, as long as you make sure get everything he promises you in writing. It's just...

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Just that there doesn't seem to be any order around here, hm? No system in place to appropriately award your contributions.

SOPON

...Yeah, I guess you could put it like that. It's not really about the money, though. I mean, yeah, Chip's in the running for King of the Credit-Pinchers, but it's not easy to keep a place like this turning a profit, I get that. And it's not like I don't get along with Xtopps, he's more fun than a bootful of giggle-shrimp, it's just... I do a lot around here, and, well... A "thank you" would go a long way, you know?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Well, I think you deserve much more than a thank-you, Sapon dear. And you'll get it. You'll all get what you deserve, in time.

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

SOPON

If you say so, Mrs. F. Oop, looks like we're running low on polycarbonated seltzers, I'd better duck into the office for a few more cans. Did you want a top-off before I go?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Nope! All good here.

SOPON

Ok then, back in a sec. *(sound of bar gate thing opening)* Excuse me! Coming through. Gotta—oof—just get to the back there—

BUBBLES

(in the background, giggling)

But how will we know if they're compatible?

SOPON

Just gotta get through...

ALTHAAR

And once the bas-ket of collection is full, you give it directly to the One of Much Anointment?

SPACE-PRIEST

(space-organ music plays behind him whenever he speaks)

Of course, my child. The collection is offered up to them on a vibro-plank of gratitude

SOPON

'Scuse me, Althaar. Father, I'm just grabbing some more poly-seltzer from the back. You want another one?

SPACE-PRIEST

Let me answer your question with a confusing, elaborate parable.

It is written that, long ago, when some ancient zood came down from on high, he—

SOPON

Just say yes or no.

SPACE PRIEST

Yes.

SOPON

Pardon me, fellas.

H.F.

(as SOPON passes)

Don't skitter this shot, B. I really want that dog park.

JOHN

Next time we play, would you mind waging something that benefits both of us?

H.F.

Hey! Miss Sophie benefits all of us, all of the time, merely by how adorable she is. Don't you gir—hey, where'd she go?

SOPON

Coming through!

DEE

(singing, resignedly)

27 bottles of space beer on the wall, 27 bottles of space beer...

[scene 4b] SOPON knocks on the door to Chip's office.

SOPON

Xtopps? *(nothing)* Your... Ebullience? *(nothing. SOPON sighs. Opens the door.)* Hel...lo?

XTOPPS

Did you glomp my messages, zood?

SOPON

Uhh...no. Just looking for some—

XTOPPS

Narg, mang! I sang the Five-Way-Canzone to you every lunar cycle! And still when Little Xtopps went to peek under the Pole of the Wayward Blessing, my Blessing-Pot was bone-dry!

SOPON

Yeah. Are you... okay, Xtopps?

XTOPPS

Just this once, mang. Just this once—grant me a full frillin' waystation, you dig?

SOPON

Sounds great! Just gotta grab these cans from behind you... and... got 'em. *(cans clanking)*
Ookay then, so... thanks. And, uh, Your Extravagancy? Think you could get back onstage sometime soon? You kinda hung Dee out to dry up there.

[scene 4c] Office door opens, we hear H.F. and JOHN groan as JOHN misses a shot. We follow SOPON back out into the bar.

DEE

24 bottles of space beer on the wall...

SOPON

Coming through!

CHURCHILL-BOT

Just make this one shot, Commander, and the day shall be won!

COMMANDER

I KNOW how to play the game, Churchill-bot!

SOPON

Time out, just passing through— Gah!

MISS SOPHIE yelps! SOPON trips, cans roll everywhere. COMMANDER curses. H.F. cheers.

SOPON

Oh, frill me!

ALTHAAR

Oh! Sin Sapon, please allow Althaar to make assistance!

SOPON

Thanks, Althaar. Ah, crap, looks like Bubbles is having trouble handling the line. Would you mind grabbing the rest of these while I—

ALTHAAR

Yes, Althaar can make gathering of the disordered beverage cylinders while you are attending your many other duties! Please, do not have concern! Althaar is most content to be of usefulness!

SOPON

Thanks, Althaar! At least someone appreciates how much I do around here. Streez. Coming THROUGH! (*bar gate thing opens. Cans set down on counter. Calling down the bar:~*) Bubbles? You all right?

BUBBLES

(calling back)

Sorry 'bout the line, Sapon. Things got a little sticky over here!

SOPON

(to herself)

Mang, this place would disintegrate if I wasn't here. Hi, sorry about the wait. What can I get for ya?

A can of polycarbonated seltzer fizzing over. Shouts and cries of dismay.

DILURIAN
BOOZE FIGHT!

*More seltzers exploding. Drink tossing. Whoops. Bar door opens, **DORMER and NESS shouting and tackling MISS SOPHIE** in the corridor.*

SOPON
Wait! Stop! Everybody calm the frid down! If only Chip had made it clear that I had some kind of authority around here, maybe these driffers would actually listen to me!

Random lil' booze splishes. Also mayhem.

CHIP
Sopon, what the hell?

[scene 5] Dreamy music again as we return to the present.

SOPON
So, yeah. That's pretty much what happened.

CHIP
Huh. So you were over at the bar, and suddenly someone's drink starts sploobing out all over the place, and then out of nowhere there's a bar fight? That tells me nothing!

COMMANDER
You know who could tell you exactly what happened... as well as everything that ever happened in the history of the universe...?

CHIP
Wikipedia?

COMMANDER
Lieutenant Frall.

CHIP
Uh huh. *(a beat)* So, Commander, what did you see?

COMMANDER
Hmm, let me think... it all started when two wannabe hustlers challenged me to a game of billiards.

H.F.

I have no idea who you mean, Mindy. But I resent the implication.

COMMANDER

You see, Chip, for the past month or so, H.F. has been scrambling up my Festivus pole for a dog park, and then today, while I was trying to relax during one of my precious few off-duty cycles with a game of SuperNova, he and John B came up with a proposition:

[scene 6] Dreamy space music transition. Sounds of billiards.

CHIP

(distant)

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

H.F.

(whiny child voice)

Mindyyyy! I want a dog park, and I want it now!

JOHN

(whiny toddler voice)

And I'm tired! Fix it! Fix it fix it fix it!!

COMMANDER

(to herself)

Farrah's fuzzy tum, I can't get through one flotting pool game... We've been over this, H.F. Miss Sophie has the entire off-tether section of Gimel 8 Hydroponics, AND the bocce ball court when it's not in use.

H.F.

(whining)

Aw, Miiinndyyyy!

JOHN

I'm colicky!

COMMANDER

Then take a nap or something!

JOHN

I don't wanna.

Keys tossing noise in the background.

COMMANDER

FURTHERmore: I am the Commander of this space station! If you have a complaint about Hydroponics policies, here's a thought: talk to the Hydroponics department! We do actually have a chain of command here, believe it or not, and I'm supposed to be all the way at one end of it! Great galloping Cielo Twins, why is it that every minor quibble, grievance, or contract dispute ends up at my console?

CHURCHILL-BOT

Heavy is the head, my dear.

COMMANDER

Tell me about it.

CHURCHILL-BOT

No, Commander. I meant my head appears to have become improperly calibrated and it's bearing too much of my weight. Can you possibly drop everything on your schedule in order to do something about that?

COMMANDER

I am the COMMANDER. NOT robot maintenance. NOT a parks department administrator. NOT INTERESTED in any of this mishegas!

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

H.F.

