

STL 69 — Posturing and Proliferation

Content Warnings

- Bullying/taunting
- Alcohol & alcoholism
- Body modification
- Threats of violence
- Panicking
- Discussion of: decapitation & dismemberment, depression
- Mentions of: body horror, fire, war, guns, blood, self-injury
- SFX: gagging, liquid sounds, fire

TREXEL

Many thanks to Ari Fenenga. May the road rise to meet you, because you found a secret levitating road!

[Show Theme – Intro]

IMOGEN

Rusty Quill presents: Stellar Firma.

[Theme continues]

[Door whooshes]

HARTRO

Ah! David 7!

(David burbles)

Ah, hello. Le— Oh, let me get thi—

(David burbles inquisitively)

Let me just wheel this in. Ah— Yeah.

[Sounds of Hartro’s exertion as something heavy & sloshing is wheeled in]

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Ah... right, that’s...

HARTRO

A vat of slurry, yeah, you guessed it. There we go.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Yeah.

That’s... slopping everywhere.

**[Sounds of burbles & bubbles come from inside the vat
as David and Hartro talk]**

HARTRO

He’s, he’s in there. He doesn’t quite—

DAVID

Mmm.

HARTRO

He doesn’t quite know where he is. He’s, he’s quite— He’s, he’s pretty happy in there.

DAVID

How, how, how long has he been under there for? He...

HARTRO

Well, that's the thing! The thing is, I shouldn't be this late. I, I found Trexel five hours ago. He's...

DAVID

Right...

HARTRO

He's so heavy. D'you see— Try pushing this thing. Just, just give a little—

DAVID

I, okay.

[The vat rumbles away easily]

DAVID

Yeah, sure, no—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Oh, whoa! Whoa.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) —that's, pretty easy. Yeah, that's, uh... fine.

[The vat smacks the wall with a slosh and Trexel continues to mutter]

HARTRO

I didn't say 'throw it across the room.' Um.

DAVID

Well, I— No, I just— Look, I expected something **heavy**, so I put some, y'know, oomph behind it, and, and it just went. It wasn't on purpose.

[Retrieves the slurry vat]

DAVID

I mean there's— I mean, there's just slurry all over the floor now, but...

IMOGEN

[Beep] If you suffer a slip or fall at work due to floor slurry, then you may be entitled to compensation! Which is what we call the big stick used to punish people who complain.

DAVID

You don't have a button for like a— Or a panel, or a wafty thing for like, a—

HARTRO

Oh, the— the self-cleaning unit, yeah. It's over there.

DAVID

Right, of course it—

HARTRO

It's just, right— Oh, can you just bend down?

(David mumbles)

[Clicking and mechanical shifting]

HARTRO

There, there we go.

[Loud mechanical rumbling]

DAVID

Yeah, oh, oh, oh—

[The vat of slime whirrs, then drains]

DAVID

Wow, there's... so much detritus I could have just got rid of really easily.

Oh, well, you live and learn.

HARTRO

(Laughing) Oh well, it's gone now.

DAVID

Yep.

HARTRO

(Sighs) Tidy, tidy.

DAVID

So, how long has he— He's been, he's been down there for five hours?

HARTRO

Yes. So, I— Well, I don't know how long he was in there before I found him. The thing is, he's just been hiding.

DAVID

Oh, this isn't even a trap. This is—

HARTRO

No! No, no, no. It's not a trap. I set several traps all around Stellar Firma, and it was just a matter of time 'til he fell in one, and I was monitoring my traps, and no Trexel, and no Trexel, and no Trexel, and then I thought, 'I know where he is.' Heh heh heh.

IMOGEN

[Beep] To know where Trexel is can be both a blessing and a curse.

DAVID

So he does this often?

HARTRO

Well, the thing is, if you go down to Thruster Personnel Unit, they do have the slurry machine that gets transferred less often, which means some of the slurry sometimes goes a little bit... uhhh, hmm... I'd say 'rancid.' But it— There's a small quantity of alcohol, you see, that forms. Do you get— Do you get what I'm saying?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Ahh, I—

No, I totally— Yeah.

(Trexel begins burbling happily in the background)

HARTRO

So I think he goes there quite often from the looks of it. All I had to do was just push him in.

DAVID

Shall we get him out, or... is there some sort of spigot, or like a, a big spoon we can use, or...

HARTRO

Uhhh, oh, yeah, let's get the big spoon.

[Pneumatic tube hisses as Hartro summons the big spoon]

DAVID

We've got a big spoon? Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, alright.

IMOGEN

[Beep] We keep them on hand in case a massive client wants soup.

