

STL 70 — Self-Assessment and Self-Advancement

Content Warnings

- Alcohol use & alcoholism
- Bullying/taunting
- Emotional abuse
- Emetophobia (inc SFX)
- Discussion of: break-ins, unsafe consumption, childhood trauma
- Mentions of: fire & immolation, death, blood, electrocution, toilet humour
- SFX: shouting, static

[Show Theme – Intro]

IMOGEN

Rusty Quill presents: Stellar Firma.

[Theme continues]

DAVID

Hmm. I wonder what Hartro's gonna bring him in next? Maybe it's some sort of... ladder, with a net at the top, and, and a barrel full of space cats and maybe there's a bottle of rum, sort of, stuffed down his gullet. Or some sort of moisture bath that's been electrified and, and he's just in the bottom, juddering about shouting, 'David! David please!'

[Footsteps, followed by door whooshing]

HARTRO

Uh—

DAVID

Wh—!

HARTRO

Uh—

DAVID

Ah!

HARTRO

Oh, you get— You get in there, Trexel. You hop in there—

(Muffled Trexel)

—and you, you I—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) (muffled) No! I won't! I'm not your bunny! I'm an angry sausage!

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) You can't— You— I've rolled— Nope! I've rolled you in that rug, and you will just lay there like a tube of, of doom. And I want you to think about what you've done!

TREXEL

(Muffled, but becoming more legible as he unrolls) A tube of doom?! I'm a tube of potential! And if you squeeze me into your mouth, I'll make your teeth shiny, shiny with opportunity!

HARTRO

David—

TREXEL

Give me a chance, world!

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) David, do you know where I found him?

DAVID

Oh, in a rug?

HARTRO

(Breathing heavily, upset) That's my rug.

DAVID

Oh, in your hou— In your bedroom?

HARTRO

(Furious, breath hitching) Yes. **(sniffling)** Yes!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Oh dear! It seems we've stumbled upon the creepiest option.

TREXEL

I found a way in! I finally found a way in! You can't expunge all the vent records, Hartro! I found a way in, and I found her drinks cabinet. Glug, glug, glug, and there she found me! Blotto on the floor, absinthe everywhere. So much crème de menthe. Your sheets'll smell like mint until you die! Ha ha ha ha ha!

HARTRO

He touched my things! David 7, he was in **in my chamber**— He was in my habitat!

TREXEL

I touched 'em with my face! I Trexeled them all up!

DAVID

I might... **(sighs)** Silver linings:

(Hartro takes anxiety-ridden breaths)

If he's covered it all in alcohol, it'll burn better.

IMOGEN

[Beep] A silver lining in the same way that being dead means less wear and tear on your furnishings.

TREXEL

This isn't all alcohol.

HARTRO

Shhh!

DAVID

Um.

HARTRO

Did you just suggest that we're gonna light him?

DAVID

No, your, your bedroom, because obviously it's got to be gone now.

HARTRO

Oh, yeah. Yeah, most of it— Most of it's in the rug.

DAVID

I mean, you could set Trexel on fire. He would burn very well.

HARTRO

Like a yule.

TREXEL

You can try, but you'll just be burning off layers of alcohol and grime. I'm like a whole body Leidenfrost effect.

HARTRO

Mmm. **(sighs)** He was in my craft room. He had crafts. He had crafts and my liquor!

TREXEL

I found soooo many figurines. I ate a lot of them. Very pointy. Lots of people pointing and going, “What ho?” Into my gullet they go. Scrapey, scrapey, scrape. Crunchy, crunchy, crunch.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Why?

HARTRO

Yeah, why? Why?

TREXEL

Why? Why?

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

Why?

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

Why?

DAVID

Yes!

TREXEL

Why? Good question. Why, after a while, destruction becomes its own reward.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Sew that on a pillow.

TREXEL

You know, it's more sort of like a way of life, as opposed to something I try to do. I found Hartro's room. I found Hartro's things. Nice things shouldn't belong to other people cos they're not mine.

HARTRO

So you eat 'em.

TREXEL

And then you're eating figurines. And so much craft paper. And quite a few pairs of scissors.

HARTRO

You need different scissors for different cuts. And you have to come at things at different angles, and sometimes you need a big cut, and a s—

TREXEL

Mmm.

HARTRO

You wouldn't understand.

TREXEL

And each one of those scissors has their own unique taste. All of them include blood.

HARTRO

And now they're gone. **(sighs)**

TREXEL

And now they're gone. You'll see them again in a bit, but you won't want 'em back.

HARTRO

(Disgusted, disbelieving laugh) You can keep that rug. You stay in that rug. I don't want it back.

TREXEL

Ooh, lovely. A new rug. It's like a jacket, except you can't move your arms and legs.

[Rustling sounds as Trexel attempts to move his arms and legs]

HARTRO

Funny thing is, I had no idea where he was. I've been out all day, looking for him. And I finally— I, I returned home in despair and disgruntled— Couldn't find him, and disarray, and— There he was.

