

STELLAR FIRMA TERRA FIRMA — THE STELLAR FIRMA PROTOTYPE EPISODE

Content Warnings

- **Alcohol & alcoholism**
- **Drugs & substance abuse**
- **Innuendo & sexual references**
- **Mind control & memory wiping**
- **Toilet humour**
- **Discussions of: medical equipment & procedures, explosions, emotional manipulation, time loops**
- **Mentions of: physical violence & death, coma, food, agoraphobia**

TIM: Hello, and welcome to a very special episode of Stellar Firma. So special, in fact, it's not even called that. Uh, this you're about to hear is the very first episode that we recorded, even before the show itself was a thing. It's a pilot, you might call it, although it was never put out as a pilot, back when the show was called Terra Firma, before we realised that for SEO reasons that would be awful. I think there was a landscaping business called that as well. So please listen and judge in incredibly kind terms the episode we recorded all those years ago. Also, it was recorded all in one take, because we were ignorant fools. Sweet, summer children who thought that would be how we would do the whole show. Oh, how we would learn. Enjoy!

TREXEL: Nine sides of Saturn! **[stretching and groaning]** Oh, dear. Ooh, dear.

DAVID: Morning, Trexel.

TREXEL: Morning, David 7, how are you?

DAVID: Uh, well, I said morning, I actually mean, um... Just... not. Not at all. Not at all the morning. Completely and utterly very late.

TREXEL: Well, you know. Morning is as morning does.

DAVID: Be late?

TREXEL: Yes.

DAVID: No, you wouldn't know what the morning does, because you're never where the morning is.

TREXEL: Look, whatever the matter, I'm here now.

DAVID: Why are you late?

TREXEL: Well, you know. I was out. I was out with my chums. We had a little drink. Had another little drink. Long story short, I woke up in a recycling unit this far away from being turned into mush, ha! Wonderful, wonderful chat with the maintenance man. He called me a scum ball and I punched him right in the face. And that's when the guards came. Anyway, potato, po-tah-to, I'm ready for work.

DAVID: Right. Well, funny you should be sleeping in the recycling pits, because we have about half an hour to make sure we don't end up there once we're fired.

TREXEL: Half an hour.

DAVID: Half an hour.

TREXEL: Half an hour.

DAVID: Yes.

TREXEL: That's not long.

DAVID: Half an hour till the pub opens, and if I know you, that's basically it.

TREXEL: Yes, yes. Whatever the cost, it's open. I'll be there.

DAVID: So, um, I've worked through most of the day's quota.

TREXEL: Lovely. Good work, David 7. Better than David 6.

DAVID: But I only put my name on it.

TREXEL: What now?

DAVID: Well, I've only put my name on it.

TREXEL: But we're a team, we work together, so our paperwork... It's you and me, David and Trexel Geistman.

DAVID: Well, no, because you—

TREXEL: The two amigos.

DAVID: No, but you weren't in work.

TREXEL: Well... does the paper have to know that?

DAVID: Well, I do. And I wrote the paper, so. Yes.

TREXEL: You're incapable of lying, are you, David?

DAVID: What?

TREXEL: Just a little lie.

DAVID: Well, no, I know what a lie is, I just didn't want to.

TREXEL: Well, couldn't you?

DAVID: Well, you're late for work.

TREXEL: [sputters] Look, we're going round in circles, David. Okay, we've got a bit a time. If I get one in, hopefully that'll slide under the old radar, and they'll look at the last one and be like, 'There's Trexel, there's David, they've done a good day's work, why don't we promote Trexel? Why don't we promote him?' That's what they'll think.

DAVID: What, after one thing?

TREXEL: A really good submission.

DAVID: Just a really good one.

TREXEL: Well, okay. We're bound to have some submissions left over.

DAVID: Anyway, well. Hang on a minute. **[hiss and thump of brief arrival]** Oh, alright. Well, one's just arrived, so.

TREXEL: Wonderful, lovely. Hit me with it, David. I'm all ears. Apart from the parts of my body that aren't ears.

