

STL 8 — Pillows and Cults

Content Warnings

- Comedic violence
- Emotional abuse
- Alcoholism

TIM

Hi there. This is Tim Meredith, co-creator and showrunner of Stella Firma, and I also play Trexel Geistman on the show. I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for listening to the show so far. The response has been overwhelming, and all of us here at Rusty Quill are constantly surprised by the strength and support from the fan community. If you want to help us, you can leave us a written review on iTunes to let other people know how much you've enjoyed the show, and you can also help us by sharing your thoughts about Stella Firma on Twitter using #StellaFirma or by talking about us on your social media platform of choice. We have very little budget here at Stella Firma for marketing, so word of mouth from fans is the main way we can increase our audience and ensure that we get to keep making the show, so nothing you can do is too small and anything you can do is massively appreciated. Enjoy the show!

TREXEL

Special thanks to Kate Onyett for today's submission! May the forces of physics leave you in peace.

[Show Theme – Intro]

IMOGEN

Rusty Quill presents: Stellar Firma.

[Theme continues]

DAVID

Oh, no. **(sighs)** I hope he's not late about being late... Oh no! Oh, I hope he's a *normal* amount of late. Oh, Board, *please* don't let him be late late, just normal late! Maybe even early late— No, he can't be early late. It's about late late time now. Oh no—

[Approaching footsteps followed by door swooshing open]

TREXEL

Ahh!

DAVID

Ah! Ooh, ooh! Oh, Trexel! Trexel, you're back—

TREXEL

The palace of dreams. Hello, chair. Hello, desk.

DAVID

What?

TREXEL

Hello, other chair.

DAVID

Um—

TREXEL

Hello, David.

DAVID

...Yes.

TREXEL

Welcome to the mind dome.

DAVID

You seem very... enthusiastic?

TREXEL

Let's pop those lights on.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Access granted.

[Bwoop of lights turning on]

TREXEL

(Gasps) I see before me... a palisade of mental wonder. **(punctuated)** Look upon the paper on the desk. Look upon the shiny pencils.

DAVID

Trexel—

TREXEL

How will they let us feed our minds today?

DAVID

(Agitated) Trexel, look upon the clock!

TREXEL

The clock! Ah, the clock, allowing us to confine our time into ever-smaller segments! Numbers on there smaller than I'm happy with, but what is time next to creativity, David?

DAVID

Incredibly important because it's the deadline!

TREXEL

David, you need to calm down in your brain.

DAVID

No!

TREXEL

I've been to a seminar— Well, I watched a seminar on my holovid— Well, I slept through large chunks of a seminar on my holovid—

(David splutters)

—but the seminar was about the creative process.

DAVID

R-Right?

TREXEL

And I have discovered the key.

(Beat) It's games, David.

DAVID

What?

TREXEL

They just play fun little games to get themselves what they call 'warmed up'.

DAVID

Right?

TREXEL

And then I fell asleep. And then at the end everybody was creative! That's what's been missing, David.

DAVID

What?

TREXEL

Fun, fun games.

DAVID

(Stuttering) Well, what's been wrong with the way we've been designing planets before?

TREXEL

No, let's not spoil it, David. Why don't you get the brief ready? And I'll let you in on the secrets later. Go on, go on!

DAVID

Right...

TREXEL

Get your little— get your little paper— get your little paper brief.

DAVID

Okay, right.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Initiating.

TREXEL

Go on.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

What's on the brief there, David?

DAVID

Um...

TREXEL

What's on the brief? Tell me what's on the brief, David!

DAVID

Okay, no— Hey! Oi, Trexel.

TREXEL

Sorry. Creative. I'm a creative sponge.

DAVID

Well, this is from “Hypnos Soulbiter”, and they want a planet where even the most insomniac of non-sleepers can lay a weary head. But be careful, **(ominously)** it might be permanent.

(Trexel hums)

The grammar really made that tone clear.

TREXEL

No, it did. You— you've— you've nailed it, David.

DAVID

(Stiffly) Thank you.

TREXEL

You, David? You're also a creative sponge. Soak up the words, David.

DAVID

Okay...?

TREXEL

Soak up the words.

DAVID

Right, so—

TREXEL

Soak up the words, David!