TREXEL

And then you smelt him. And then you can smell— You open your front door, and you're like, **(sniffs)** 'That's not how my house smell— **(gasps)** He's inside! He's inside the house! The smell's coming from inside the house!' And then you just hear me laughing from the other room, 'Ahahahaha! Ahahaha.' Have you got any more figurines? I'm quite peckish.

HARTRO

It's a review. **(David sighs)** Let's, let's do the review. Let's— I, I can be professional, it's fine. I'm not shaken.

DAVID

Tell you what—

TREXEL

We can all be professional.

DAVID

Tell you what.

HARTRO

Hmm?

DAVID

Um, after this, wh-when we're done, we can go roll him down some stairs.

HARTRO

Yes!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Finally, some good clean fun, for all the family.

TREXEL

Well, now, let's not—

HARTRO

Yes!

TREXEL

You're not gangsters. We're all employees together.

HARTRO

How do you know we're not gangsters?

TREXEL

Uh, uh, because you haven't got cool, coquettish hats, and shorthand that I don't understand, but pretend I do.

HARTRO

So, after this, David 7, we're gonna go tilly in the lingdong.

DAVID

Make hats.

HARTRO

Yes.

DAVID

Yes. And, um, we're, we're gonna, we're gonna... shuffle him away up the old... avenue.

HARTRO

That's right.

TREXEL

I have no idea what you're talk— **(gasps)** Gangsters! Please, please, don't make me sleep with the spaces!

HARTRO

Ayayayaya.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Is that some sort of gangster alarm call?

DAVID

Yeah, but before that, gotta do the review.

HARTRO

Ya.

DAVID

Which... you're... here—

HARTRO

Yes.

DAVID

—and you've **been** here, so how... how review... how review do this?

TREXEL

It's a conflict of interest, surely.

HARTRO

Oh, uh, no, yes, no, it's fine. I— We're reviewing how we've been working together the last four... **(stammers)** Briefs.

DAVID

Uh— Y... right.

TREXEL

Y-Y— No, no, but Hartro, Hartro, Hartro, Hartro, I've been in a couple of reviews myself.

HARTRO

Yeah.

TREXEL

You should remember. You were there.

HARTRO

Hmm.

TREXEL

And I never got to review me, so how do you get to review you? That's not fair.

HARTRO

It's, it's simple. It's simple. Uhh—

TREXEL

Okay. Oh, it's simple. Oh, thank goodness it's simple—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yeah, don't worry, nope.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) —I'll be able to understand. Okay. Explain to me simply.

HARTRO

Well, I'm just— I'm gon— I've, I've got this form here—

TREXEL

Yes?

HARTRO

There we go, right. And I just need to simply see— Write down some things, how I feel about how **we've** done.

TREXEL

Yes.

HARTRO

And I'll ask you some questions, and I might put us through some... experiments to just prove i— Basically—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Will these experiments—

HARTRO

Mmm?

TREXEL

—involve games in which you suddenly disappear, become a voice speaker in the ceiling, and we nearly die? Because we've seen your games before, Hartro. And if they're not incredibly well-constructed dioramas, a fantasy-land experience roleplayed together, they're a death maze.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Those are the three official options.

HARTRO

This is a little different, okay. I-I'll give you that. I mean, I haven't had as much time to prepare this one because I've been with you.

TREXEL

And also all of your crafts have been destroyed, and are mostly in my tum.

Mmmm.

HARTRO

Stop it. We will get the ayayayaya gangsters out if we need to.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Again, gangsters are not some sort of bird or marsupial with an alarm call.

HARTRO

We'll bring 'em in early.

DAVID

Am I going to be able to play a character? Could I maybe, sort of, I don't know?

HARTRO

Well, no, David— You have to play yourself, because it's how well do we... work together.

DAVID

Oh.

HARTRO

So you could be—

TREXEL

We're not assessing your character's abilities. We're assessing yours.

HARTRO

Yes.

TREXEL

Your meagre abilities, David. Your paltry abilities.

DAVID

'kay.

HARTRO

I mean, you could be a version of David 7.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Maybe a good one. That'd be interesting. A good version of David.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Credit where credit is due. That's a great slam.

DAVID

Okay, Trexel.

TREXEL

Yes?

DAVID

You're being very... feisty for somebody who's rolled up in a carpet.

TREXEL

Well, you know, when you can't move your arms and legs, all the energy has to come out of your face and neck. Rararararar!

DAVID

Okay, I—

TREXEL

Rarararararar!

DAVID

T-tell you what, I think all the blood's sort of just pooling in the bottom of his body. I'm just gonna stand him up.

TREXEL

Whoa—

DAVID

Pop— Prop him in a corner.

HARTRO

W— You are strong.

TREXEL

I'm at a coquettish angle myself. I'm like a hat on the head of a gangster.

DAVID

(Blandly) Ayayayayaya.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Oh dear. It's spreading.

HARTRO

Right. So, before we start, I do need to write down how do you think the last four briefs were answered? Uh. One: Great. Two: Okay. Three: Not so good.

TREXEL

Uhh, I'd say that's a strong one. A strong one. Great in every facet, because each one was a Geistman original. Mmm! That fre—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Okay, examples, examples.