DAVID

Um... do you want to do the honours, or shall I?

HARTRO

Well n— Let me jus—

[Sounds of spoon scraping on the ground]

HARTRO

I don't— I don't think I can lift it. I, I—

DAVID

Okay, well, I— No, I can—) No, I can— I'm sure I could lift it if I kept— I just, I—
I— You get him out, you get him out.

DAVID

Okay, yeah, no—

HARTRO

I'll let you get him out.

DAVID

Yeah, no, no sure, sure, I, I, I'll just um—

[He scoops Trexel from the vat with the giant spoon]

HARTRO

And a... whoooo!

[Trexel surfaces wetly, panting for breath]

TREXEL

I am a baby born of fermented slurry goodness. Put me back! Put— Hang on a minute, this isn't Thruster Personnel! None of you are thrusting. Put me back and take me back home. This is work. I do not want to be here. Put me back in the hot, 1% alcohol mixture, please.

HARTRO

Trexel.

TREXEL

No, not here. Put me back.

HARTRO

Go on, David. Tell him what time it is.

DAVID

Well it's— It's work time.

HARTRO

It's work time!

(Trexel groans)

HARTRO

Come on, Trexel, we get to work! It's gonna be great.

TREXEL

When you need the fermented slurry most, that's when somebody pulls you out of it with a big spoon and says, 'Time for work, Trexel.' It happens **all** the time. You wouldn't believe how often it happens. Three times this week!

IMOGEN

[Beep] You are correct! I do not believe you.

DAVID

But you were in there five hours.

TREXEL

Yes?

DAVID

That's a long time to be submerged.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) It is. It is.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) How did you breathe?

TREXEL

Well, I don't need to, you see, David.

DAVID

Oka—

TREXEL

Because I have, over the years, developed what some people might call gills.
Now, that may sound strange to you—

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

—but when you spend as much time submerged in alcohol, you either adapt or die. And I? I'm a businessman. So I adapted. And so I've got gills now.

DAVID

That doesn't make any sense.

HARTRO

It doesn't make **any** sense.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Well, no, it doesn't make— no, it doesn't make any—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) I would like to see your gills.

TREXEL

It doesn't make any sense to the untrained mind. But, you see, human beings
— and I am, technically-speaking, a human being. I've got a certificate!

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Am amphibious one.

TREXEL

An amphibious human being. Now, sure, no morsel of, uh, eth... ethnolic... eth... ethanolicphibious... in that I can't breathe underwater, but I can breathe under alcohol. Special alcoholic gills.

DAVID

You, you got a back corridor surgeon to graft those onto you, didn't you.

TREXEL

Yes, I got some of the boys in genetics with gambling debts to, to whack these babies on. They're very— They're very, very slight. You can't really see them,

HARTRO

I have never noticed them.) and they're sort of under, under the armpits, so that, you know, nobody gets them when they're frisk you.

[Squelching noise]

HARTRO

Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, put, put, put, put them away.

TREXEL

Have a look at that!

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) No, no, no, no, put them away. Trexel.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh, no, oh, no, oh!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Have a look at these! Yeah.

DAVID

It's worse than the nipples!

(Hartro sighs in disgust)

Ah.

TREXEL

There it is. But, when I fall into a vat of whisky, and you're there going like, 'Ah, oh, is Trexel gonna drown?' I'll just drink it all and swim to the other side. I'll, I'll be sitting pretty whilst you're drowning in gin, I'll be bathing on a sea of smooth cocktail mixers.

HARTRO

From your armpit gills.

TREXEL

Yeah, well, you know.

DAVID

Great.

HARTRO

Right, well, I'm shutting this now. And that's enough—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) No, no, can't you leave it open, just so I can s—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) That, no, that is enough for now. No.

[Slams the slurry vat shut]

HARTRO

Right.

TREXEL

Aww. I wanna keep my buzz on.

HARTRO

You can—

TREXEL

I'm like a bee! Don't take my buzz.

DAVID

S'just—

TREXEL

What will I tell my queen? Queen Drunkhead.

HARTRO

Right, alright, alright. Now, that... needs to be forgotten. I can still see the armpit gills.

DAVID

I don't think I'll ever unsee them.

(Hartro sighs multiple times)

TREXEL

They'll haunt you.

DAVID

They will. They will.

TREXEL

When I got them grafted on, I said, I said to the surgeon, "You could probably make these pretty nice. Make 'em a bit upsetting, y'know? Give 'em frills. Give 'em nodules. Make it look like if you dropped a coin in there, the coin would be shredded."