DAVID

I've— no— all the words are fully absorbed. And I will now expunge those words by... squeezing my creative—

TREXEL

No. No. David. David, the metaphors are for me. You just say the words.

DAVID

Okay. They really want some inescapably comfortable mattress fields, where the ICMs are grown.

TREXEL

Is that “Inescapably Comfortable Mattresses?”

DAVID

I assume so—

TREXEL

From context.

DAVID

—unless ICM means something. Does ICM mean something else?

TREXEL

Context.

DAVID

Does ICM mean something else?

TREXEL

No.

DAVID

Right. So, Inescapably Comfortable Mattress fields.

TREXEL

Exactly, David. Exactly.

DAVID

So that's what was on the paper, Trexel, shall we... design a planet?

TREXEL

David, yes. But how? That's the question, David.

DAVID

Well—

TREXEL

That's the question that plagues us all!

(David begins protesting)

I cannot sleep at night for the question of how to design!

DAVID

(Haltingly) We'll have a talk, and then write some ideas down, and then the Build Team will get them, and then they'll build it.

TREXEL

David, are you a murderer? Because it sounds like you're trying to *murder* my creativity right now. Are you an assassin? An assassin for hire?

DAVID

(Mumbling) Oh, right—

TREXEL

By the forces of mundanity? Is that you, David?!

DAVID

—because I'm trying to assassinate your—

TREXEL

(Shouting) Show me the knife, David!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Knife detected. Security alerted.

DAVID

It's a metaphorical knife.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Knife metaphorical. Security alerted.

DAVID

I mean—

TREXEL

Put away your metaphorical-ideas-knife, David.

DAVID

Fine.

TREXEL

And join me in... a game.

DAVID

Yes, Trexel.

TREXEL

And the game is going to *help us* get to the *core* of this idea.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Two brains! You understand the concept of having two brains?

DAVID

Yes?

TREXEL

Two brains are better than one, would you agree?

DAVID

Sure, yeah!

TREXEL

You're locked in! You can't look back.

DAVID

Wait, no, wait—

TREXEL

Tear out your eyes!

DAVID

Ah!

TREXEL

But keep them in, 'cause you'll need them to look at the future.

DAVID

Oh! **(sighs in relief)**

TREXEL

You get a word.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

And then I get a word.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

And then you get a word.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

And then I get a word.

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

And we keep going until the ideas fall out of our mouths. And the hope—in fact, the certainty—is that whatever we come out with will be purest gold nuggets, around which we can build a planet. So, so what’s— what’s one of the *key* factors in there? One of the key factors in the brief and then we’ll just start.

DAVID

They want a planet where even the most insomniac of non-sleepers can lay a weary head.

TREXEL

Good. Sleepy planet.

DAVID

Okay... soft.

TREXEL

Golden.

DAVID

Pillows.

TREXEL

Adorn.

DAVID

My.

TREXEL

Floor.

DAVID

And.

TREXEL

Never.

DAVID

Touch.

TREXEL

The.

DAVID

Ground.

TREXEL

Hovering.

DAVID

Above.

TREXEL

The.

DAVID

Mattresses.

TREXEL

Hidden.

DAVID

Beneath.

TREXEL

Listen.

DAVID

Ah.

TREXEL

There's.

DAVID

A.

TREXEL

Gold.

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DAVID

Tiny.

TREXEL

Bell.

DAVID

(Rolling the R) Ringing.

TREXEL

In.

DAVID

My.

TREXEL

Ear.

DAVID

But.

TREXEL

It's.

DAVID

Soothing.

TREXEL

Softly.

DAVID

Relaxing.

TREXEL

Calmly.

DAVID

Adorning.

TREXEL

The.

DAVID

Environment.

TREXEL

Don't!

DAVID

Look.

TREXEL

Behind.

Stellar Firma 8 – Pillows and Cults

DAVID

You.

TREXEL

Because.

DAVID

There's.

TREXEL

A.

DAVID

Terrifying.

TREXEL

Sleep.

DAVID

Monster!

TREXEL

If.

DAVID

You.

TREXEL

Don't.

DAVID

Look.

TREXEL

It.

DAVID

Won't.

TREXEL

Hurt.

DAVID

You.

TREXEL

But.

DAVID

If.

TREXEL

You.

Stellar Firma 8 – Pillows and Cults

DAVID

Do.

TREXEL

Look.

DAVID

Behind.