TREXEL

Oh, umm. Well, you know, we, umm, oh, hang on, I remember this. Hang on. I— Don't worry about— Don't, don't worry about me. I remember the briefs. Me, the briefs? All of them. Remember 'em. You know, it's like they're tattooed on the inside of my eyelids, so when I fall asleep I just think, 'Ahh, what a good solution we did to that brief, which I remember. Both solution and brief,' so, one.

IMOGEN

[Beep] What a very long-winded way to say no.

HARTRO

So 'one,' okay.

[Sound of paper flipping and writing]

HARTRO

I've put 'one' for Trexel, aaaand...

DAVID

Uh huh?

HARTRO

David 7.

(Crosstalk) One, two, three?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Uhh, well. Okay, uhh, well, I mean, uhh— pfft. Maybe sort of a—
I'm sort of a 1.5?

HARTRO

Ooooh, alright. I like—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Will that be—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Is that a thing?

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Room for improvement, I like that.

DAVID

Yeah, we got, got, got somebody to drink a lot of red of wine. Umm...

HARTRO

Yeah, we did do that.

DAVID

Pretty sure we had some moisturiser cocktails on the go.

(Hartro mutters agreement)

TREXEL

Yeh. Pretty good. Pretty good.

DAVID

Uhh, think s-some sort of animal, sort of... uprising thing?

TREXEL

I'm hearing ones all round David—

HARTRO

Yep.

TREXEL

—why are you selling yourself short? Why, why, why the point four?

DAVID

I mean, I think the animal uprising was probably more of a t-two.

HARTRO

But it's an overall. It's an overall sampling. And, yes—

DAVID

Yeah, s-so one point five.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) I'm gonna put three ones down. Okay. There we go.

[Scribbling]

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) So one point four, rounded up to one. Three ones. There ya go.
Perfect.

HARTRO

Great. So, the second part of the review is just, we feel like we've done well, now we're just going to prove that with some physical, uhh, data. So we do need to unroll Trexel. Well, I don't know— **(self-protesting burbling)** Let's leave him in there— N-not for this— I'll do a different one first. Right. Okay, this is simp— Yeah, this is simple.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Wh— I—

(Muttering) Quite— I feel— My body's gone, sort of, quite cold. Is that normal?

HARTRO

Yeah.

TREXEL

But my head's really hot.

HARTRO

You shouldn't have eaten my crafts.

TREXEL

I'm like a match. A match full of crafts.

HARTRO

What we're going to do is just all of us... breathe in— Oh, wait, close your eyes.

DAVID

Uh, okay, okay.

TREXEL

Okay.

HARTRO

Stand up, stand up, stand up.

[Sounds of furniture scraping the floor]

DAVID

Right, yep, yep, yep, yep.

HARTRO

Okay, close your eyes. Uh—

DAVID

Mmmhmm.

HARTRO

Breathe in.

DAVID

Mmm?

(Trexel gives a loud, gasping inhale)

HARTRO

And breathe out.

DAVID and TREXEL

Ahhhhhhh.

HARTRO

And breathe in...

(Trexel inhales with a noise that sounds like a sheep bleating in reverse)

HARTRO

And breathe out...

DAVID and TREXEL

Ahhhhhh.....

TREXEL

—aaaah’m Trexel Geistman.

HARTRO

Okay, now, as a team.

DAVID

Uh huh.

HARTRO

We are going to count to twenty.

TREXEL

Twenty!

HARTRO

(Quietly) Trexel, just— **(mumbles)** We’re gonna count to twenty, from one to twenty, and—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven—

(Quickly sputter-mumbles out the rest of the numbers all the way to twenty)

HARTRO

You can only— Wh— You can’t say the n-numbers at the same time. And you can’t say them really fast like Trexel just did.

DAVID

Okay.

HARTRO

And we have to get to twenty—

TREXEL

Twenty.

HARTRO

—as a team.

TREXEL

Team twenty.

HARTRO

And... if we say them at the same time, we have to start over again.

DAVID

Hartro, we do only have, like, well, under an hour or s-so...

HARTRO

No, no, this is— **(burbles)** Cos this is gonna demonstrate how well we work as a team.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Is that what this will demonstrate?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Right.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Twenty.

HARTRO

Because... We'll be able to get from one to twenty without—

DAVID

Okay.

HARTRO

—saying it at the same time. So—

TREXEL

Twenty.

HARTRO

—sense when somebody else is gonna say it, and don't say it. Starting... now.

TREXEL

Twenty.

HARTRO

Trexel.

TREXEL

Mmmhmm?

HARTRO

Trexel.

TREXEL

Yes? Yes.

HARTRO

You have to go from one to twenty. You have to go from one up to twenty.

TREXEL

Oh, from one **to** twenty! Okay.

HARTRO

And you—

TREXEL

One.

HARTRO

No, we're not starting until I say we're starting.

TREXEL

(Burbles) And we're going from one to twenty?

HARTRO

Yeah.

TREXEL

Okay.

HARTRO

To show how well we work as a group. So, as a group we do this.

TREXEL

Okay.

DAVID

Okay.

HARTRO

Okay, close your eyes. Breathe in—

DAVID

Uh huh.