HARTRO

I mean, they looked like blinds.

TREXEL

Yes, and in fact, I have actually got a little cord, and if you pull it they will, like, shoot up, but if you can find the cord I'll give you five credits. Cos I've never been able to find the thing. Occasionally I hear it clatter if I turn around quickly, but I've never once found it. But I know it's there. A man knows his own gills.

DAVID

And his own cord.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Everybody shut up forever.

DAVID

So, uh... shall I get the brief?

HARTRO

Yes, please, yes!

DAVID

Okay, yeah, right.

HARTRO

Yes, yes, yes, anything, anything!

TREXEL

I'm drying out.

[Unpleasant wobbling sounds]

DAVID

No, Trexel, please, just lower your arms.

TREXEL

Okay, fine.

HARTRO

Urgh, I can just hear it... squelching. **(groans)**

TREXEL

(Sings) I'm a bee with gills, look at me!

DAVID

No—

TREXEL

I've got honey under the sea!

It's sea salt honey!

It's sea salt honey!

But if the sea salt honey's got alcohol in it, it's sea salt mead!

Get your head into it!

Into a groove!

Have a tankard for your dudes!

Yum!

HARTRO

Trexel, I haven't done this in so long, but I will get my foot out, I swear.

[Velcro rips]

TREXEL

No, **(stammers)** hang on, hang on, hang on. Let's not, let's not—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) I have just had them cleaned.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Let's, let's not deploy feet.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) And I prefer a dirty foot when I need to use it.

TREXEL

We don't need to go into the foot zone. I have been— I've—

(Choking, then muffled)

Okay, well... **(more mumbling)**

DAVID

He did deser— He deserved that.

HARTRO

He did. I mean, the fact that he danced and sang, and I don't know if you could feel a weird breeze coming from those... gill... armpit flaps... **(distressed noise)**

IMOGEN

[Beep] Congratulations everyone. This is our most upsetting tableau to date.

(Trexel mumbles incomprehensively around Hartro's foot)

HARTRO

I think I'm gonna be sick—

DAVID

Okay, I'm just gonna— That's f— I'm just gonna, I'm gonna do the brief. We can focus on the brief, we can focus on the brief.

(Trexel makes enthusiastic noises)

Okay.

HARTRO

No, no, no—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) So— Okay.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) —you stay like that so. You are staying like that.

(Sighs) Just read it while he can't talk.

TREXEL

(Mumbles) Very well.

DAVID

Okay. So this is, this is coming to us from Alisón Prince-Bruléé.

(Hartro and Trexel hum inquisitively)

Uhh, they're "External Seeking Wisdom," and they're writing to us about from the Intergalactic Coalition of Toaster Repair Excellence Acknowledgement Board.

HARTRO

Ohhh.

(Trexel talks incomprehensibly)

Stop.

(Trexel stops disappointedly)

DAVID

And their problem is "The ambiguity of the classification of toasters is leading to an influx of nominations that our system simply cannot handle. One member of the Executive Board is advocating to restrict the definition of 'toasters' to exclude toaster ovens."

(Trexel gives a horrified gasp)

HARTRO

Well, I think Trexel feels very strongly about that.

DAVID

"Another member suggests we upgrade our systems to keep up with the nominations. This would take funding away from our top-secret toast

technology development team. Also the arguing is giving me massive headaches.

HARTRO

Hmm.

DAVID

What should we do?”

(Trexel mumbles)

HARTRO

Oh, usually when I have a headache I like to go get it rolled.

DAVID

R-rolled?

HARTRO

Yeah, get my head rolled.

DAVID

What, like just in, in a big roller?

HARTRO

It’s an ancient tradition, uh, way of expelling headaches. You—

(Trexel makes a noise)

Well, obviously a clone wouldn’t know. Trexel, you’ve had your head rolled, haven’t you?

(Trexel makes sounds of agreement)

Yeah.

DAVID

Okay, m-maybe, maybe, maybe take you—

HARTRO

Oh, sorry, oh, yeah, s— There you go.

[Hartro removes her foot from Trexel’s mouth]

TREXEL

Ugh, yes. I have had my head rolled quite, quite a few times in my, in my life. It’s a bit of— It’s a bit of a procedure, David. It does involve having your head removed. Not for long! You know, not, not in a weird way, but you have it just quickly popped off. They keep your body safe somewhere, and they just pop your head in this sort of big room full of blankets and pillows and satins. And then they turn the whole room, like a rock tumbler, except instead of a rock it’s your head, and instead of smoothing the edges, it’s smoothing your brain, and your feelings. And then they pop your head back on, you feel refreshed, you feel good, and they only sometimes go through your body’s pockets whilst you’re in there.