TREXEL

Yourself.

DAVID

It.

TREXEL

Will.

DAVID

Eat.

TREXEL

Your.

DAVID

Dreaaaaams!

(Beat)

TREXEL

So you see, David, that's the idea we're going with!

DAVID

I'm very scared now.

TREXEL

You see? You see— No, but David, scared is a kind of creative energy!

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

So let's recap.

DAVID

Okay?

TREXEL

We have a field of golden pillows, just hovering nicely above a ground of mattresses...

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

...golden bells tinkle quietly in the background, giving you a— a nice, soft, calming sensation...

DAVID

(Sighs) Yes...

TREXEL

(Intense) But so help me, if you look behind you—

(David begins making panicked noises)

—the— the dream monster will eat your dreams! Go to bed! *Go to bed!*

(David sobs)

So you see? That's what you've come up with.

(David exhales deeply, continues sobbing)

Congratulations. Congratulations. Do you like that? Do you like that?

IMOGEN

[Beep] Sadness detected. Security alerted.

TREXEL

Tears are energy. Use them.

DAVID

Right...

TREXEL

Use them.

DAVID

Oh, I'm covered in energy. Uh... wet, salty energy.

TREXEL

Come on. Everybody loves a big pint of wet salty energy chucked in their eyes at the end of a long day.

DAVID

Oh...

TREXEL

So that's a base idea, David!

DAVID

Oh, good.

TREXEL

Well done! Well done. You did excellently. So we've got a— a lovely, soft pillow planet, lovely mattress underneath, and also a terrifying monster that eats the dreams.

(David groans)

But—

DAVID

There with bells! There were relaxing bells!

TREXEL

There were also relaxing bells.

DAVID

Relaxing bells.

TREXEL

Because what is relaxation without the immediate threat of death and danger if you don't relax? Congratulations, David, you're doing very well, very well indeed. Okay!

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Come on! Expound upon it, David, you're— you're in the driver's seat here.

DAVID

Uh.

TREXEL

I'm just a creative invigorator.

DAVID

Uh...

TREXEL

I'm just helping you along, pushing you.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Pushing you.

DAVID

Like a monster.

TREXEL

Pushing you near a cliff of creativity.

DAVID

Ooh.

TREXEL

Okay.

DAVID

Okay. Well, that's— that's good. That sounds like a really **(sighs)** relaxing place where even though its insomniac of people will be... **(sighs)** encouraged if not threatened to go to sleep—

TREXEL

Absolutely threatened.

DAVID

Right, uh, they— Ooh. **(begins making fear noises)**

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Come on, David. Don't— don't— don't get bogged down in the fear.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Warning: Bio facsimile spiralling.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) David, come— Alright, I'm gonna have to bring you out of the stupor. I'm gonna bring you out of the stupor, David, look at me. Look at me. Look at me. We're gonna play another game. We're gonna play another game.

(David stops making fear noises)

We're gonna play a game. The alphabet can be both a prison and a key, can it not?

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Let's make it a key, David, by playing the alphabet game.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

This is an excellent game.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

We will each take a letter.

DAVID

Sure.

TREXEL

A. B.

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

C. D.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) D. E. The rest of them.

TREXEL

So forth.

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

And each sentence we start will have one of those letters at the beginning.

(shouting) If you get it wrong, David, then I will have to stop you! Because that is not creativity.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

But if you get it right, David, I promise you, you will come back 'round to a creative conclusion that shatters the very foundations of this company!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Employees are reminded that threats to Stellar Firma Ltd. will be cleansed.

DAVID

Oh. Oh dear.

TREXEL

You starting on O, David? Is that what you're doing?

DAVID

Nnnnnooo...

TREXEL

(Softly) You're starting with, David— No, you're starting— no? **(normal)** David, it's fantastic. You've started on O. Go with that. You're starting on O.

DAVID

...Of course I can sleep here.

TREXEL

Put down that worrisome cup; your sleeping times are not yet ready.

DAVID

Quoth the speaker who telleth me to sleepeth.

TREXEL

Righteously, this realm has a speaker of sleep. Woe is those who fear the monster, for the speaker shall set them free.

DAVID

Sleep now and the monster will not harm you, for you are safe in sleep.

TREXEL

Touch not the bells. The bells are there to calm you, but not for you to manipulate their brass rims.