HARTRO

—Breathe out.

TREXEL

Ahhhhhh.

(David and Trexel begin vocalising every breath)

HARTRO

Breathe in. Breathe out. Okay, and, and we're going now.

DAVID

One.

HARTRO

Two.

TREXEL

Twenty! We did it! One to twenty.

IMOGEN

[Beep] I wonder if I can selectively depressurise just part of a room.

HARTRO

Trexel, you have to do all the numbers. You have to do one, two, three, four—

TREXEL

I did! What?

HARTRO

—five, six, seven, eightnineten—

TREXEL

No, you said, go one, two—

HARTRO

No.

TREXEL

—twenty.

HARTRO

No—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) I listened!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) One— The numbers one through the number twenty.

TREXEL

Oh, well, if you're gonna be confusing about it— Okay, fine, okay, fine, we'll do it, we'll do it, we'll do it, we'll do it.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Me and David 7 are gonna do it.

TREXEL

Wh-what?

HARTRO

Trexel, you don't get to play.

TREXEL

Aww, twenty.

HARTRO

Okay, t— Trexel. Okay. David 7, we're gonna breathe in—

DAVID

Okay.

HARTRO

—breathe out.

(David inhales and exhales noisily)

Breathe in, breathe out. Okay, and, ready, go.

DAVID

One.

HARTRO

Two.

DAVID

Three.

HARTRO

Four.

DAVID

Five.

HARTRO

Six.

DAVID

Seven.

HARTRO

Eight.

DAVID

Nine.

HARTRO

Ten.

DAVID

Eleven.

HARTRO

Twelve.

DAVID

Thirteen.

HARTRO

Fourteen.

DAVID

Fifteen.

HARTRO

Sixteen.

DAVID

Seventeen.

HARTRO

Eighteen.

DAVID

Nineteen.

HARTRO

Twenty. There we go!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Yaaaay, yes! See, we're really good.

TREXEL

There's no— No, that's nothing, you're just saying numbers one a— **(burbles)**

Hartro, just give u—

HARTRO

We did it as a team.

TREXEL

I just want to prove to you, just, just you, you and I. David, you don't complicate things, you and I just quickly do it, okay? Just— G— Just trust me, just trust me, okay? I can do this. I can do this. I can do this. Okay. Okay.

HARTRO

But we've already passed it.

TREXEL

No, no, but, please— Just, please, one go. One go. One chance to prove myself.

HARTRO

Okay.

TREXEL

I'll go first. I'll go fast.

HARTRO

Br...

TREXEL

One.

HARTRO

Breathe in.

(Trexel mutters, then does some breathing exercises)

HARTRO

Okay.

TREXEL

One.

HARTRO

Two.

TREXEL

Twenty. I just can't resist the easy path.

(Hartro breathes in and out)

I just can't resist it. I thought I could. I thought I could resist it, but I couldn't, it's just there!

HARTRO

But you even set it up!

TREXEL

I know!

HARTRO

You were gonna prove to me that you could do it!

TREXEL

Hartro, I am the most shocked of all of us here. But here we are. In the boat of reason, I am a sail, shifting, shifting in the breeze. I have a priority one moment. The next moment, I've got distracted by the breeze!

HARTRO

Okay, well, half of us did that well. So, I mean, we are improving.

DAVID

Uh, it was over half.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Round it up to a one I'd say.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yes, over half! Oooh, that's true.

TREXEL

Round it up.

HARTRO

Yes. Nice. I'm gonna round that—

[Scribbling]

HARTRO

Well, that was—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Yeah. That's why they call him Trexel 'Roundi—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) We're showing a majority of us work well as a team.

TREXEL

What do they— Sorry, sorry David, what do they call me?

DAVID

Trexel 'Rounding Error' Geistman.

HARTRO

Hmmm.

TREXEL

That is a hurtful nickname that I thought I'd got past. That was one rounding error! Of course, I rounded from off to on, and the on was a reactor, and the people were cleaning it, so it was a big rounding error, sure. But I think that's small-minded of you. Have a bigger mind, David. Have a big, expanding, irradiated mind.

IMOGEN

[Beep] What kind words!

HARTRO

Hmm.

DAVID

Hmm.

HARTRO

Right, moving on. I think we'll do quite good at this one. I think this— I think this is the one I should have opened with.

DAVID

We— Will we?

TREXEL

If the last one's any guide, I think we'll nail it. We'll nail it like you nail a butterfly to your leg.

DAVID

Do we, uh, do we need to unroll Trexel yet?

TREXEL

Please.

HARTRO

Oh, yeah, yeah, we can unroll him for this one.

TREXEL

I've tingle— I've got the tingles.

DAVID

Alright, I'll tell you what. I'll just, ah—

[David yanks hard on the rug, spinning Trexel as he unravels him]

HARTRO

That was a fast spin.

TREXEL

I'm so dizzy. I've never been more dizzy in my entire life. I have no legs, they're above my head. Urp—

HARTRO

Do not throw up my crafts!

(Trexel retches noisily)

[The remnants of Hartro's crafts clatter to the floor]

HARTRO

Auuuugh, I don't wanna **see** this!