IMOGEN

[Beep] To be fair, Trexel does have a remarkably smooth brain. Barely a lobe on the whole thing.

DAVID

So we should get— Just get them all to have their head rolled.

TREXEL

I don't think so, because I—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, wh— Wait, wait, wait. We should definitely put it as a bullet point.

TREXEL

That council is a very large organisation. I don't think we've got enough tumblers to do it in good order. By the time we've got through to the end, then there'll be another election, the, the council will rotate, then you're back again— It'll be like painting the Sixty-Eighth Bridge.

DAVID

Can you sort of, you know, roll multiple heads at the same time?

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) You can if you want a bruised face, David.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Ooooh.

TREXEL

Also, imagine if your head was being tumbled with somebody you didn't like.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) (Several gasping, borderline hyperventilating breaths) Oh god!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) You know, you may as well put two fighting goldfish in a bag.

Yeah— Hartro, imagine that you and I—

(Hartro makes extended sounds of desperate protest)

—were having our heads tumbled at the same time. Bumping into each other, ‘Oops, sorry, so— Excuse me, oh, that was the flesh of my eye. Sorry about that, and its dampness.

HARTRO

No, no, no, please, don’t put it on there—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) But at least that I haven’t got gills in here.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) No, it’s a bad idea, it’s a terrible idea.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay there, fair enough.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) It’s a bad idea.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) No, no, no head rolling.

TREXEL

And also, these toaster oven-hating scum don't deserve our time! The toaster oven is the cornerstone of the toaster universe. Without it, you haven't got a pyramid: you've just got a triangle whose foot's fallen off.

DAVID

Okay, n— Just, actually, very quickly, could somebody please explain to me what a toaster is?

(Hartro and Trexel begin to laugh condescendingly)

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Oh, dear.

DAVID

Well no, don't, don't, don't laugh. Don't laugh.

IMOGEN

[Beep] You fool, David.

TREXEL

What a turd.

HARTRO

It's too— It's obviously a toasting device that... is... warm.

DAVID

Wait, do you not— Do, do you not know what a toaster is?

(Hartro laughs dismissively)

TREXEL

Hartro, you, you don't seem to know what a toaster is.

IMOGEN

[Beep] You fool, Hartro.

HARTRO

Y-you know what a toaster— Trexel, you know what a toaster oven is.

(Crosstalk) I use one—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Well yeah, of course I know what a toaster is. It's sort of— Yeah, a toaster is—

HARTRO

Yeah.

TREXEL

—You, you've got sort of like a, like a, like a sphere.

HARTRO

Yeah, yeah.

TREXEL

And then inside that sphere... is br— is bread. O-or maybe a waffle.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Trexel, you know how I feel.

HARTRO

It has to have, um, grains. It's— It's a grain—

(Crosstalk) Strictly grain—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) It's gotta have grains. You've gotta put grains in the sphere and then it makes the grain hot.

HARTRO

Yeah.

DAVID

Alright, um. I, okay, I don't— Neither of you know what a toaster is, do you?

HARTRO

Excuse me, David 7, we just described what a toaster was.

DAVID

No, that—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) (muttering) She described what a toaster was, so I think—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Quite clearly!

DAVID

You were absolutely making that up as you went along.

TREXEL

I wou—

HARTRO

Uh.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) No, no, look. I'll draw you—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) There was, there was very little cohesion, there was a lot of hesitation, there was a lot of contradiction—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yeah, yeah— But I'm getting—

TREXEL

Hartro, Hartro, you've got your craft equipment.

HARTRO

Yes?

TREXEL

Let's both get a bit of paper, we'll both draw a toaster—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Okay. Okay.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) —and we'll both come up with the exact same thing independently, okay, so I'll just—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) I have some materials here.

[Rustling sounds as crafts are deployed]

DAVID

Okay, okay, yeah, so both— No, you sit over there, looking that way, and you sit over there looking that way, and I'm gonna—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) No, we need to sit at the same—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Well, let's just erect the screen.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) No, and I'm gonna stand in between you, as the screen, you're both gonna—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Oh, alright, you be the screen.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) I'm gonna be the screen. So—

TREXEL

Right, okay, fine.

DAVID

—you have ten seconds. Three, two, one, go!

(David counts up from one to ten in the background as Trexel and Hartro draw)

TREXEL

Well, it's clearly a— One of those, and a bit of that—

HARTRO

Trexel, stop looking at mine.