(sounding like Elmyra from tiny toons)

But Miss Sophie is the cutesi-wootsiest doggie in the whole universe. Look at her widdle face! Look at her roll around on the gwound! Look at her chase Vert!

VERT

(being chased)

This is fiiiine!

COMMANDER

Aaand she can chase Vert all she wants over in Gimel 8.

VERT

(from a distance, among yips and barks)

Having a great time!

H.F.

(overlapping VERT)

But mo-om - I mean Min-dyy-

JOHN

(still like a toddler)

Uh oh! I dropped-ed my pool cue!

COMMANDER

Tell ya what. I'll play you for it on my next shot. I make it? No dog park and you leave me the hell alone. I miss? Yes dog park and you leave me the hell alone. Okay?

H.F. & JOHN

Yay!

CHURCHILL-BOT

Annoying, long-winded British expression of approval!

ALTHAAR

Hellooo!

The Humans all gag.

ALTHAAR

Althaar is sorry! Even though Althaar could have known perfectly well that would happen! Althaar will take his horribleness somewhere else, which he probably should have done in the first place!

JOHN

Bye Althaar! Thanks for coming with me all over the station to disgust and horrify all the Humans, and the Commander in particular, as well as overloading the cleaning bots who have to clean up afterward whenever one of us gets a look at you! We should keep doing this forever!

COMMANDER

I really wish you wouldn't.

JOHN

(starts crying)

Commandy make John saaaad!

COMMANDER

Oh for the love of— ugh. Never mind. Are we doing this or what? My Gibson's getting warm.

JOHN

(sniff) Ok. I'm gonna line up my shot. Hope the ball doesn't disappear forever when into those little pockets. I don't have object permanence yet!

H.F.

Careful John B. I want that doggy park! I want it I want it I want it!

Plink.

JOHN

Yay! I scored-ed a billiards!

COMMANDER

Uh, no, John. That was a miss.

H.F. & JOHN

Awwwwww!

DEE

24 bottles of space beer on the wall...

COMMANDER

Now, *(knuckle cracking noise)* stand back and watch how a real pro does it— *(sounds of effort as she lines up the perfect shot)*

SOPON

Aoooooah! Coming through! Not going around! Going right through. Hey Mindy, I'm gonna ask you a question later that's way below your pay grade, get ready! *(as they walk off:)* Make a hole!

COMMANDER

Concentrate, Mindy... A designated dog park would mean re-locating the aromatherapy gardens... probably all the way down to Tav 48...

CHURCHILL-BOT

It's simple, my dear: just hit the ball into the hole!

COMMANDER

I KNOW how to play billiards! Weren't you in here a couple months ago? Now, would everybody just shut up for a second?

There's a hush over the table.

COMMANDER

(to herself)

All right now...steady...aaaand...

MISS SOPHIE yelps! followed by a gigantic explosion noise.

COMMANDER

OH CRACK JIBBO'S TEACUP IN THE BILGE!

H.F.

(simultaneously with above)

Miss Sophie! Are you okie dokie? We won! Yippee! Let's celebrate with some off-key karaoke!

JOHN

(simultaneously with above)

Oh boy oh boy!

CHURCHILL-BOT

(simultaneously with above)

Curses! Oh well. No consequences for me!

COMMANDER

H.F., CURB YOUR DOG!

H.F.

Aw, I don't wanna!

COMMANDER

That dumb dog broke my focus!

H.F.

Don't blame her! Vert stepped on her! Vert! Suspend yourself from the ceiling fan!

VERT

You got it! Hup!

JOHN

Uh oh. Commandy? Where did Miss Sophie get all those cans of Seltzer?!

COMMANDER

WHAT?! Miss Sophie! No! Drop it! Drop it girl! Bad dog! Bad doooooog!

H.F.

(simultaneously)

Aw, who's a cutie pie? Who's the cutest little— Oh, hang on, I gotta get a picture! Now don't you stop shaking that can, oogie woogums...

More fizzing and explosions.

DILURIAN

BOOZE FIGHT!

More fizzing, more explosions. During which:

H.F.

Good Miss Sophie! You're such a good dog! Yes you are! Who's definitely not a public nuisance and probably going to give us all rabies?! Not you! No! Not you at all!

Bar door opens.

CHIP

Mindy, call off your goons!

COMMANDER

My who now?

CHIP

All of this is obviously your sole responsibility, like every single other thing that happens on this entire fakakte station. So what are you gonna do about it?

[scene 7] Dreamy transition back to the present.

H.F.

Now hold on, Mindy. Miss Sophie did not start any booze fight, and you know it!

COMMANDER

Well, that's my recollection. And in any case, that dog is trouble, and everyone here knows that.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, we know it all right. But, Commander, I'm sorry to say I don't think your taproot's made it all the way through the topsoil on this one.

CHIP

Taproot?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

It's a common expression! Ahem. As I was saying, this all *actually* started as I was minding my own business at the end of the bar—

[scene 8a] Dreamy transition music.

CHIP

Alright, everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

SOPON

Chlorophyll you up, Mrs. F?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Sure, sweetie. Make it a double, why don't you?

SOPON

You got it. Bubbles? Bubbles? Hey, Bubbles? Excuse me, Bubbles? Bubbles? I am expending energy by rubbing my disgusting throat-meat-strings together in an attempt to get your attention, instead of merely releasing chemicals into the atmosphere.

BUBBLES

Yeah? Whaddaya want?

SOPON

There's a customer who's seated themselves all the way at the other end of the bar, despite all of the many barstools which are situated closer to us, the bartenders.

BUBBLES

That makes complete sense to me, what with me not being a plant and all. I'll just waste a bunch of time and electricity moving myself over there to accommodate them.

She trundles off. Key-tossing noise in the distance.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Sopon, dearie, don't you think you could organize this place a little better?

SOPON

I'm not sure I know how to do that. Hey—why don't you teach me?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

I thought you'd never ask, dearie!

[scene 8b: song]

(sings)

Let's start at the very beginning.

The only acceptable place to start.

When your phytohormones communicate with your cells to stimulate growth they begin with:

SOPON

Auxins, gibberellins, and cytokinins!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

That's right!

(sings)

When you organize you must begin with:

Efficiency!

SOPON

Efficiency!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(sings)

What's the only overriding objective you should concern yourself with, regardless of the hindering and quite frankly adorably naive will *(cough cough... deep breath)* of the minority?

Efficiency!

SOPON

(sings)

Efficiency!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

HIT IT, DEE!

A snazzy big band number inexplicably starts up in the background.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(sings)

The world would be much better, dear, if everyone knew their place

You wouldn't have catastrophe if your fragile Human bodies had their own separate space

Imagine a much happier world with humans seeded in a row

And all you'd have to do is sit around and grow!

SOPON

And grow?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Now you've got it!

(sings)

You humans wouldn't have to fuss with complex organ systems
Just divide them into "root" and "shoot"—I promise you won't miss them!
You'd plant yourself just like a plant and then install a mister,
And get nourished from the sun!

ALIEN BARFLY

(finishing the line)

You tell 'em, sister!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Now hold on! Hold on! I know some of you are dancing to this song, but you just put a stop to that right now—it's a needless waste of energy! Don't you all know you must learn to conserve! Conserve, I say!

SOPON

Hey, Mrs. F? I'll admit you're making some fantastic points that should by now be obvious to everyone in this room, but I still don't see how this would solve the conflict between me and Chip.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Weren't you listening, dear? You need to know your place!

(sings)

Imagine our whole universe with one big World Order
With an all-powerful ruler, there'd be no need for wars or borders
If you and Chip couldn't get along, you'd appeal to just one Sovereign
And They'd re-pot you somewhere else so you wouldn't bother 'Em!