DAVID

Oh, he's— Oh, he's— Oh, he's— Oh, he's, he's thrown up a battalion.

TREXEL

Ahh, that came up worse than it went down. Ohhh.

DAVID

They're actually—

(Hartro moans)

Well, you know, they're actually—

HARTRO

Look at them.

TREXEL

Why do I have to eat such pointy things?

DAVID

They're in a classic pincer formation. I think—

TREXEL

I've got a very tactical gullet.

DAVID

That's i— That's impressive. And, and the cavalry are even— Wow, that's, um. Yeah, your stomach has a, has a very incisive... tactical mind.

TREXEL

The Geistmans have always had the stomachs of warriors. They have to be to defeat the alcohol.

HARTRO

I have to say, I am, I am a bit emotional. But I... I think I'm going to... put this down as a use of good teamwork. I mean, they are my crafts—

TREXEL

They were in me.

HARTRO

—they were Trexel’s upset stomach, and David’s foresight to see this as a work of art. I’m putting this down.

[Sniffles, scribbling]

TREXEL

It comes together like a synergistic piece of pie. A slice for everyone involved. A slice for you. A slice for you. A slice for me.

DAVID

I can rinse them off, if you want.

TREXEL

But the memory will still be there. You can clean it all you want, but you’ll still know where they’ve been.

DAVID

Trexel, why are you intent on making this worse?

TREXEL

Because it’s who I am!

HARTRO

I’m not, I’m not having those again. I have no— I’ll get new crafts, and it’s fine. I’ll create new relationships.

TREXEL

You can keep ‘em, David. You can start a collection of things I vomited.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Can we establish a charitable trust to ensure that a museum collection is not preserved? We can call it “The Unwelcome Collection.”

DAVID

I’ll tell you what: I could just pummel them into discs right now. Would that help?

HARTRO

That would help.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Oh, hang on, let me do a 21 Trex-salute as you destroy the troops.
Boom!

[Punching sounds, accompanied by sounds of exertion from David]

TREXEL

Haa! **(punch)** Slam! **(punch)** Kablam! **(punch)** That’s enough, I’m not doing 21, they didn’t deserve that.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Goodbye, boys. Goodbye.

DAVID

Alright, well—

[David begins punching the regurgitated crafts furiously]

DAVID

There you go.

(Hartro sighs)

TREXEL

Ha. I'd say that that, ah, that battalion's got a very... flat hierarchy. **(he laughs at own joke)** I'm hilarious.

DAVID

Okay, no, just, just one second, I'm just gonna gather these up, r— Get them all in like a nice, nice roll, and— Trexel?

[Clatter of flattened crafts]

TREXEL

Yes?

DAVID

Trex— Would— Just say 'ahhh.'

TREXEL

Ahhhhhhhh.

[David yells shoves the roll of flattened crafts into Trexel’s open mouth as Hartro is shocked]

TREXEL

You know what? They go down much smoother like that. Thank you, David. Now I still get to pass them, but without the unpleasant scraping. That’s teamwork. Put it down for another one!

HARTRO

I’ll put it down, I’ll put it down.

[Scribbling]

TREXEL

Ha! Hartro’s on board!

HARTRO

I’m gonna take that— I’m taking that.

IMOGEN

[Beep] I would advise against this jocular acceptance of unarguable horrors.

HARTRO

(Sighs) Okay, this is a bit of a fun one. I want you to get out of your heads here, and we’re just gonna really be silly. Okay?

DAVID

Silly?

HARTRO

Yep.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Okay. We're gonna put away our serious hats that we've been keeping on, put away our childish things, y'know, childish seriousness. I was a very serious child. I actually started quite serious, and then got here. Who knows why? I think trauma. Anyway, so, what's the game?

HARTRO

Right, so, anything goes. I just want you to really think quick on your feet. There's no wrong answers, alright?

IMOGEN

[Beep] I think there is.

TREXEL

Twenty!

IMOGEN

Yep.

HARTRO

Except for that.

DAVID

I think he's found the one wrong answer.

HARTRO

Yeah, the one wrong answer.

TREXEL

Well, anyways, that's an achievement.

HARTRO

Right. So, somebody is going to just pick something. They're gonna say, "I am a," and they're gonna, they're gonna leap into the middle of our, our little triangle here that we're making. And they're going to say—

TREXEL

Yes.

HARTRO

—what they are, and then they're gonna create the shape of the, of the item. Of the thing. And then, and then—

TREXEL

Yes.

HARTRO

—and then the other two are gonna jump in, and they're gonna be things that would go really nicely with this other thing. Uh, yeah? That makes sense?

(David and Trexel vocalise agreement)

TREXEL

Makes sense to me. Do we, do we just go in turn, or?

HARTRO

No, no, go in when you feel it. And then the first person who's jumped in, they say who the winner is. Cos one person's gonna have the best answer.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Okay, fine. Okay, right. Uh, well, I am Trexel Geistman, World Genius.

DAVID

Okay, um... I am one of Hartro's miniatures, falling down your throat!

HARTRO

Yes, yes—

TREXEL

Oh.