DAVID

Five... you can't, I'm in the way... six... **(continues counting)**

HARTRO

He's trying...

TREXEL

One of these... **(muttering)**

DAVID

Stop trying to get round. Se— Eight. Nine. Stop it—

TREXEL

Just wanna—

DAVID

Ten, done, right.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Can I pl— Can I plug this in somewhere? But I just need it—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Plug it in? It's a drawing.

[Crumpling of paper]

HARTRO

Theeere we go.

DAVID

Did you just—

HARTRO

There we go.

DAVID

You've just made a—

[Crackling of a paper fire]

TREXEL

Did you just shove— ope! That's on fire. That's on fire. If you shove paper into a plug, it goes on fire, Hartro!

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) But that's part of it! That is part of it!

TREXEL

Well, Hartro's entry is this flaming bit of paper.

HARTRO

Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

Uh, I've written the word 'Toaster!'

DAVID

Okay, that's not a drawing, that's just the— That is the word toaster.

TREXEL

Look at that. What do you see? If you look at that piece of paper, what comes into your mind, David?

DAVID

The **word** 'toaster.'

TREXEL

Case closed.

HARTRO

Okay, David.

TREXEL

I know what a toaster is.

HARTRO

David.

DAVID

Mmm?

HARTRO

Who wins?

DAVID

Neither of you.

TREXEL

That's unacceptable. That's not a competition. That's torture hidden as a conversation.

DAVID

(Crosstalk, sputtering) You just know— You just— You just know—

You just wrote down the word ‘toaster,’ and, and Hartro, you burned yours too—

HARTRO

(Interjecting) I win!

DAVID

You know you burnt it.

HARTRO

I win!

DAVID

No, you didn’t even enter anything.

HARTRO

Mine works!

DAVID

It burned up!

TREXEL

David—

HARTRO

If I had grains, we would have bread and/or waffle.

TREXEL

Hartro.

DAVID

What has bread got to do with it?

IMOGEN

[Beep] David 7, asking the tough questions.

TREXEL

Hartro, Hartro, Hartro, David, please. Let's level with each other. Okay, there has been a little bit of a trade embargo between Stellar Firma and... ICTREAB?

DAVID

Oh, the, the Intergalactic Coalition of Toaster Repair Excellence Acknowledgement Board.

TREXEL

The very same.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

There was a little, tiny, teensy little war, y'know, couple of hundred years ago when they were sort of, y'know, developing new toasters and Stellar Firma was like, "Our toasters are old and boring. Give us your toasters!" And it turns out toasters had got pretty advanced while we weren't looking, and they are also

kind of intergalactic weapons. So, we haven't had a toaster on Stellar Firma for quite a while. But, uh, amongst the upper echelons, you like to pretend that you've got one. "Ooh, I've got a black-market toaster. I've got connections." So, uh, y'know, it's, it's, it's been a force of habit to pretend that we know what... **(sighs)** toasters are.

IMOGEN

[Beep] For Trexel, it's a force of habit for him to pretend he knows what anything is.

HARTRO

I mean I... do feel like I know.

TREXEL

Everyone feels like they know what a toaster is.

HARTRO

I know more than you do!

TREXEL

In a, in a way that everybody, everybody feels like they know what it'd be like to chop their own arm off. You know, like if you're trying to say to someone, like, 'What, what it would— Yeah, what it would be like if you chopped off your own arm?' Everyone nods like, 'Yes, I understand,' but **really?**

HARTRO

Yeah, I couldn't imagine.

TREXEL

But really? But really would you? Like as the, as the laser or knife is going in, and the bones being broken independently because that's what happens, y-y'probably wouldn't, no. You probably— At the time, you'd be shocked. You'd be like, 'Oh, **that's** what it's like! Ow!' Y'know.

HARTRO

I think it would happen fast, and that actually you'd be expecting it to hurt a lot, but it wouldn't hurt—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Sorry, are we talking about toasting or arm chopping now?

TREXEL

Same thing. If the toast is a giant laser, maybe the toaster chopped your arm off.

DAVID

Is the toaster a giant laser?

TREXEL

We don't know, David!

HARTRO

Probably.

TREXEL

Will you stop trying to embarrass u— Probably?!

DAVID

Okay, bu— Then what does toaster ovens— W-was your disdain at toaster ovens, like, still part of the farce, or do we know about toaster ove— Like—

TREXEL

Are you, are you saying my interest in toaster ovens is performative? Is that what you're saying?

DAVID

Probably, yes.

TREXEL

Cos you're correct, David.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

You've seen through my veil. So that's gonna make this brief a little tricky, cos we don't know actually know what a toaster is.