DAVID: Right, well, um, so. This one's from Sun in a Box. That's all they go by. Uh, looks like they want a leisure plant.

TREXEL: **[with a different pronunciation of 'leisure']** A leisure planet.

DAVID: No, a leisure plant.

TREXEL: **[still with the same different pronunciation]** A leisure planet.

DAVID: Um. Yes. And, uh, they're looking for total relaxation.

TREXEL: Mmmhmm.

DAVID: So this should hopefully be quite an easy one. Um, they're looking to expend no energy, so you should be perfectly at home here.

TREXEL: Nice.

DAVID: Uh, the theme is 'Leisure and Luxury,' it seems. And they want the mandatory feature of 'you staying healthy,' but expending no energy.

TREXEL: Okay, okay, so I'm thinking... I'm thinking, do we wanna go mechanical or organic? Cos if you want a mechanical world of total relaxation and luxury, I'm thinking hover chairs, I'm thinking feeding tubes? I'm thinking tubes of all kinds. Every location connected by a network of vacuum tubes. Yes, it'll take some thought, it'll take some thought. Well, do you wanna go mechanical, or do you wanna go more uh—

DAVID: I'm trying to think of mechanical and all I can see is spidery arms. Uh. You know, rapidly moving up and down, moving things to your face.

TREXEL: Well, some people like—

DAVID: [unintelligible] —scream 'No more, no more, I've had enough, please stop it.'

TREXEL: Hm, we had a trouble time—

DAVID: What? No. That was just a thought.

TREXEL: Just a thought?

DAVID: Yes.

TREXEL: Well, I mean, you could have a spidery-arm, grab you, move you from place to place. It would require a system of pullies more complicated than I think we're prepared for.

DAVID: So are thinking this planet's gonna be entirely automated?

TREXEL: Yes. I think an entirely automated planet— if it's a luxury planet— you don't want to do anything, you don't want to have to code or key anything in, so. An entirely automated planet. Below the crust, you can have mechanics, so the core of the planet, it's gonna be CPU, it's gonna be, it's gonna be generators.

DAVID: Wait. Okay.

TREXEL: It's gonna be all the, all of the gubbins.

DAVID: Right, but the client doesn't want to expend any energy at all, so I'm assuming this means both physical and mental.

TREXEL: You wouldn't have to. It'll all be set up. You'll arrive: a bed rises out of the meadow floor.

DAVID: A meadow?

TREXEL: A meadow.

DAVID: A mechanical meadow.

TREXEL: Well, the meadow top will be artificial, but the mechanics will be— So the meadow opens up, a bed rises out, and a hand maiden says, 'Lay down, please.' And you lay down, and from that moment on: not a single piece, not a single iota of excess energy is spent.

DAVID: Well, see, this is what I'm thinking, though. So they lie down in the bed, and then the handmaiden is like, 'Excuse me, sir or madam, or anything else.'

TREXEL: Yes.

DAVID: 'What would you like to do?' And then boom, they've just had a thought, and they've had to make a choice. A difficult choice: do they want to eat now, or will they maybe like a pleasurable time of a certain class?

TREXEL: Okay. So you want alllll of the choice taken out of it?

DAVID: Well, that's energy, right? And they want to expend no energy. Very specifically said expending no energy.

TREXEL: No energy at all.

DAVID: But staying healthy.

TREXEL: Okay. So. At what point does the planet of complete leisure and luxury become a prison world in which you have no autonomy?

DAVID: Um— the point at which you realise, I suppose.

TREXEL: So— Oooh. An ether-based atmosphere.

DAVID: Yes.

TREXEL: Gently drugging you, keeping you docile, keeping you happy, but keeping you awake. That's gonna be a difficult balance to maintain.

DAVID: Yes.

TREXEL: Okay, full medical equipment on every pleasure bed.

DAVID: Yes.

TREXEL: Monitoring your blood, your oxygen level, keeping you alive, of course, making sure you all of your bodily functions are taken care of. Pooping is energy, after all.

DAVID: Well, yes, so we want some kind of contraption that just sucks the poop right out of there. No contractions necessary.