(speaks)

In fact...

(sings)

Take a look around this bar
I'd surmise that it hasn't gotten you perambulators very far
How do you expect to grow at all,
When you spend all your time getting willfully poisoned on—

DEE

Twenty three bottles of space-beer on the wall

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(sings)

What if we took this speakeasy and dressed it up a bit?
We'd root the barback to the floor and the taps would all have sprinklers that came retrofit
The ceiling would be opened up and the sun would be our fuel
And instead of alcohol you'd serve nitrogen-laced gruel!

SOPON

Of course! Gruel! It's so simple!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Now take it to the bridge! Without going anywhere!

*16-bar instrumental in the style of the "Take a look around this bar" bridge,
during which:*

MRS. FRONDRINAX

No! I said no dancing! Everyone stay perfectly still! Try to keep your outer appendages pointed towards the bar's light sources at all times! There you go, Vert, you've almost got it!

Instrumental is about to modulate into a key change at the end until—

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Now you stop that! Just stop it! I know that the way the chord progression works is making you THINK you want to change keys, dearies, but what have I been telling you all? No, no—modulation is far too inefficient. Think of the needless mental energy wasted in having to transpose! We're all perfectly content staying in G, thank you very much!... Ahem!

(after a much calmer, pastoral refrain in original key begins, she sings:)

And now that you're all nutrient-dense, and fully synchronized

You can lay your pedicles down my dears, and softly close your eyes

As you recline, you'll see the sign you all have waited to see

The morning will come when the world is ours, tomorrow belongs to m—

MISS SOPHIE interrupts with frantic barking!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, no! That dumb dog has ruined a perfectly closing refrain! Shoo, shoo girl! Shoo! Hey! Don't you even think about relieving yourself there! I am a dignified plant!

***MISS SOPHIE yelps and runs away. Sounds of a CRASH off in the distance.
[scene 9] Dreamy transition music back to the present.***

H.F.

Boy, you plants sure have a funny way of looking at things.

JOHN

Yeah, I never knew how much better plants are at, well... basically everything, according to your, uh, impressively choreographed uptempo third-act number, there.

CHIP

So what you're telling me is that the Egg is in a shambles because... we Humans don't sit around all day photosynthesizing?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Is that what you got out of it?

CHIP

Ooohkay. Can anyone tell me who's actually responsible for what happened here? And while you're at it, can someone get Vert down from the ceiling? And I want all of you helping the busboys pick up your poly-seltzer cans, I don't care how many hands you've got. Also, what's the matter with Bubbles?

BUBBLES

mmmpzzzzzz. I'm all gunked up!

CHIP

Unbelievable. When I find out— John! It was you, wasn't it?

JOHN

What? Why do you want to pin this on me?

CHIP

Oh, believe me, I'd love for this to be the fault of someone who's actually worth suing for damages, but c'mon. You're John B, disaster's favorite dance partner. So what did you do this time?

JOHN

Nothing! I mean... It's not my fault. I mean...

[scene 10] Dreamy transition music, space-billiards breaking. A whistle from H.F.

H.F.

Great shot, kid.

COMMANDER

Lucky, more like it.

JOHN

What? No it wasn't. Since when have I been lucky at anything? I've put in a lot of practice to get this good. Right, H.F.?

H.F.

You're good, kid, but you'll never be as big a space-shark as Captain Hustler over here.

COMMANDER

First of all, H.F., if you can't stand the afterburn, don't try hotdogging in Beggar's Canyon. And second of all, that's Commander Hustler to you.

CHURCHILL-BOT

I believe it's still your turn, old chap.

CHIP

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

XTOPPS

(calling from the stage)

Chorp! Before you go, I need the keys to the castle!

CHIP

Oh, good call, Xtopps! Here you go.

Key-tossing noise.

H.F.

Hey Churchill-bot, they got SuperNova down in the Union break room?

CHURCHILL-BOT

A table yes, but when it comes to the game itself, I'm afraid the cues are in desperate need of a wood re-finishing and supplemental chalk detailing. A request for maintenance and possible upgrade was approved by committee, but the actual work order is still being passed around between Recreation, Carpentry, and the Tanner's Guild, all of whom claim the matter is: Not their department.

H.F.

(overlapping)

Not their department. Yeah, forget I asked. Hey, uh, Commander, speaking of protocol and work orders, who's leg does Miss Sophie have to adorably hump in order to get that dog park approved over on Resh 18?

COMMANDER

We've been over this, H.F. Miss Sophie has the entire off-tether section of Gimel 8 Hydroponics, AND the bocce ball court when it's not in use.

Sound of another pool shot.

JOHN

Hey! I just got three more in!

H.F.

Yeah, one second kid—Commander, the bocce ball court is all the way over in Bet—that's basically two-thirds of the station away! And as for the park in Gimel 8, you know very well those Dilurians have basically claimed it 28 hours a day for their incessant Frolf tournaments!

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

(During the next line, sound of JOHN taking another shot, followed by tiny explosions, and a tiny electronic voice saying "High score! Enter your initials here!")

H.F.

Those of us with companion animals of the canine persuasion need a designated space to let our pals frolic, socialize, and have their precious little piddle parties in peace. I mean, they've gotta get all that energy out somehow, and if they don't have a park to do it in, well. Just look at her now, bounding around, chasing Vert!

VERT

(running by)

Just happy to be included!

COMMANDER

I don't know who Vert is.

JOHN

(missing his shot)

Rats!

H.F.

Aw, ya whiffed it, Johnny!

JOHN

Yeah, but I got all but two of our balls in. And... that last shot, the table told me I won some sort of award, and little fire-works shot off...

Silence. Space crickets.

JOHN

Really? No one saw that?

CHURCHILL-BOT

No one did, and no one is impressed, old boy. Commander, you're up.

COMMANDER

I'll tell ya what, H.F. I'll play you for it on my next shot. I make it? No dog park and you leave me the hell alone. I miss? Yes dog park and you leave me the hell alone. Okay?

H.F.

Deal!

COMMANDER

All right. *(cracks knuckles)* Let me just line up this shot—

ALTHAAR

Helloooo Human friends!

The Humans all gag, although JOHN's is minimal.

JOHN

Hey, Althaar.

ALTHAAR

Althaar saw FriendJohn make so many pool shots! The practicing does seem to have resulted in the paying of off!

JOHN

Hey, yeah! Thanks for noticing!

ALTHAAR

Althaar is most proud of FriendJohn's snookerial acumen!

JOHN

Aw. And you are completely obscured by that glowing St. Polyhedron Girl sign, Althaar!

ALTHAAR

Ah! The practicing has paid off also for Althaar! By contorting his fourth and seventh flixators, producing a not-unpleasant convolution of the cartilage, Althaar has discovered he can reduce his carapace volume by 0.8 microns! An increase to Althaar's geometrical understanding has been a most fortuitous side-effect of the continued room-mating with FriendJohn!

JOHN

You don't say.

COMMANDER

Hey! Are we going to sit around jabbering like a herd of Carrollian Wockies, or are we gonna play some pool? Althaar, would you mind stepping away from the table for the next five minutes or so? It's really hard to concentrate on lining up a shot when I have to constantly suppress my gag reflex.

ALTHAAR

Oh! Apology to you from Althaar! He will absent himself from the Gentlebeings' Parlor at once, and begin again to mingle with the large variety of sapients now enjoying the delicious purveyances of the Electric Egg! The mingling has been of great success already! Althaar has made friendship with a priest! A pleasant evening to you all, friends!