HARTRO

—good, good, good. I am... I am the Board.

TREXEL

Okay. Okay, not as impre— Well, okay, I choose Trexel Geistman, World Genius. I am Trexel Geistman, World Genius.

DAVID

I think—

HARTRO

Okay.

DAVID

I think you have to choose—

HARTRO

Yeah, you have to pick—

DAVID

—someone else, Trexel.

TREXEL

No, you said, choose, choose the best one.

HARTRO

No, no, no, you gotta pick.

TREXEL

And I chose Trexel Geistman, World Genius.

HARTRO

You pick—

TREXEL

Just come on. Just come on. Come on with the game. No, jump in. I'm Trexel Geistman, World Genius.

HARTRO

Uhhhkay. I'm... I'm... uh, Trexel Geistman's... gills under his armpit... Eurgh.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Flappin' away. Flappin' away.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh, augh... augh... Why?

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Euuuuuuughhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

TREXEL

All like an angry face.

HARTRO

Euuuurgh.

DAVID

(Sighs) I am the ever-ticking clock, asking Trexel to just turn up on time, once!
For once!

HARTRO

Here, Trexel, pick one of us that's the best.

TREXEL

Okay, I'll pick, uh... I'll pick... I'll pick Trexel Geistman, World Genius. Okay, I'm
Trexel Geistman, World Genius.

HARTRO

No, no, no, Trexel, you've— Cos it's gonna be the same every time if you just—
If you keep picking yourself, then we'll never have a new thing.

TREXEL

I thought— What am I supposed to— You say “pick the best one,” David.
Trexel Geistman, World Genius is there. What am I supposed to do? Lie to the
children? Think of their sad eyes!

(High-pitched sad voice) “Please sir, why did you not pick Trexel Geistman,
World Genius? He's the most genius in all of the worlds. Why? Why did you do
this to us, non-specific orphans?”

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Okay, okay, okay. Okay. Okay. I'm—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) See? You wanna upset the non-specific orphans?

HARTRO

I'm a non-specific orphan!

TREXEL

They haven't eaten in an indeterminate amount of time!

HARTRO

Ugh. I'm doing another one. I'm doing a new one. Get out. I'm a non-spec—

(Trexel rumbles)

—I'm a non-specific orphan.

TREXEL

Okay. Um, I am the ever-looming presence of starvation! Oooh, hungry.

DAVID

Ummm. I am a teddybear! Clutched in their tiny, tiny hands.

HARTRO

Awww, David wins. Okay, that's the end! We did it, we did it, we did it!

(David and Trexel share uncertain hoorays)

IMOGEN

[Beep] You certainly did something.

TREXEL

I didn't win.

HARTRO

Yaaay! We did it, we played it right.

DAVID

Hoor— Hooray.

HARTRO

We win.

TREXEL

We played it a way. Not the best way, in my opinion. And I'm— I've heard it said, a bit of a world genius.

HARTRO

Thing is— The thing is, boys, the whole point was can we play a game together correctly?

TREXEL

Mmmhmm.

HARTRO

Because in the past, when I have done your training, we've never been able to do that.

TREXEL

That's true.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay.

HARTRO

But we just did one round of that game correctly.

TREXEL

And no rules were broken.

DAVID

Did we...? Uh... I mean... okay?

HARTRO

I'm, I'm actually going to put down, for our review —

DAVID

Uh-huh.

HARTRO

—that we... did... excellent.

[Scribbling]

TTREXEL

There we go. And I'm sending that off.

TREXEL

There we go.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Submitting.

[Pneumatic tube whooshes]

[Music begins to play, a strange panel opens and different machinery whirrs]

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Hang on, hang on, I've not heard that noise before, what's— Whoa! That's a new panel.

DAVID

Uh— the—

TREXEL

What's— It's a—

DAVID

There's a bit of a sort of... t-t-tray?

TREXEL

It's a golden card and... three—

(Hartro gasps)

TREXEL

Is— Hartro, is it—? Is this—?

HARTRO

(Gasping again) Oh my— I've heard of this.

TREXEL

Hartro. Hartro. You, you, you read it out, I can't, I can't bear to touch it.

HARTRO

(Overwhelmed, stammering) O-Okay, I-I'll read it— I'll read it—

TREXEL

No, give it here, give it here, give it here—

(Hartro babbles in alarm)

No, you read it, you read it, I'm gonna— I'm too nervous—

HARTRO

No, you do it—

TREXEL

Give that back to me!

HARTRO

Can I read it? **(babbles)**

DAVID

I'm going to read it! **(sighs, grabs card)** Right.

HARTRO

But read it, read it, r-read it, read it properly.

TREXEL

Read it like, like it's an announcement from a herald in, in a heraldic tale.

(David makes heraldic trumpet noises with his mouth)

HARTRO

Yes, yes.

TREXEL

Yes, yes, that's exactly— That's exactly it. You couldn't have got that more right.

DAVID

Okay, uhh. "We, the Board—" Oh. Um.

HARTRO

(Gasps) Yes, yes.

DAVID

"Hereby appoint you—"

HARTRO

Who, who?!