TREXEL: You want it really up in your business.

DAVID: All over your business.

TREXEL: Cyborgs everywhere.

DAVID: Lots— Wait, what?

TREXEL: Well, you're, that's— You're a cyborg, then.

DAVID: Okay, yes, so you are a cyborg.

TREXEL: Yes, we—

DAVID: Um. Just tubes, every single orifice.

TREXEL: This isn't sounding fun. I've gotta tell you, it's not sounding fun.

DAVID: I suppose it depends on what you're into.

TREXEL: It's a very specific kind of fun. I've known a couple of boys who would like that kind of thing, but I think for, for the day to day customer, that's gonna be, you know— Before they go into it, we're gonna have to present this to them. And with a like, opening gambit, 'we're gonna put this up your butt.'

DAVID: So I think maybe we're going a bit too high tech. Maybe we shuttle them in, and then we hit them with a sock with a billiard ball in it—

TREXEL: Okay.

DAVID: Ooh, no, that sounds very—

TREXEL: David, that's troubling. And that's coming from me, Trexel Geistman, a man who's stolen so many cars that I actually don't think they were cars, I think they might be bikes. I think they're bikes. I've been stealing bikes.

DAVID: Are you sure you haven't been in some sort of opiated atmosphere?

TREXEL: Absolutely. Three clubs, all opiated atmosphere.

DAVID: Right, okay, well. Fair enough.

TREXEL: So, we're gonna have to find something that isn't... physically violent to the customers. Management don't like it when we physically assault the customers.

DAVID: Unless they ask for it.

TREXEL: Unless they ask for it specifically, which I don't believe they have.

DAVID: No, leisure planet does not a battle planet make.

TREXEL: No, no, no. So it needs to be completely pleasant, completely lovely. I know.

DAVID: Okay.

TREXEL: I know.

DAVID: Right.

TREXEL: What you do, is you allow them to gently drift off to sleep.

DAVID: How?

TREXEL: Well, you wait.

DAVID: Just, let them...

TREXEL: Eventually, everyone goes to sleep.

DAVID: Right.

TREXEL: And when they're asleep, at that point, you just cap their head with a neural reader.

DAVID: Okay.

TREXEL: You're in their brain.

DAVID: So you're talking about mentally assaulting them as opposed to physically assaulting them?

TREXEL: No, no, we tell them about this. They've fully consented. So you put a mental reader right on top of their little dome, and then you transport them to an internal world.

DAVID: Right, okay! How do we deal with their poo?

TREXEL: Oh, that's all handled.

DAVID: But, no, but by tube, surely.

TREXEL: Yes, but you're in a medically induced coma. Like, if you're in some sort of shuttle accident.

DAVID: Right, okay.

TREXEL: We've got the technology for that. It's handled. So, you know, you whack it on. Once they're in, once they're in the fully internal world that we will build, you know, in the computers—

DAVID: Oh, we'll have to get the software guys on this.

TREXEL: Oh, we'll get the software guys on it. Actually, the business might like this. Because although it's very complicated, building an internal world? Much cheaper than building a physical world.

DAVID: Oh, that's true, actually. Overhead's kept down. You don't have to rent the space of space.

TREXEL: Your overheads are so low you might hit your head on a beam if you're not careful.

DAVID: A financial beam.

TREXEL: Financial beam. So, you've got them in the internal world, and at that point, anything's possible. You just allow them to let— You know, at any given point, what they want. So, maybe at a certain point they're thinking, 'You know what? I like marshmallows. I want everything to be

marshmallowy and soft and see,' but, you know, you're not gonna get diabetes from these marshmallows, cos they're marshmallows in the mind.

DAVID: Mind-mallows.

TREXEL: Mindmallows. Mind over Mallows! That's what we'll call one of the versions. Cos we're gonna have to show them some example versions.

DAVID: Oh, okay.

TREXEL: 'Let me present to you... Mind over Mallow.' Bam. Presentation.

DAVID: What about some other versions, then? What do you think? We've got some marshmallows, right? What else do we think a sun in a box is gonna like? What do you think a sun in a box is gonna find totally relaxing?