JOHN

A priest?

DEE

Twenty-four bottles of space-beer on the wall, twenty-four bottles of space-beer...

COMMANDER

Thanks, Althaar. Lemme just—

CHURCHILL-BOT

You just shoot that ball into the hole, madame!

COMMANDER grumbles.

COMMANDER

I'm *trying*, if you'd just let me concentrate... and...

Pool balls clacking as she fails to make the shot.

H.F.

And that's a miss! What do we call this dog park, Mindy? I'm thinking; "Logan's Dog Run!" Or is that too dark?

COMMANDER

Hey! No! That one doesn't count! I was distracted by... uh... a series of loud noises!

JOHN

What series of loud noises?

MISS SOPHIE yips, a few cans clatter to the ground.

COMMANDER

That series of loud noises!

H.F.

What? That hadn't happened yet!

COMMANDER

I don't make the rules, Hardyfox. Or rather, yes I do, because I'm the commander of this station. And I say re-rack!

VERT

(zooming by)

Ayeeee!

H.F.

Miss Sophie! You stop that!

ALTHAAR

Would New Friend Father Grthmaa'labluurgen Of Our Lady Of The Many-Severed Appendages Of Screaming Death like another refreshing and non-brain-chemistry-altering beverage?

MISS SOPHIE

Yip yip!

H.F.

Give it up, Commander. You lost fair and square!

JOHN

It's okay, Commander, I can—

COMMANDER

I'm telling you, H.F., I was distracted!

H.F.

Distracted, my left reticulum!

JOHN

I don't think you're going to get anywhere with this, H.F., let's just play another—

Fizzing and shouts!

DILURIAN

Booooooze Fiiiiight!

JOHN

Gah!

*More fizzing, explosions, and **shouting** as dreamy music transitions back to the present. [scene II]*

CHIP

Okay, so I guess we've at least established that Sopon tripped over Miss Sophie, but that still doesn't explain who actually started the fight. Or how that drink exploded.

ALTHAAR

Perhaps Althaar's recollection of these events could be of some utility? Althaar would be most willing to make sharing of it, if this would reduce the confusion that is causing the stress-rash to Mr. Chip Frinkel!

CHIP

Stress-rash? Oh frill me, not again.

ALTHAAR

It is not to worry, Mr. Frinkel! The stress-hives are providing a most pleasantly ruddy appearance! Like the Human deity Nicholas!

CHIP

The who now?

JOHN

St. Nick—he means Santa.

ALTHAAR

Yes! The "San-taa." But without the subcutaneous stomach tissue resembling a container full of gelatin. Rather, Mr. Frinkel is resembling the "San-taa" who is performing very frequently the cross-fit! But good cheer is instigated nonetheless!

CHIP

Grrreat... Could you just tell me what happened, Althaar? And, uh... no one look at me for a few seconds. *(to himself, rummaging through a bin at the bar)* Where's that topical Dr. Noobarsh prescribed?

ALTHAAR

Althaar would be most pleased to do so! It all began as Althaar was enjoying an evening of wholesome camaraderie with his many dear friends at the Electric Egg!

[scene 12] Dreamy flashback music.

CHIP

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

ALTHAAR

It is a great joy to Althaar to be engaging in bibations with his three newest friends!

COMMONER-BOT

Cheers!

WOODSMAN-BOT

Skål!

SPACE-PRIEST

L'Chaim!

Glasses clink, key-tossing noise.

ALTHAAR

So, Father Grthmaa'labluurgen Of Our Lady Of The Many-Severed Appendages Of Screaming Death, please continue description of the customs of your most unusual religious practice! Althaar regrets very much that he has not as of yet made study of the the Disciples of Tranquility and Luminosity!

SPACE-PRIEST

Ah, well, good Iltorian, the initiation into our order begins on one's twenty-sixth birthday. Those who are blessed to receive the Mark of Tr'fallanawulf the Obtuse upon their left temple are ushered off to the priestly training grounds, where a gaggle of nuns attend to their education.

ALTHAAR

Nuns? But if it is the priestly training grounds, are there not priests also?

SPACE-PRIEST

No, my child, they are conspicuously absent. You know, it is most refreshing to have someone ask about our oblations. Normally people run screaming in terror the moment they lay their organs of perception upon our traditional vestments.

ALTHAAR

Oh! Althaar has experienced this phenomenon on many occasions! It is an unfortunate side-effect of Althaar's attempt to make friendship with a species that cannot be seeing him without great bodily distress. Althaar and his dear Human friends have created many workings-around in order to mitigate this! But it is an ongoing process.

SPACE-PRIEST

Yes, friendship is also one of our Forty-Three Guiding Principles of Unseen Obeisance.

ALTHAAR

Ooh!

WOODSMAN-BOT

(offensively Canadian accent)

Sohrry to interrupt, but who's that tall glass of Molson behind dat dere bar?

ALTHAAR

The robotic bar-tender? That is the very talented and most efficient mixology-bot Bubbles! She is also well-practiced at the purveyance of salty snack foods and the 'chatting-up' of the customer base. She is a fixture of the Electric Egg, in both the literal and figurative senses!

WOODSMAN-BOT

I wouldn't mind swapping gaskets with her, eh? Excuse me, gentle-bots, and my good Iltorian pal, I believe I'll go askin' for a drink, dere. Wish me luck, buds.

ALTHAAR

Much luck to Sin Woodsman-bot in the requesting of refreshments!

SPACE-PRIEST

(casual) Anyways, *(priestly again)* once we are ordained, we are sent out across the Galaxy, accompanied with nothing but a collection basket in our leftmost appendage, and the Book of Truisms of the Prophet Of Bleeding Orifi in our right.

ALTHAAR

Fascinating. And what is collected in these baskets?

SPACE-PRIEST

Why, we collect alms, my child.

ALTHAAR

Alms?

SPACE-PRIEST

And legs. Alms and legs. Or any other appendages you can spare. The One of Much Anointment needs them all in order to keep his mindspace focused on the Infinite Putrescence of the Beyond.

ALTHAAR

Oh! It is a great regret to Althaar that he can not be sparing any of his pedipalps or flixators for his new friend Father Grthmaa'labluurgen Of Our Lady Of The Many-Severed Appendages Of Screaming Death. Regeneration of shed limbs is not a property of the Iltorian anatomy.

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

SPACE-PRIEST

That is all right, my child. It is enough that you occasionally reflect upon the disgusting insignificance of your mortality.

ALTHAAR

Althaar will do so! And once the bas-ket of collection is full, it is given directly to the One of Much Anointment?

SPACE-PRIEST

Correct, dear gentlebeing. The collection is offered up to them on a vibro-plank of gratitude

SOPON

'Scuse me, Althaar. Father, I'm just grabbing some more poly-seltzer from the back. You want another one?

SPACE-PRIEST

Well, my child, is it not written that, long ago, when Blorpfast the Ancient One came down from on high, he—

SOPON

Just say yes or no.

SPACE PRIEST

Yes.

SOPON

Pardon me, fellas.

ALTHAAR

Please be excusing Althaar also, Father. His roommate FriendJohn appears to be engaged in an act of "schooling" at the table of billiards, and Althaar is wishing to go and provide support.

SPACE-PRIEST

Of course, my child. Many Contemptuous Horrors And Herniated Disks to you! I shall pass the time with my fellow Commoner-bot here.

COMMONER-BOT

(as ALTHAAR moves away)

Hey, is this anyone's baby?