HARTRO

We don't **say that** to them.

TREXEL

I know we don't— Between, between, not 'friends,' between three people in a room.

DAVID

You absolutely both know what toasters are. Hooray, congratulations. My question is: why and/or how have ICTREAB managed to send a question to us?

TREXEL

Anybody can ask. Anybody can send a question.

DAVID

Has, has there been some sort of ceasefire? Do you think— Like, are they in talks? Is this part of a diplomatic exercise?

TREXEL

No, not so much a ceasefire as we all, sort of, ran out of ammunition at a certain point. So now we mostly glare.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Y’know, and then, and then everyone got bored. And then it was the holidays, and then you come back, and you’re like, “What were we doing?” and everyone’s like, “I don’t know, I’m so f— I’m so full of Christmas slurry.”

IMOGEN

[Beep] The best kind of diplomacy is a mutual loss of interest.

HARTRO

I— You know what? This, this could be a test.

TREXEL

Oooh, yes.

HARTRO

Like, they, they might want to see if we're still hostile.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Yes!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay.

HARTRO

So we should include a secret message in this answer that lets them know like, like, 'Okay...'

TREXEL

We mean business.

HARTRO

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but like, underneath: don't mess.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Yeah. 'Hey. Here's your answer, but also, are you looking at me?'

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

‘I’m pretty sure you’re looking at me. I asked my space station here, and they said that you were looking at me. And there are no asteroids around here — so you must be looking at me, buddy. Bang, bang, bang, bang,’—

HARTRO

Yeah.

TREXEL

—and then you do fingerguns, ‘bang bang bang.’

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Yes, you sort of say... ‘Ah, yeah, no, here’s the answer to your question, but also if you step out of line, I am going to rip your arms out of their sockets.’

TREXEL

Right out of the sockets, and you’ll be like, ‘**That’s** what that’s like. I always imagined, but I never knew until now.’

DAVID

Yeahhh.

TREXEL

And then you bleed to death.

HARTRO

And I actually think it happens really fast, and it probably while it happens, you would think, 'It doesn't hurt as bad as I thought it would hurt.'

TREXEL

Hey, it's a hypothesis, but when are we gonna test it?

DAVID

I—

TREXEL

Who's got the time to chop off their own arm?

HARTRO

And chopping would hurt less than pulling out.

TREXEL

That's true.

DAVID

I could just, I could— I could do it.

HARTRO

What? **(gasps)**

TREXEL

I'm sorry?

HARTRO

He could! He threw you across the room earlier! When you were in the vat.

TREXEL

We **could** all do lots of things—

HARTRO

Well...

TREXEL

—but we don't. I'd like to keep my arms intact, thank you David, you freakishly strong boy.

HARTRO

Yeah.

DAVID

Yeah. Well, y'know.

TREXEL

Now, I've got a question.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

What was the question? I got so wrapped up in the whole toaster thing, I've genuinely forgotten what they are. So if we're gonna threaten them, but like,

beneath an answer, I kinda need to know what the question was. So just paraphrase for me, David. What do they want to know?

DAVID

“The ambiguity of the classification of toast is leading to an influx of nominations that our systems simply cannot handle,” right?

TREXEL

Sure, sure sure.

DAVID

So there’s too many, too many toasters.

HARTRO

That’s a threat, that right there.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) That’s a threat, too many toasters. That’s like, that’s like, ‘Oh, we’re so— We’ve proliferated so much, we can barely keep our toasters straight.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yeah.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Oh no. I dropped all my terrifying munitions where you can see them.
How embarrassing.

HARTRO

Okay. 'kay.

DAVID

Okay. Uh, “one member of the executive board is advocating to restrict the definition of toasters to exclude toaster ovens.”

TREXEL

Unacceptable. Unacceptable. **(whispering)** Unacceptable.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Well, no— Okay.

But that’s just— That’s implying that maybe most of the extraneous nominations are of toaster ovens, if— Anyway. So, “another member suggest we upgrade our systems to keep up with the nominations.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Uh-huh.

Another threat.

DAVID

So maybe that’s some sort of arms race.

HARTRO

Yeah.

DAVID

Uh, “this would take funding away from our top-secret toaster technology development team, again saying —

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Top secret toaster weapon of death.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) “They have— They have the ca— t— capability. Also the arguing is giving me these massive headaches, which is what would happen if you were hit in the head with a toaster.”

TREXEL

These TMDs represent a clear and present danger to Stellar Firma, and I for one won’t stand for it.

HARTRO

Me neither!