DAVID

And there's a sort of a space, and then i-in a different font, it kind of says,
'Trexel Geistman'—

TREXEL

That's me!

HARTRO

And, and?

(Hartro makes quiet noises of poorly contained excitement as David reads)

DAVID

And then we're back to a— Back to the normal— An 'and,' yeah, and then, and then, 'and,' and then it's in a thing, and it says, "Your clone, David 7," and then there's another, there's another bit, there's another bit, an 'and'—

TREXEL

I mean, we've covered everyone. What's the point? Everyone's covered.

DAVID

"Hart—" In the font, "Hartro Piltz—"

HARTRO

Hartro Piltz!!

(Trexel and Hartro gasp)

DAVID

“Have been... promoted... to the position of... senior executive—”

TREXEL

Yeeeeeees!!

HARTRO

Yay!

DAVID

As—

TREXEL

It’s finally here! Finally—

DAVID

Um.

TREXEL

—the day my triumph is total! All my life—

HARTRO

Thank you!

DAVID

There is more.

TREXEL

All my life!

HARTRO

Thank you.

DAVID

There is more.

HARTRO

Thank you.

DAVID

“Assigned... to the department... of...”

HARTRO

Ooh, ooh, we have a department.

DAVID

“The department—”

HARTRO

Of course we have, of course we have a depa— a— a— We can't be— We can't— I'm so silly!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) We're not, we're not, we're not senior consultants without portfolios! Come on, we're big shots! Go on, David.

HARTRO

I know, I know, I know, I know, go on.

DAVID

Uh, “the, the Department of Business Warfare.”

TREXEL

That— That is a department! You know what? There are lots of departments—

DAVID

Umm.

TREXEL

—for senior consultants. Some of them are good, some of them are bad, that’s a tip-top one. That’s where they keep all the guns!

DAVID

Okay... And... I mean, that’s— Yeah, that’s— There’s no, there’s no P.S., there’s no... there’s no, there’s nothing.

HARTRO

What else is there to say?

IMOGEN

[Beep] Perhaps that this must be a terrible mistake, as Trexel will now be in charge of some wars.

DAVID

Well, I'm just gonna— I'm just gonna sort of t-tear it in half. There's nothing—
There's nothing hidden, there's no bombs, there's no...

TREXEL

No.

DAVID

It's not like a surprise... evil... card inside.

[Clatter of bottles and glasses]

HARTRO

They've given us executive senior business warfare slurry!

TREXEL

A flute for me, **(glass clink)** a flute for Hartro. **(glass clink)** There is a flute for
you, David, **(glass clink)** but I think it might be full of regular— I think they've
just given you regular clone slurry.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) But it's in a nice glass.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) But it's in a fancy flute.

DAVID

I mean...

TREXEL

So there's always that.

DAVID

Great.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Cheers everybody!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Uhh...

[Glasses clink again]

HARTRO

Cheers!

DAVID

Cheers...

IMOGEN

[Beep] Cheers.

HARTRO

I **knew** this day would come.

TREXEL

(Rapturously) Ohh, ohh, sweet nectar. Oh, sweet, sweet nectar. Mmm, yes—

[Drinking sounds]

DAVID

Okay, no, just—

HARTRO

Why are you drinking through your armpits? You don't need to do that.

TREXEL

(Slurping) Ohh, it's so good. You taste it better through the gill. I've got four tongues in there. Mmmm. Tasty. Tasty, tasty.

DAVID

Um, look, just, so— Just hang on a minute.

TREXEL

What, what?

DAVID

This you— You said—

TREXEL

Are you gonna—

HARTRO

Nothing could ruin this moment.

TREXEL

David, are you gonna gainsay th— You’ve got your gainsay face on. This is, unreservedly, without reservation, with not a single reservation — you’re not getting a table, that party over there, they’ve just sat down — with no reservation, this is a good thing! Do you know how long I’ve been hoping, wishing, dreaming, waking up, striking, panicking, burying, driving around and around all night going, “Oh Board, oh Board, what have I done? They’re gonna find out!” Then nobody comes. Then nobody comes, David, because my day never comes. And finally my day has come! I am a senior executive! No-one can take that away from me! Not mum! Not dad! They didn’t believe, but here I am, Senior Consultant Geistman! Take that you dead, dead idiots!

DAVID

Now **that** is entirely... my thought. This doesn’t really happen to people, does it? Like ever. Have you ever heard of this happening to anyone else?

TREXEL

Y-yeah, well yeah, some people are— Some people are senior—

HARTRO

Somebody has to be a senior executive.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Right.

TREXEL

Paradrak, Paradrak had to have gone somewhere. You know, they were an executive here, and, and they're moving up. That's why we're moving in. So I assume they— They went to— I mean, I've, I've not seen them since, and— I've never actually met a senior executive in person, but I assume they go somewhere, and it's fine.

HARTRO

I, I, uh, I had a poster on my wall as a child that— There was a senior executive and a... nnn... sort of shadowy figure underneath the words 'senior executive.'

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

They're shadowy people.

DAVID

No, but—

HARTRO

Yeah.