ALTHAAR

Salutation to you, Human and robot friends! And Vert!

ALL

(à la "Norm!")

Althaar!

ALTHAAR

Oh! And greeting to Miss-Sophie also! *(barks)*

MISS SOPHIE

(replies in puppy)

JOHN

We missed you, buddy! What've you been up to?

ALTHAAR

Althaar saw FriendJohn make so many pool shots! The practicing does seem to have resulted in the paying of off!

JOHN

Hey, yeah! Thanks for noticing!

ALTHAAR

Althaar is most proud of FriendJohn's snookerial acumen!

JOHN

Aw. And I appreciate the way you're completely obscured by that glowing St. Polyhedron Girl sign, Althaar! Good job!

ALTHAAR

Yes! The practicing has paid off also for Althaar! By contorting his fourth and seventh flixators, producing a not-unpleasant convolution of the cartilage, Althaar has discovered he can reduce his carapace volume by 0.8 microns! An increase to Althaar's geometrical understanding has been a most fortuitous side-effect of the continued room-mating with FriendJohn!

JOHN

And I keep learning new ways to get projectile vomit stains out of carpet, thanks to you, knowledgeable FriendAlthaar! I'm constantly amazed how much each of our species has to learn from one another!

COMMANDER

Wanna watch us play some pool, esteemed diplomatic colleague?

ALTHAAR

Oh! Althaar would enjoy this greatly, but Althaar is knowing that when a game of the billiards is in session, it is most uncouth for a new player to insert himself into the proceedings! He will absent himself from the Gentlebeings' Parlor at once, and begin again to mingle with the large variety of sapients now enjoying the delicious purveyances of the Electric Egg! The mingling has been of great success already! Althaar has made friendship with a priest! A pleasant evening to you all, friends!

JOHN

A priest? FriendAlthaar, I'm always amazed at your ability to make new friends wherever you go!

DEE

Twenty-four bottles of space-beer on the wall, twenty-four bottles of space-beer...

COMMANDER

Yes, John, it's always important to remember that, with patience and good will, common ground can be established between all sapients in the galaxy. Thanks, Althaar! Now lemme just line up this shot, and...

SOPON

Woah!

MISS SOPHIE yelps, cans clatter to the floor.

ALTHAAR

Oh! Is the delightful Miss Sophie all right?

MISS SOPHIE yips and runs away.

VERT

(from far off)

Oh, dear! Please don't chase me!

ALTHAAR

(calling)

Oh! Sin Vert! Althaar can be providing the boost, if this would facilitate the process of suspending yourself above the reach of Miss Sophie until her agitation has decreased!

VERT

All good! Hup!

ALTHAAR

Then if Althaar is not needed, he will— Oh! Sin Sopon, may Althaar perhaps make assistance to you?

SOPON

Thanks, Althaar. Ah, crap, looks like Bubbles is having trouble handling the line. Would you mind grabbing the rest of these while I—

ALTHAAR

Yes, Althaar can perform gathering of the disordered beverage cylinders while you are attending your other duties! Please, do not have concern! Althaar is most content to be of usefulness!

SOPON

Thanks, Althaar!

ALTHAAR

(grabbing the cans off the floor)

Oh! New friend Father Grthmaa'labluurgen, one of these cans of non-alcoholic polycarbonate waters, Althaar is remembering, is for you!

SPACE-PRIEST

Bless you, my child. So thoughtful, such a good memory.

ALTHAAR

And these other cans must belong at the bar, with the gregarious and hardworking Sin Sopon! Please be excusing Althaar, Father. Sin Sopon!

Behind him, the priest's can explodes open. Fizz. Fizz.

ALTHAAR

(among the ensuing commotion)

Sin Sopon! Althaar has the remainder of your canned beverages! Where should he be depositing them, please?

DILURIAN

Booze Fiiiiiiight!

Dreamy music transition back to the present. [scene 13]

CHIP

So... you don't actually know how the booze fight started either? Or why Bubbles is clogged up? Or why Dee was favoring you all with the galaxy's least-requested a capella number the whole time?

ALTHAAR

Mm. Althaar is realizing now that his perspective is perhaps of more limited utility than he had at first assumed. Mr. Frinkel, Althaar is wishing to beg your forgiveness!

CHIP

(sighs) No, it's fine, Althaar. We'll just have to go through this whole thing one more time. So again, let me ask, did anyone see anything that could help me understand just what the heck happened in this bar while I was out?

FRALL shimmers in.

FRALL

Well, Chip, if you really want to know exactly what was going on from the vantage point of every single entity inside this bar simultaneously, you could always allow me to project the information directly into your consciousness. I promise not to touch anything else while I'm in there... that you'll notice.

CHIP

Yeah, right. You're even more out of touch with this level of reality than usual if you think I'm going to let some twinkly effluvium fool around with my mind. Even if that's... literally the only way I'll ever know what really went on in here... *(beat)* Hey, Vert! Let Frall into your brain.

VERT

Youuu got it, boss!

FRALL

It was merely a suggestion, Chip. I don't wish to intrude on Vert's... cavernous... mental space.

CHIP

Yeah, great, thanks for nothing. Okay then, let's do this systematically, start at the entrance and make our way through the Egg one person at a time. Which means first on deck are those Security meatheads who were trying to put Miss Sophie in a half-Nelson out in the corridor. Let's get 'em in here. Hey, Xtopps? Got a couple of Barneys inbound, you good?

XTOPPS

As long as they vibe with the Authorities Cannot Apprehend Bar-goers decree.

CHIP

Okay, let's find out if they've got anything useful to say.

Main door whooshes open.

CHIP

All right, jabronies. You're allowed in, but the ACAB rule's still in effect. Got it?

NESS

Why do you think we're posted right outside?

DORMER

C'mon Ness, we don't need to tell them our secret system.

COMMANDER

It's not a secret, it's obvious and dumb. And so far it's netted you exactly one suspect, who, again, is a non-sapient companion animal. So would you please tell us all exactly what led to you wrestling a cocker spaniel in the Lamed 3 corridor?

NESS

Affirmative, sir. It all started when I and my fellow officer detected with our aural receptors a possible explosion emanating from the approximate area of this drinking establishment and multi-cultural eatery.

DORMER

Officer Ness and I visually observed the door opening, and a suspect exiting the establishment through said door. Suspect was approximately one foot two inches tall. Hair brown and white, eyes brown, sex indeterminate. Motive for criminal activity also indeterminate.

CHIP

Criminal activity?

NESS

We had reason to believe the suspect was engaged in illicit activities, by way of the loud disturbance we had heard inside the establishment, and also predicated on the suspect's rapid movement away from the area.

CHIP

Or maybe she was just a dog, running away from a loud noise.

NESS

That had not occurred to us, sir.

DORMER

But we had to act quickly, our lives were being threatened!

COMMANDER

(knowing the answer is going to be very stupid, but asking anyway)

How?

NESS

Commander, the individual in question matched the description of a known criminal believed to be currently residing on the Fairgrounds, who we had reason to believe would be in the Electric Egg this evening.

COMMANDER

Miss Sophie... matched the description. Of a known criminal.

NESS

Yes, sir! A carbon-based, mammalian individual, between 9 inches and 8 foot 3 inches in height. A perfect match! Use of defensive measures was clearly indicated by Security protocols, sir!

DORMER

Can't be too careful, Commander.

COMMANDER

It seems like you can.

NESS

As the suspect exited the establishment, Officer Dormer and I apprehended them by brandishing our neuro-dampers in a very professional and not at all panicky manner.