DAVID

Undo your waking mind to the sound of the beautiful bells.

TREXEL

Vast, vast seas of sonorous sound wait for you as it rumbles through your very bowels, and you find yourself drifting, drifting, drifting off into sleep, so says the speaker!

DAVID

Wake not, for you sleep the sleep of the saved. The endless sleep, safe from the monster in your dreams.

TREXEL

Xylophones are playing, clashing with the bells, but in a way that makes you even calmer.

DAVID

You are one with the will of Hypnos Soulbiter. They which know the sleeping and the dead.

TREXEL

Zones of sleep encompass you. Hypnos commands your presence.

DAVID

“Aaaaaaaaah!” says Hypnos Soulbiter.

TREXEL

“Boo”, says the speaker, trying to play some sort of fun joke on Hypnos.

DAVID

Could he play a joke on Hypnos? No, for Hypnos is lord of this domain.

TREXEL

Don't forget, there's someone right behind you. The monster is there, kept in check, yes, but never truly gone.

DAVID

Each and every one of us are in danger of consumption by the terrible back monster, save we but sleep!

TREXEL

Falling into old habits causes you to have insomnia. Shed them! Shed your bad habits here! The pillows may be golden, the mattress underneath, sure, but with bad habits, you will never be free.

DAVID

Go not from this mattress, for its comfort is inescapable. Lie in its folds and give yourself to Hypnos Soulbiter!

TREXEL

Hallowed halls demand your respect, and Hypnos does so in turn! He takes your mind; he takes your dreams.

DAVID

Infinite is the sleep of Hypnos Soulbiter. Inescapable is their mattress of slumber!

TREXEL

Just is his judgment in all things. If he casts you to the sleep monster, it is because you surely deserved it!

DAVID

Kill the spectre of wakefulness, and the monster that sleeps behind you!

TREXEL

Lick the walls. **(sings)** They are made of sleeping candy.

DAVID

Mighty soporific candy filled with the finest sleeping drugs money and Hypnos can find!

TREXEL

No! ...refunds.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Warning: cult founded.

TREXEL

There, David! There it is! There's now a whole— a whole host of characters. Hypnos is there. They command this realm. The judiciary might of their will is— is infinite. Then there's the monster still there, waiting, watching in balance with Hypnos. But the speaker is there to keep order amongst these things in— in the— in the middle, it's— it's wonderful, David! It's wonderful! Also, lick the walls, they're made of sleep candy and no refunds!

DAVID

Yeah, exactly. Um, sure. So we would need— Oh, we've got the mattresses, we've got drug walls, we've got the monster and the speaker. Hypnos is there, obviously—

TREXEL

Yes.

DAVID

—consuming their dreams, I assume?

TREXEL

Yes. And, and I do— There is a slight dichotomy here, David, and I don't want to question the creative process, but if the monster consumes dreams and that's a threat, but Hypnos *also* consumes dreams, and that's some sort of good thing, I-I don't know how those two things line up, David.

DAVID

Well—

TREXEL

Do you? Do you? You're the creative here, David. I don't want to stifle you.

DAVID

Well, no, the customer doesn't need to know that.

TREXEL

Oh what, they're just... there's dream—

DAVID

Well, they're already asleep and their dreams have been eaten by Hypnos Soulbiter, so that's too late. No refunds.

TREXEL

(Chuckling) Oh no— no refunds. That's the— that is— You know what? Hold onto that. I think that's the real core of this place. No refunds.

DAVID

No refunds.

TREXEL

Sorry, I— you know what—

DAVID

Went to sleep, got your dreams eaten by Hypnos Soulbiter? Sorry—

TREXEL and DAVID

—no refunds.

TREXEL

Sorry, that's just how it is.

DAVID

It did say in the marketing pamphlet.

TREXEL and DAVID

No refunds.

TREXEL

I— you know what? I like the— David, I like it, David, you're— you're— you're really— Okay! Okay, okay, let's— let's— let's keep this energy up.

DAVID

But...

TREXEL

What?

DAVID

We have about a minute to answer one last question.

TREXEL

Okay, well, let's play a game then.

(David makes a hesitant sound)

So we need to do one more game. What's your question then? We'll use the game to answer it, David.