TREXEL: Pleasure.

DAVID: Pleasure.

TREXEL: Pleasure.

DAVID: No, pleasure, sorry.

TREXEL: Pleasure.

DAVID: No, pleasure. What do you think a sun in a box would find pleasurable?

TREXEL: How you have you spelt this?

DAVID: 'Sun in a box.'

TREXEL: Sun, s-o-n, or s-u-n?

DAVID: Uhh... S-u-n it looks like.

TREXEL: Okay. Sun in a box. What would— If I was a sun in a box—

DAVID: Fission. I just really, really enjoy fission

TREXEL: I love— Gone Fishin'. That's what it's called!

DAVID: No. Nuclear fission.

TREXEL: Gone Nuclear Fission.

DAVID: What? Oh, the software version.

TREXEL: The software version.

DAVID: But what does it have in it? Is it just a lot of exploding?

TREXEL: It's a lot of— Sun, you know what—

DAVID: That sounds stressful!

TREXEL: No, no, but to a sun— You know what suns love?

DAVID: Well, maybe they hate marshmallows. They burn them up. It's very stressful! They want a nice crispy one, and then it's just—

TREXEL: David. David. Are you a negative Nancy? Or are you a positive Peter?

DAVID: I'm a pragmatic David.

TREXEL: Pragmatic David, it'll do. But I'm getting the feeling you're not coming with me on this fun—

DAVID: I'm just trying to think of what a sun in a box would want. Well, wait, hang on it a minute. What is this box?

TREXEL: The box? The sun— the box in which the sun is? I suppose the universe is a box with all suns in it, really, if you think about it.

DAVID: Oh, I suppose so, yeah. It might not be a literal box.

TREXEL: Could be a metaphorical boxes.

DAVID: Could be one of those hyper boxes.

TREXEL: Could be a hyper box. Okay, so. We've got them in the neural lit. They're in their own internal world. They're enjoying themselves, but we have to have the purest luxury. And you know what? I've met people. Have you?

DAVID: I have occasionally met people.

TREXEL: What are people like? In your experience.

DAVID: Umm... Rude.

TREXEL: Rude, sure.

DAVID: Perverted.

TREXEL: Sure.

DAVID: Late.

TREXEL: Are we talking just about me?

DAVID: No?

TREXEL: There was a— Well, yes. People are... flawed. Even unto their own perception of luxury and leisure.

DAVID: Right.

TREXEL: A person might think, 'This is what I want—'

DAVID: Are you implying we just tell them what they want?

TREXEL: We just tell them what they want.

DAVID: Do we in fact manipulate them into liking exactly what we offer them?

TREXEL: Yes. We. Do. We tell them what they want, because people don't know what they want. What they want really is to be told what's nice, and then basically work backwards from there to convince themselves it was their idea all along.

DAVID: Okay, fine.

TREXEL: People find choice confusing and frightening.

DAVID: Anyway, so we've got marshmallows... I mean, mind-mallows.

TREXEL: Mind over mallow.

DAVID: Mind over mallow.

TREXEL: Gone Nuclear Fission. We need one more because we need three. People love three. Two they're like, 'That's just two.' Three they're like, 'I won't have two of those.'

DAVID: Four is like, 'Oh, there's too many, I'm confused.'

TREXEL: Too many. 'I'm confused, I'm angry, I'm violent.'

DAVID: That's why they call it the rule of triples.

TREXEL: That's... what... yes.

DAVID: The triple rule.

TREXEL: The triple rule! There's three triple rules, did you know that?

DAVID: Uh, yes. So, one is 'always triple the rules.'

TREXEL: Number two, 'Don't do two triples cos that's sextuple, I think.' Rule three is, 'You've gone far, go back to rule one.'

DAVID: Exactly.

TREXEL: Exactly. So we need a third world.

DAVID: What else do suns enjoy? Why would a sun be in a box?

TREXEL: Why would a sun be— A sun has to be somewhere.

DAVID: I know, but most suns aren't in boxes.