DORMER

The suspect then abandoned their escape attempt and proceeded to jump up on us.

NESS

At which point we were forced to defend ourselves!

DORMER

We could have apprehended her peacefully before then, but we're not allowed in the bar.

NESS

It hurts our feelings, actually.

CHIP

Lemme get this straight. You two were loitering outside the door all night—

NESS

Patrolling!

CHIP

And pulled your neuro-dampers on the first... individual to come out the door?

DORMER

...yes?

CHIP

Because?

DORMER

We just want to be included.

COMMANDER

Well, congratulations! You're going to be included in a disciplinary filing first cycle tomorrow.

NESS & DORMER

Aw, mang.

CHIP

Seriously, Mindy. Do you really think it's a good idea for these blockheads to be walking around with weapons?

COMMANDER

I am increasingly asking myself that question.

NESS & DORMER

Aw, MANG!

COMMANDER

We'll discuss this further tomorrow. Now get out of here, and no more skulking around the corridor outside the Egg for no reason, you understand?

NESS

Not for no reason, sir, no.

COMMANDER

Let me be clear: being in the mood to arrest someone is not a reason.

DORMER

But our quotas! We'll never get the steak knives at this rate!

CHIP

All right, officers, thanks for your complete lack of help. Now please get lost.

NESS and DORMER slink out, grumbling. The door whooshes shut behind them.

XTOPPS

And that's why the ACAB decree is in perpetual effect, zoods.

CHIP

Ok, Xtopps? Where were you when all this was going on? Please don't make me regret asking.

XTOPPS

No frills the supermercado, zood. I believe I can dressage that particular pony. You see, it all started when I got those sweet keys to the back office...

[scene 14a] Dreamy flashback transition music.

CHIP

Hey you two, I'm gonna be out for a while, gotta pick up a package. So are you good for the next hour or so?

XTOPPS

I dunno, mang. I'm running low on the slow mo flow, y'know?

CHIP

...I do not. But I'm assuming you're talking about the nutty stuff. Well, if you're in need of a pick-me-up, there's something that might be of interest in the office. You should check out the "Special Drawer" of my "Desk". Get it?

XTOPPS

Repetez-vous?

CHIP

(quietly, a secret now)

The special drawer of my desk. I'll give you the key if that keeps you cranking out the tunes while I'm out.

XTOPPS

You got a deal, I can keep it real.

DEE

What about me, Chip?

CHIP

Sure, you can have some peanut butter if you want.

DEE

Har, har. I meant, how am I supposed to finish our set if Xtopps is in your office getting glitched?

CHIP

(already walking away)

See ya later!

DEE

Unbelievable.

XTOPPS

Yeah, this shank of the cycle is a king-size flake. That's why I keep trying to get you to join me in the astral plane. Turn your eyes inside and dig the vacuum.

DEE

I don't have the knack for remembering songs when I'm three sheets to the solar wind like you, Xtopps. Just be sure *you* join *me* on stage after break, ok? We're supposed to have each other's backs, no matter how big the monkey on yours is.

CHIP

(far off at the door)

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

XTOPPS

(close-up, finally)

Chorp! I need the keys to the castle!

CHIP

Oh right. Good call.

Key-tossing noise, keys being caught in Xtopps's xtopps.

XTOPPS

Lemme get this nutty oil for the crab boil, know what i mean sis?

DEE

Yeah, do what you've got to do, just get back here in five.

[scene 14b] We follow XTOPPS humming as he heads towards CHIP's office. He opens the office door, shuts it behind him. The bar noise fades.

XTOPPS

(to himself) Lessee here. *(keys jangling)* The special drawer, ay? Ah! A special key is my special-ty. *(fits the key into the lock, drawer opens)* Ohh, Chorp, you magnificent sort! I see you've got that good brittle brittle. But where's that... come on, drawer. I know you're holding out on me... *(rummages around. A vial of peanut oil makes a peanut-oil-in-a-vial-sound)* Oooh yeah, just what the attorney advised. *(unscrews the top)* One dropper's good for a dapper dude. But just to be safe... best take... three.

Three squirts/gulps, followed by a "time-warp/time-slows-down" noise, immediately followed by a sick sitar anthem à la "Within You Without You."

XTOPPS

Wooooaaaaaaahhh... Good to be back. Hey, I didn't know Chorp had one of those doors to the exact center of consciousness installed back here.

He opens the door to the stock room.

UNEXPLAINED VOICE

Welcome back, Xtopps. We've missed you.

XTOPPS

Now if I can name that tune correctly, each of these bottles holds one secret of the universe. What've we got in this dusty li'l friendo?

He uncorks a bottle. The sound of a beam of light (you know, the sound that light makes) rushing out.

XTOPPS

No way. I'm the musician. I'm all musicians, I keep time. Time! Ha! Time can't be kept, mang. Free time. I hear you, beam of light. Time should be free. *(spots a different bottle)* What will you lay down when I unscrew your lid, kid?

He unscrews a second bottle. A frantic but pleasant buzzing.

XTOPPS

No flottin' way, zood. What do you mean?

A different, emphatic buzzing.

XTOPPS

And then they just... seize the means of production?

Agreeable buzzing.

XTOPPS

So it is possible! Gary Marx was right!

Buzzing in assent.

XTOPPS

Right on, Doktor Avalanche. I got the fuel for the transformation! (*another bottle*) What about this shiny one here?

He opens a third bottle. A rainbow (and the sound rainbows make) pours out.

XTOPPS

Ohh. It doesn't matter what the recipe says. Add as much garlic as you want.

SOPON

(heard by XTOPPS as the voice of a god)

XTOPPS!

XTOPPS

A messenger? I'd better answer...

He hums the first eleven notes to "Welcome to the Black Parade."

SOPON

(correcting him: "what do we say?")

...Your Amplitude?

XTOPPS

Of course! (*hums again*), Your Amplitudinosity—Four-thousand flagellations, I never thought I'd reach the exact center, my most sublime cherry-lime.

The office door slams open. A booming (autotuned?) voice:

XYBIDONT GODDESS

Xtoooooops!

XTOPPS

Oh, woah, mang. Deep fried and crusty!

XYBIDONT GODDESS

You've been ungrateful, Xtopps. And now I won't give you a wooden train for Xybmas! Why did you never write to me?

XTOPPS

Oh, hey, didn't you glomp my messages, zood?

XYBIDONT GODDESS

You have forsaken me, Xtopps!

XTOPPS

What? Narg, mang! I sang the Five-Way-Canziona to you every lunar cycle! And still when Little Xtopps went to peek under the Pole of the Wayward Blessing, my Blessing-Pot was bone-dry!

XYBIDONT GODDESS

Sing it to me now, Xtopps. Regale the ancient ones with your voices.

XTOPPS

(singing, a pure, melodious falsetto)

AaaaaaaaaAAAAaaaahhh! AaaaaAAAAaaAAAAAAAAA!

XYBIDONT GODDESS

Yes, yes, more! This pleases me.

XTOPPS

When I was! A young boy! My father! Took me into the city!

XYBIDONT GODDESS

Would you like me to tell your future, Xtopps?

XTOPPS

Whisper it loud, able grable.

A breeze floats by. It kisses XTOPPS on the forehead. XTOPPS weeps.

XTOPPS

Narg, mang. Ultra-narg.

XYBIDONT GODDESS

Three times the raven shall realize the discotheque. Be your best on Saint Coltrane's Day, and only the young die good.

XTOPPS

(still crying)

I know... everything!

DEE

(from far off)

Please welcome to the stage, the Illustrious Xtopps!