DAVID

And then it says, “What should we do?” It’s a direct question. “What should we do?”

HARTRO

You should throw all your toasters away, first off.

TREXEL

Point the first: chuck away the toasters. Get ‘em— Chuck ‘em in the sea. Say they’re causing too many problems, they’re clearly causing fights. Chuck ‘em in the sea.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Make it as some sort of toaster non-proliferation treaty, and then just chuck ‘em in the sea.

DAVID

Which sea?

TREXEL

Any sea. The Sea of Tranquillity, the Sea of Shouting. I’ve Sea-Sea’ed you in. I’ve B-Sea-Sea’d you in. ‘Oh I’m sorry, you shouldn’t have been Sea-Sea’ed in.’

HARTRO

Did you sea that?

TREXEL

Did you sea it? No!

DAVID

I see...

HARTRO

But then, are we then saying that we will also chuck our toasters that they don't know that we don't have?

TREXEL

(Chuckles) We'll say we will—

HARTRO

Yeah, okay. Alright.

TREXEL

—but we won't the toasters that we don't have, but they don't know—

HARTRO

Yes.

TREXEL

—that, so we'll have toasters that they don't know about that we don't have but they think we do!

HARTRO

Aha! I love it.

TREXEL

It's mutually assured confusion.

HARTRO

Mmmhmm.

DAVID

It certainly is.

HARTRO

And then just write on there, David 7, “Get your head rolled.”

[Sounds of writing]

DAVID

Okay, okay, “Dot, dot dot—

TREXEL

Just the back on there.

DAVID

—get your head rolled.” Okay.

IMOGEN

[Beep] There is always a chance they do just mean machines that heat up bread. But hey, why miss out on an opportunity to escalate tensions?

DAVID

Right, so we’re done? We’re good?

HARTRO

Yeah, done.

TREXEL

There we go. On it goes!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Submitting.

[Pneumatic tube hisses]

DAVID

Uh, submitted. Yeah.

HARTRO

I feel like we stopped a war.

DAVID

Or started one.

HARTRO

Huh.

TREXEL

Yeah. Reaching hands across space... across space to embrace our enemies... so that they think we're hugging them, but actually we're getting ready to choke 'em. At peace, you understand.

DAVID

Yeaahhhh...

HARTRO

All in a day's work.

TREXEL

All in a day. All in a day, even when you spend most of that day entirely submerged in alcohol.

HARTRO

In fact, if you would like to get in your vat while you talk—

[Metal clanging]

HARTRO

—I, I think you deserve it.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) I— You know what?

I, yeah, I'll just climb in. I'll, I'll treat it like a jacuzzi.

HARTRO

There ya go.

(David groans)

[Trexel splashes about in the slurry vat]

TREXEL

Could you turn on the bubbles?

HARTRO

That’s just you.

TREXEL

Oh. I see.

[Sounds of the slurry rising to a gentle bubble around Trexel]

TREXEL

That’s an interesting reaction. So, David, I just want to check on a couple of things, cos you know, when Hartro started with us earlier in the week—

DAVID

Mmm?

TREXEL

—you were really down in the dumps.

HARTRO

(Gasps) He was!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) And you seem to have—

You seem to have really cheered up, David, you’ve moped less. There’s been less time spent facedown on the floor saying “What’s the point?” Just wanted to check in.

HARTRO

It's me!

TREXEL

Is it Hartro?

HARTRO

It's me.

TREXEL

Is it a Hartro Effect? Or is it the Geistman Effect?

DAVID

No, it's, it's, it's, it— Look. You gave me something to do, which was nice.

(Stammers) Obviously, I'm still... I'm still massively disappointed that the whole clone revolution thing didn't... seems to be a bit of...

TREXEL

Bit of a non-starter because of the ineffectualness of clones.

DAVID

(Blandly) I will throw somebody through a wall if... if you laugh at...

TREXEL

I like clones. I don't know what—

HARTRO

I was j—

TREXEL

I don't care what anyone else says. I love 'em.

HARTRO

I was laughing at Trexel.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Plausible.

DAVID

Okay. But no, yeah, look, obviously I'm still disappointed, but I guess, y'know, we've got over, got over worse. We're still alive, so we can, y'know—
Something will come up, right? S-some, s-something.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) That's a, that's a good— That's a good attitude. That's a good attitude.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) That's right.

TREXEL

That actually brings me to our second point, you know, with the whole threatening to throw me through a wall. Why isn't it that you haven't just, you know, gone out there and kicked some ass and take some names? Like ka-bam, 'I'm, I'm David 7 and I'm cross, so I've punched 'em in the face so hard that their head just sort of disappears in some pink dust.' You know, that's

something you'd probably do. I'm glad you haven't, David, but why haven't you tried?