TREXEL: Oh my god. They're agoraphobic.

DAVID: Yes, agoraphobic sun. Universe is a big place, can be quite scary.

TREXEL: An agoraphobic sun. You want to be... coddled. You want to be... encased. You want to be carried, like a babe in swaddling clothes, like a child found in the reeds by a river, wrapped up by a young slave maiden.

DAVID: What?

TREXEL: That's what we offer them.

DAVID: Right.

TREXEL: To be swaddled, to be cuddled.

DAVID: Do we just call it the Swaddle Box?

TREXEL: The Swaddle Box. Don't like the outside? Get in the Swaddle Box.

DAVID: Right. You managed to make that sound disgusting.

TREXEL: Everything can sound disgusting with the right tone, David. Get in the Swaddle Box.

DAVID: I don't want to get into the Swaddle Box.

TREXEL: Is this going to be a physical swaddling? An emotional swaddling?

DAVID: No, it's gonna be a mental swaddling, cos it all happens inside their brain.

TREXEL: All inside their brain. It can be both. Okay, imagine this: lights go down. The theatre hushes.

DAVID: Wait, wha— We're in a theatre?

TREXEL: We're in a mind. The theatre of the mind. The curtain comes up. And out of it pours...

DAVID: Boxes.

TREXEL: Goose down. Tons of goose down.

DAVID: Tons.

TREXEL: If all put on you at the same time? [**DAVID:** Suffocated death.] Instant death. Instant suffocation. But. When dispersed around a world, tons of goose down coating the floor, swaddling you.

DAVID: Well, hang on a minute. So we've got Marshmallows, Nuclear Fission, and Swaddling, and we've built three discrete versions.

TREXEL: Mind Over Mallow, Gone Nuclear Fission, Get in my Swaddle Box.

DAVID: Okay, no, it's just Swaddle Box. **[David begins protesting all of Trexel's proposed titles]**

TREXEL: Get in that Swaddle Box. Swaddle Box (Get Right Up In It.) Open up the Lid: Get In My Box of Swaddles.

DAVID: This is actively getting worse now.

TREXEL: Swaddle Box.

DAVID: Thank you. I was thinking, why bother doing three versions? Why not just, you know, put it all together? You know, cover— You come in, you come through these lovely, mallow'y clouds, right? And then you see a sea of goosedown, and then you're like, 'Oh, this is lovely, me, a sun, I really like this, there's lots of marshmallows—' Then BOOM! Nuclear explosion.

TREXEL: **[laughing]** Wow. That was frightening. So... I'm not sure that **every** person is going to enjoy—

DAVID: Whatever, we're not looking for every person.

TREXEL: That's a good point. It's just for Sun in a Box. So, you come through the clouds. There's marshmallows, there's goose down, there's an immediate nuclear explosion.

DAVID: Uh, not immediate. There's like, just enough time for—

TREXEL: To enjoy it. To sink in.

DAVID: AND THEN BANG!

TREXEL: David. I'm gonna have to tell you.

DAVID: What?

TREXEL: If you keep doing that, I'm gonna ruin these trousers.

DAVID: Why?

TREXEL: Because when a man's been awake for as long as I have, sudden long noises tend to make— You know, things happen.

DAVID: Uhh. Do you need a tube?

TREXEL: No, I don't need a tube.

DAVID: I think you might need a tube.

TREXEL: I've got my own tubes, David. I don't need to be coddled by you.

DAVID: Sounds like they don't function correctly. You've got broken tubes.

TREXEL: My tubes are just fine.

DAVID: Then why are you gonna— BOOM!

TREXEL: Well, now... Now I'm sitting in filth.

DAVID: See? You've got a broken tube!

TREXEL: Well, I didn't have a broken tube! You screamed a tube broken. So, what do you think?

DAVID: Well... what, my idea?

TREXEL: Of our idea. Does it fly? I can't tell at this stage, I'm too far in.

DAVID: Um, well, okay, so we've got— Got the clouds, got the sea, you've got the— **[whispers]** Boom. **[normal voice]** And then... and then... and then I'm out of ideas.