XTOPPS belts out a beautiful, melodic, sad tune that swells, something similar to Vitas's the 7th Element. It fades into the dreamy transition music. [scene 15]

DEE

Hang on, hang on, no. That is not what happened at all!

XTOPPS

I saw what I saw, mang.

DEE

If you saw it, that means it definitely didn't happen. Chip, here's what really went down.

[scene 16a] Dreamy transition music.

CHIP

Hey you two, I'm gonna be out for a while, gotta pick up a package. So are you good for the next hour or so?

XTOPPS

I dunno, mang. I'm running low on the slow mo flow, y'know?

CHIP

...I do not. But I'm assuming you're talking about the nutty stuff. Well, if you're in need of a pick-me-up, there's something that might be of interest in the office. Look in the "Special Drawer" of my "Desk". Get it?

XTOPPS

Repetez-vous?

CHIP

(quietly, a secret now)

The special drawer of my desk. I'll give you the key if that keeps you cranking out the tunes while I'm out.

XTOPPS

You got a deal, I can keep it real.

DEE

What about me, Chip?

CHIP

Sure, you can have some peanut butter if you want.

DEE

Har, har. I meant, how am I supposed to finish our set if Xtopps is in your office getting glitched?

CHIP

(already walking away)

See ya later!

DEE

Unbelievable.

XTOPPS

Hm? Sorry, Dee, I wasn't paying, like, any attention.

DEE

Gee, thanks.

XTOPPS

Like, at all. Ever.

DEE

Got it. Okay, buddy, we've still got another hour to kill. Think you can manage to not leave me hanging like last time? We're supposed to have each other's backs, no matter how big the monkey on yours is.

XTOPPS

I'll never be your creaky gate, Dee!

DEE

Oh yeah? You don't remember last week, when you totally effed and I was stuck repeating the same three songs for five hours until you charged the stage singing Carmina Burana?

XTOPPS

Ooooh, right. You kept calling for backup.

DEE

I sure did, but O Fortuna does not remotely sync up with Happy by Pharrell!

XTOPPS

Agree to disagree.

CHIP

(far off at the door)

Alright everyone, I'm outta here!

ALL

Bye, Chip!

XTOPPS

(close-up)

Chorp! I need the keys to the castle!

CHIP

Oh right. Good call.

Key-tossing noise, keys being caught in Xtopps's xtopps.

XTOPPS

Lemme get this nutty oil for the crab boil, know what i mean sis?

DEE

Yeah, do what you've got to do, just get back here in five. I ran through my whole a capella repertoire during your stunt last week, the only thing left now is "28 Bottles of Space Beer on the Wall."

XTOPPS

Groovy tune.

DEE

No it is not. It is not a groovy tune. It is very boring and terrible and nobody likes it. That's why I eliminated 71 of the bottles. Do not. Make me do that. Again.

XTOPPS

You have my word as a scholar and a gentlebeing. I'll brb, mon cherie.

DEE

Okay... *(into mic)* Hey there, Electric Eggers. Eggites? Eggizens? Anyway, my associate here is just going to grab a quick snack, and then we'll be back in business. So sit tight!

Mild applause.

DEE

All right, Xtopps, go on. But we took five three minutes ago, so you'd better make it snappy.

XTOPPS

Oh, Xtopps will make it Skippy!

XTOPPS heads off to CHIP's office. [scene 16b]

DEE

Ho-kay. Where's my Triple Parsec and soda?

DEE shuffles instruments & sheet music around.

DEE

Did that Xyb yoink my drink, too? Frill me.

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

KWONTZ

[You're doing a great job, Dee!]

DEE

(sighs)

Thanks, Kwontz. How you been?

KWONTZ

[Oh, you know. Getting through it.]

DEE

Tell me about it. You coming around for the jitterbug dance-off tomorrow?

KWONTZ

[I'd love to, but Kwizzia has a ballet recital]

DEE

Oh! I didn't know Kwizzia was doing ballet! How old is she now?

KWONTZ

[145!]

DEE

A hundred and forty-five already! Wow, time really flies, huh?

KWONTZ

[Sure does, sure does.]

DEE

At least some time does. I feel like I've already been at this gig for an eternity and a half.

KWONTZ

[Hang in there, Dee!]

DEE

Thanks, Kwontz. Oh, break's over. And surprise, surprise, Xtopps is still back in Chip's office getting randomized. All right, good talk, Kwontz, but I gotta go sing... something. Sans accompaniment. Again.

KWONTZ

[You got this!]

DEE

Thanks. *(into mic)* Ahem. Hi. Looks like it's just you and me, Electric Egg. So... *(sigh)* I'm sure you'll all remember this classic number from the early days of space exploration.

(sings) 28 bottles of space beer on the wall, 28 bottles of space beer...

(to backstage) Xtopps? Any second now.

(back into mic) C'mon, you know the words! *(sings)* Iiiiiif one of those bottles should happen to fall, and the gravity field is working at all, 27 bottles of space beer on the wall...

(to herself) Oh, hey! There's my drink!

(back into mic) Folks, if you'll bear with me, I'm just gonna take a pause for... a quick... sip... while my partner... okay, he's still not here, so how about one more verse? Bottoms up!

(she downs her drink and sets the glass back down on a stool)

Hey Bubbles? Can you make me another one of these dealies? I have a feeling it's gonna be a long night.

(back into mic) Okay. Here we go now, verse two!

SOPON

(approaching)

Coming through!

DEE

27 bottles of space beer on the wall, 27 bottles of space beer—

No one's gonna sing along with me, huh? Alright, fine. Just thought I'd throw it out there.

—Iiiiiiiiiiiiiif one of those bottles should happen to fall, and the gravity field is working at all, twenty six bottles of space beer on the wall...

Don't you all look at me like that! I'm doing my best up here, and what thanks do I get? A round of applause? If I'm lucky!

KWONTZ

[You're killing it, Dee! Third verse, same as the first!]

XTOPPS

(from the back room, high pitched falsetto)

AaaaAAAAaaaAAAAAA!

DEE

WHAT the— Crap. Sorry, Kwontz, sounds like Xtopps really did manage to get weirder than usual back there. I better see what's up. Could you keep it going for me? I'll spell you as soon as I can.

KWONTZ

[Right-o! Anything for you, Dee!]

KWONTZ starts the song up again in the background as DEE makes her way to the back room. She knocks on the door. [scene 16c]

DEE

Xtopps?

XTOPPS

aAaaaaAAAAaaa

DEE

Great. *(opens the door, XTOPPS gets louder.)* Oh, what the meckel is this now. Xtopps? Buddy? Everything's fine. You're ALL RIGHT. You're in Chip's office, surrounded by... bottles? You're sitting under the desk in a huge pile of bottles, zood.

XTOPPS

AaaaAA?

DEE

That's right. Think you can hoist yourself a little closer to reality for me, bud? At least enough so you can tell one end of a fleezborp from the other?

XTOPPS

(whimpering)

AaaaAa.

DEE

Great. 'Cause I'm dying out there.

[scene 16d] DEE leaves the office and heads back to the stage, where KWONTZ is still singing.

KWONTZ

[23 bottles of space-beer on the wall!]

DEE & KWONTZ

23 bottles of space-beer! If one of those bottles should—

XTOPPS bursts out of the office and onto the stage.

XTOPPS

TO CARRRRY OOOONNNNNN, TO CAAAAARY OOOONNNNNN, TO...

DEE

Flob, dammit.