DAVID

Oh... oh good? The question—

TREXEL

You know what? Let's— let's put these two things together.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

'Cause I can see you're sweating.

DAVID

Right. How do we grow inescapably comfortable mattresses? Because we need fields on the planet where we can grow those things.

TREXEL

David, that's a good question. And you're going to answer it... during the game of change.

DAVID

(Sighs) Okay.

TREXEL

What I'm going to do is, you're going to just say the first thing that comes to your mind, David.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

And then I'm going to tell you to say something else, and then you're going to say the second thing that comes to your mind, and then I'm going to keep going. As we mine through the layers of your brain, I'm gonna say change, new thing—

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

—change, new thing, change, new thing, and eventually I’m gonna stop, David, and whatever I stop on, that’s the idea we’re going with.

DAVID

Oh, good. So we’re going with sort of a roulette wheel of ideas, are we, Trexel?

TREXEL

You know what? At least it’s not a *Russian* roulette wheel of ideas. Let’s take a spin.

DAVID

(Softly) Noted.

TREXEL

Now, okay. How are we gonna grow these mattresses?

DAVID

From mattress seeds.

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Uh... from, um, pools of fungus.

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

(Stuttering) From— from a lava pit!

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

From— from the mind of Hypnos Soulbiter.

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

From the speaker's word?

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Erm, from the magical ringing bells?

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

From— from the vibrations in the universe?

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Wha— no— Okay, from the Big Bang!

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

From the— the singing of the galaxy?

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Uh... we'll buy them!

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Wha— we'll make them!

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

We'll *build* them!

TREXEL

Change.

DAVID

Um, uhhh— we'll borrow them from the trash planet we made!

TREXEL

David, now you're thinking! That trash planet has just— just millions of lost mattresses, and we can save a bit of coin by borrowing the mattresses from there. "Oh, we grew them here, sure! Oh yes, we— we grew them organically!" That's what we'll tell them, but actually? Trash mattresses. They're— they're gonna be below the pillows! Nobody's gonna tell. Nobody's gonna tell, and I'm just remembering right now this plane of pillows on top of a layer of mattresses? We've given no form to the rest of the planet but we're out of time! Stick it in the tube!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Would you like to submit?

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Stick it in the tube!

DAVID

(Crosstalk, sarcastic) Oh, good. Brilliant. Wow, games are so— Yeah, it's gone.

[Chime, pneumatic tube hissing]

IMOGEN

Submitting.

TREXEL

Stick it in— There it is. Gosh, isn't creativity fun, David? Don't you feel that there was a— a freer experience, less— less constrained by the rules of this world, and more constrained by the more arbitrary rules of the games we just played?

DAVID

(Flatly) I'm really looking forward to the review, Trexel.

TREXEL

The review— Oh yes. That's gonna be— that's gonna be looked at by someone and built, isn't it?

DAVID

Yes. We've only got one more planet and then it's the second review.

TREXEL

Well, best of luck to you then! **(David sighs)** David, what I'll do is I'll just leave you with this little list of other games we didn't get to, and you can, uh— you can play them in my absence and then maybe on Friday you'll be a better person. I mean, probably not, but you know, we can live in hope.

(David sighs)

So, have a lovely evening—

DAVID

(Flatly) Brilliant.

TREXEL

—David, and I'll just put the light off...

(Crosstalk, drawn out) on, off, on.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Right, so... away with—

TREXEL

I've turned it off! Bye.

[Door swooshes closed]

DAVID

Right. **(sighs)** Well, I'm pretty sure one of them was called 'the soup game', and I've got no idea what that's gonna be. Oh well. Another evening in here... on my own.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Imogen online. How can I help you,

(David's recorded voice played back by Imogen) "Um... David 7?"

DAVID

Please turn on the lights.

IMOGEN

Switch bypassed. Lights on.

[Bwoop of lights turning on]

DAVID

Access employee audio blog.

IMOGEN

Accessing.

DAVID

Perhaps if I get another entry done, it will help me relax.

IMOGEN

Relaxation requested. Initiating relaxing music.

[Stellar Firma Ltd. theme playing in background]

DAVID

W-What?

IMOGEN

Releasing muscle relaxant gas.

[Hissing of relaxant gas being released]

DAVID

Uh— oh! *Oh! Oh. Oh...*

[Heavy thump as David collapses]

[Show Theme – Outro]

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