TREXEL: Then you're out of ideas. You know what? I'm out of ideas, too. What happens after then?

DAVID: Do we just reset it and play that over and over?

TREXEL: Again and again. I mean, that will probably get quite irritating for them after the first—

DAVID: What if we trick them that it's lovely?

TREXEL: You wipe their memory every single time!

DAVID: Yeah.

TREXEL: You go through clouds, goose down, explosion, 'Oh my god, that was so good, why do I feel sleepy?' **[David joins in]** Bam. Clouds, goose down, explosion. 'That was cool, that was nice, I enjoy that, I'm quite sleepy.' Clouds, goose down, explosion—

DAVID: Clouds, goose down, explosion. 'That was really good. Yes, now I'm a bit sleepy.' Goose down, clouds— I got confused. But I liked it.

TREXEL: You got confused, but it doesn't matter. We can randomize the order, it doesn't really matter.

DAVID: Oh, right, okay, wait. 'Explosion, goose down, clouds.'

TREXEL: Doesn't matter, because each time your memory will be reset. Each experience, pristine and new.

DAVID: Okay, alright. That sounds good. How do we keep them healthy?

TREXEL: How do you keep them healthy?

DAVID: How do you keep a sun healthy? Do you just wait? I think they're just healthy for billions of years.

TREXEL: I think suns are just fine.

DAVID: They're probably just— Have you ever seen a sick sun?

TREXEL: I've not. Well, I've seen a red dwarf.

DAVID: Oh, that is a sick sun.

TREXEL: That's a sick sun. But the thing is—

DAVID: Do we have to keep them stoked?

TREXEL: No. No, the problem with a sun is as it uses up all of its matter, it begins to collapse in on itself. But we have one thing on our side.

DAVID: What?

TREXEL: Any healthy sun that's looking for a planet now is gonna be... adolescent, at most.

DAVID: Is it?

TREXEL: Look at the submission. That's a teen sun.

DAVID: That's a very teen sun.

TREXEL: We've got millions of years until this pervert falls out of the sky.

DAVID: Why are they a pervert?

TREXEL: Well, they want a leisure planet! You know what that means.

DAVID: Well, they'd expend no energy!

TREXEL: Yeah, well, you don't have to expend energy to have that kind of fun. [**DAVID:** Hang on a minute.] Lie back and think of the resource wars.

DAVID: No, I've heard of this kind of expenditure of energy, and it sounds quite... busy.

TREXEL: You... You're just so naïve.

DAVID: What? No.

TREXEL: There are many ways that a being can encounter another being. Some energetic, sure. Sweaty. Breathless. Climaxing into a crescendo of shame.

DAVID: I don't like... Okay.

TREXEL: But! You can also just lie there. Just let it happen.

DAVID: Okay.

TREXEL: And that's, you know. That's a viable alternative, right. I'll show you some pamphlets. I'm showing you the pamphlets. Here's the pamphlets.

DAVID: [making increasingly distressed sounds] That person's not doing anything at all!

TREXEL: I think the clone doth protest too much. You love it, you dirty, dirty copy.

DAVID: That was very rude.

TREXEL: It was. Anyway, that sounds like a job well. Stick it back in the tube!

DAVID: Okay, there it goes.

TREXEL: Ha! Job well done. Now, you need to join me down at the Nebula.

DAVID: Yeah?

TREXEL: For a big, frosty pint.

DAVID: Okay, alright. I'll have a half.

TREXEL: You'll have... three halves! In one large glass.

DAVID: So I'll have one and a half.

TREXEL: Correct! You're getting the hang of it.

DAVID: Fine. Okay, let's go.

TREXEL: Alright sunshine.

[ending theme]

Created by Tim Meredith and Ben Meredith
Produced by Katie Seaton
Executive Producer: Alexander J Newall
Performances: Ben Meredith and Tim Meredith
Editing: Maddy Searle
Music: Samuel DF Jones
Artwork: Anika Khan
Mastering: Jeffrey Nils Gardner