Dreamy music transition back into the present. [scene 17]

DEE

And then you just kept singing that over and over, until the priest in the bloodstained robes opened one of those seltzer cans that Soapon dropped, which exploded all over the place, which of course those Dilurians over there took to mean “time to act like a bunch of frat butts,” (*everyone present except FRALL: OHHHHHHH!*) at which point you collapsed into a heap muttering about Xybidont Christmas or something.

XTOPPS

You mean I didn’t really see the Ungrudging Byroxidana?

DEE

Not today, zood. Today you saw the underside of Chip’s desk and whatever was inside those old-as-Earth bottles he’s been “saving for a special occasion.”

CHIP

Waitaminit, what?!

DEE

Yeah, you know. The dusty ones with the corks from the back of the supply room?

CHIP

I was saving those for when I retire to the Trifluvian Beach Satellite Islands!

XTOPPS

You can’t keep the secrets of the universe in bottles in the supply room, mang. It’s not right.

CHIP

...I’ll deal with you later, (*bitterly*) Your Radiance.

DEE

So anyway, there you have it, Chip. As you and everyone here can see, I was not wasted. I saw the whole thing go down, from my perfect vantage point, alone on the stage.

CHIP

Okay, yeah, I think we've got every piece of the puzzle now. Except for one:

A robot console opening, electric sparking noises.

CHIP

—Why is BUBBLES full of MAPLE SYRUP?!

BUBBLES

Oh gosh... so embarrassing...

WOODSMAN-BOT

I... think I can help clearin up dat dere mystery dere, eh?

CHIP

I'm sorry, who are you now?

ALTHAAR

Oh, yes! The robot with the flannel decalcomania and the large axe was speaking with Althaar and Father Grthmaa'labluurgen earlier! Althaar must make apology that he was not catching your name, robot friend.

WOODSMAN-BOT

Just your friendly neighborhood woodsman-bot, dere. So here's my yarn fer ya: I was oot and aboot havin' a rip with dat dere space-priest, when I happened to notice the prettiest two-fer of Labatt I ever did lay my sensors on over beyond at da bar, so I naturally went to chattin' her up, and, well...

Dreamy transition music. [scene 18]

BUBBLES

Heya. Haven't seen the likes of you in here before. What can I get ya?

WOODSMAN-BOT

Hidey ho. That's some pretty impressive pouring yer doin' there.

BUBBLES

Mm hmm. I got the fastest pour in the Western Spiral Arm.

WOODSMAN-BOT

Oh yeah? Dat dere's quite a statement. I don't suppose you can back it up?

BUBBLES

Why don't ya sit back and just watch me?

Rapid pouring noise.

BUBBLES

Done! 4.8 Nanoseconds.

WOODSMAN-BOT

Tapdancin' Tommy Douglas! Dat's a super-fast pour, dere. But tell me, can you do it with... other liquids?

BUBBLES

Whaddaya mean?

WOODSMAN-BOT

I mean, I got 6.4 metric liters of pure, uncut Ontario Gold in my reserve tank. I'd love ta see me a robo-girlie who knows her way around dat stuff.

BUBBLES

Are you implying you think you're too much for me to handle?

WOODSMAN-BOT

I mean, how would I know unless ya showed me?

BUBBLES

Ooh. Right here at the bar?

WOODSMAN-BOT

If ya wouldn't mind, that is...

BUBBLES

(purring)

It's my other specialty.

CHIP

ALL RIGHT!

Dreamy transition music back to the present. [scene 19]

CHIP

I think I get the picture. Woodsman-bot, you usually walk around with a tank full of syrup?

WOODSMAN-BOT

Well, now I'm filled with tonic, and I feel 3 upgrades younger!

CHIP

(groans)

Those tubes are gonna take forever to flush out.

BUBBLES

Sorry, boss. I thought I could handle it.

CHIP

Ugh, Bubbles. Just... next time you want to expand your personal horizons? Do it on your own personal time! *(addressing everybody)* So! It seems like this disaster was pretty much everyone's fault, for being their typical clumsy, distracted, drugged-out, bogged-down, stirred-up, or, in the case of Althaar, excessively helpful selves. That about right?

EVERYONE

Guess so, yeah, sounds right to me, etc

CHIP

Great. I'm never leaving the bar again.

[scene 20] End credit music.

ANNOUNCER

You've been listening to *Life with Althaar*, episode nineteen.

This episode was written by John Amir and Lex Friedman for Gemini CollisionWorks and starred

Chris Lee as Chip Frinkel

Berit Johnson as Althaar

Derrick Peterson as Xtopps

Ivanna Cullinan as Commander Torianna

Amanda La Pergola as Mrs. Frondrinax

Eli Gantias as H.F.

Zuri Washington as Dee

John Amir as John B

and Alyssa Simon as Lieutenant-Commander Frall

and also featured

Philip Cruise, Holly Pocket McCaffrey, Ian W. Hill, Lex Friedman, and Linus Gelber

Life with Althaar was created by Berit Johnson and Ian W. Hill

Berit is the supervising producer, showrunner, and script supervisor.

Ian is the audio producer, sound designer, and technical supervisor.
The writers' room consists of Berit, Ian, John, Amanda, Chris, Philip, Lex, and Linus.
Theme and Interstitial Music composed and performed by Anna Stefanic
Life With Althaar logo and illustration by Dean Haspiel
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We'll be back in two weeks with more from all our friends on the Fairgrounds, but right now,
who's this mysterious stranger checking into a cheap spotel in Samech 51?

[scene 21] Grimy, sad spotel lobby. Probably a broken ventilation fan somewhere. BIGELOW, a Human sounding both strong and nervous, rings the bell for service.

ALIEN SPOTEL MANAGER

Welcome to the Syodmack Spotel. "Syodmack: A Place You Might As Well Be." Whaddaya want?

BIGELOW

Yes, I have a reservation. Flitcraft. Charles Flitcraft?

ALIEN SPOTEL MANAGER

A reservation? What kinda joint you think this is? *(bleep)* Oh, lookit that, Flitcraft. Paid in advance for three days. That when you'll be checkin' out?

BIGELOW

I... I don't know just yet. I may be here longer. Maybe much longer.

ALIEN SPOTEL MANAGER

Yeah, ok, I don't need your life story, pal. Here's the key, it's the last door on the left.

A keycard is placed on a counter; BIGELOW takes it and starts moving, MANAGER is heard fading away.

ALIEN SPOTEL MANAGER

Bathroom's at the end of the hall, no cooking in the pods, no audible weeping after 23:20 pm. Enjoy your stay.

BIGELOW walks down the hall, possibly humming or whistling a song ("Beyond Uranus," maybe) and entering his room. Sound of him dropping a suitcase on a bed. He exhales. There is a rustling sound from the corner of the room...

BIGELOW

Uh, hello? Is someone in here? Hello?

The rustling approaches BIGELOW.

UNIDENTIFIABLE FUGULNARI VOICE

...Mister Bigelow...?

BIGELOW

What? Who? No, my name's Flitcraft. I don't know any Bigelow. Who are you? What do you want?

UNIDENTIFIABLE FUGULNARI VOICE

(closer)

...Mister Bigelow...!

BIGELOW

What? NO!

*Sound of the **FUGULNARI** grabbing and strangling **BIGELOW**. **BIGELOW** coughs, tries to scream, protests, but the plant is too strong. The struggle knocks lamps off tables, breaks other furniture, but in the end, **BIGELOW** grows silent. The **FUGULNARI** drops the body to the floor with a thud and moves to the door, opening it. It stands in the doorway for a moment, **chuckles**, and then slams the door behind it.*