DAVID

Wh— Well, no, it's— It's something I've **thought** about, but, y'know, like— Look: if I go out there and start punching peoples' heads, then, y'know, maybe y-you get through a few people, and that'll be, y'know, very cathartic, very helpful. But...

HARTRO

You'd have to make 'em really count.

DAVID

Yeah, exactly. Cos the—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) You'd have to really pick the heads to vaporise.

DAVID

Yeah, cos then, then you'd just get shot a lot, and I-I, I, I reckon, I reckon I could probably get through a bunch of, y'know, pr-probably be fine for a bit...

HARTRO

What, with bullets? Lasers?

DAVID

Well, I dunno. But I, I reckon, to be honest, I do reckon so. Look, I mean, look, look, look— For example, here's this, here's this wastepaper basket.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Mmhmmm.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Okay.

DAVID

And, and here's me holding it against the side of my head.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Okay.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Okay.

DAVID

And then uh—

[Sounds of metal rapidly warping]

DAVID

—then it **(bubbles)** there you go!

(Hartro gasps)

TREXEL

Oh, it's gone!

HARTRO

What— Where did it—

TREXEL

It's just a disc now.

HARTRO

Where is it, though? Like, there must be something—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Well, no, it's here. I, look, it's just,

TREXEL

It's just so flat.

DAVID

it's just so flat. Look, I'll turn it, and there it is.

HARTRO

Oohhhhh.

TREXEL

There's the disc. Which is really impressive, given that your head isn't perfectly flat.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) I know! No, I know.

TREXEL

What's going on? Who's to say.

DAVID

I think I just scared it. Anyway! Um. I've made a couple. You probably won't see them, I've kind of slotted them aw— An— Anyway. The, the point is, if they vented me into space—

TREXEL

No, yeah, doesn't matter how strong you are. You're in space.

HARTRO

Ahhh.

TREXEL

You know?

HARTRO

The great leveller.

TREXEL

Even if you can hold your breath for a really long time, you've—

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

—got nothing against to push against. You just tumble away.

HARTRO

Mmm.

TREXEL

Ah, it's a good point. Well I'm, as I was saying: I'm glad. I'm glad it hasn't gone that way, so...

DAVID

That's what I said.

TREXEL

Well done.

DAVID

Biding our time.

HARTRO

Yep. Well done David 7 for keeping it, y'know. I think it's fine to smush things.

DAVID

Biding our time...

TREXEL

Okay. Gone a bit frightening now. Hey, Hartro, I'm gonna— I'm gonna sort of dip down here. How about you push me out, maybe up to one of the promenades so I can soak amongst stars?

HARTRO

Ooh, yeah. Well, I am going past C7. I can take you up as far as C4. That's it, though.

TREXEL

That's fine, that's fine by me.

HARTRO

And— I'll have fun finding you. **(laughing)** Tomorrow.

TREXEL

(Chuckles) Oh ho ho. Will you find me, though? Or will I slip, slip out of your grip one final time?

HARTRO

I always find you, Trexel.

TREXEL

You always...

HARTRO

And I notice that you took your tracker out. Heh heh heh. But I—

TREXEL

I found where it was, and I dug it out with a spoon. It really bled! But that's why give 'em the alcohol bath. Nothing to cauterise a wound like a hot, fermenting, rancid slurry bath. The bacteria can't live in there. So you're all good to go.

HARTRO

Alright.

TREXEL

Anyway.

HARTRO

Down you go.

DAVID

Great.

TREXEL

I'll see you tomorrow, Da—

[Gurgling sound as Trexel submerges)

HARTRO

Bye, David.

DAVID

See you later, Hartro. See you tomorrow.

HARTRO

It was a good one today.

DAVID

Yeah! Yeah, no, I thought it was. Thanks.

[Hartro rolls Trexel and his vat away]

DAVID

Thanks for popping by.

HARTRO

Toodles!

DAVID

See you later.

[Door whooshes]

DAVID

Byyyee. **(sighs)** Oh, Board forgive me, I think I'm starting to like them a little bit. Eugh.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Don't do this, David. Stockholm hasn't existed for thousands of years.

[A sudden jump in whirring broadcast static]

IMOGEN

[Beep] Intercepting signal from Sector TRV420. Analysing Source.

[Beeping] Source identified as Galactonium Public Relay Substation. Signal locked and saved. Monitoring for further activity.

[Show Theme – Outro]

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