DAVID

—So this is, this is really— Th— I'm not saying that, like, nobody is ever a senior executive. I assume that they exist. But people don't just get promoted,

do they? So... I-I really think this might have something to do with Standards. I-I really think this might be—

(Hartro sighs)

TREXEL

Oh, it's about David. Sorry, Hartro. Sorry, Hartro, I thought for a moment—

DAVID

No!

TREXEL

—something was about us. But I think it's about David. I think—

DAVID

No!

TREXEL

—David's identified that it's about him, and his weird, menage-a-what-is-this with Standards.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) No, but— No, but— Standards—

HARTRO

Trexel...

DAVID

The— I, I think that— They're the— They are the people who, who will be a—
Who **could** do this kind of thing, and it's a bit neat that all— Like, also, why did
we get promoted together?

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Trexel. He's... **(sighs)**

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Because we just had an excellent teamwork brief, so.

HARTRO

No, no, no, he's right—

TREXEL

No, please Hartro—

HARTRO

Trexel, he's right!

TREXEL

—we don't always agree on things, but we can both—

HARTRO

He's right! No, think about it!

TREXEL

—agree that David is always wrong.

HARTRO

(Groans) I wish I could, but... Trexel, he's got a point. Nobody would **ever** promote you to senior executive. Like— it, this, this, this doesn't make sense, unless there's some sort of thing, like— **(gasps)** Ah! The Stakeholders Meeting! It— Yeah— Cos they said! D-do you remember? I said, "The Stakeholder Meeting coming up," and they needed, uh, what was it, David 7 was still the best... choice? Option?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh... I... I'd forgot— Sorry, yeah, I was con—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) It's—

TREXEL

I don't remember that at all, because I don't think I was listening.

DAVID

But— Uh, no— I was—

HARTRO

So it all makes sense.

DAVID

I was so obsessed with this, the clone revolution thing, I just kind of brushed it off. But you're right. They did have— They want to set us up for something. And—

HARTRO

(Sighs) Why can't I just have something?!

DAVID

And— Wait—

HARTRO

Why couldn't I have this?!

DAVID

Let's just fa— I just wanna make sure. Let's just m— Let's just— So.

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) Yeah.

DAVID

Who gets to go to the Stakeholders Meeting?

TREXEL

Well, I— It's a small selection chosen from senior executives, I think, so...

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

Right. Okay. Well, I think this needs a little bit of further investigation. Now, I could do it, but I think we all know if you send me out there—

HARTRO

(Crosstalk) No, I'll do it, I'll do it, I'll do it!

TREXEL

If you send me out there, I'll start with the best of intentions. But give me twenty minutes, I'll be neck deep in some slurry, so...

HARTRO

Boys.

TREXEL

Cos I'm celebrating anyway. I don't care if this is part of a ploy. I'm celebrating as if it's real. Like it's nineteen-ninety-nine.

HARTRO

Okay, okay. I— I'm on this. I'm on this. Okay. I just need to get my, my mind back in the game. Um, I'm a great detective. I've do— I do wonderful spy work. I will, I will get some intel. I've got this, boys.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Well, Hartro. You go off and do your thing. I'm gonna go off for a celebratory twelve hours of drinking. And David, **you** get to stay here.

DAVID

Yep.

TREXEL

Congratulations!

DAVID

I'll just... wait for the floor to open up, and I'll land in a different office.

TREXEL

Maybe it'll be a different way this time, David. I mean, it probably won't be. They've established a bit of a pattern, but we can but dream. Maybe we'll be carried there on golden chariots.

DAVID

Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

Bewinged chariots, full of kittens.

DAVID

Yes, maybe this new office will be shinier and even more confusing.

TREXEL

Ooooh, could be. As you know, as you get more executive, and you get more sleek, you get less labels, you get less buttons.

DAVID

Good. Great. I will look forward—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Oh hang— No, hang on— I’m an exec— I’m an executive now, David. **Fewer** buttons. I thank you. I thank you.

HARTRO

Alright, I’m outta here. If you see me out in the world, you don’t know me.

TREXEL

I don’t know you now! Because my vision is going hazy. Bye, David! Bye, Hartro!

[Door whooshes]

DAVID

Wait, we— We were gonna roll him down some stairs! Ayiyiyiyi!

IMOGEN

[Beep] Signal from Sector TRV-420 active. Receiving intercepted transmission.

DAVID

Wait, wait, wh-what’s this? Wh-what signal?

[A display screen whirs to life and heavily distorted, incomprehensible speech of Bathin begins to play]

IMOGEN

[Beep] These are the intercepted transmissions with the suspected source being the Galactonium Public Relays.

DAVID

Galactoni— The— The, the— I-I-It could be— Uh— Maybe it's a— Oh, oh my Board— C-C-Can you make it any clearer?

IMOGEN

[Beep] Signal clean-up in process. Estimated time to completion: fourteen hours.

DAVID

Okay. Okay. I can wait. I can wait.

[Show Theme – Outro]

Stellar Firma is a podcast distributed by Rusty Quill Ltd. and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence.

Created by: Tim Meredith and Ben Meredith

Producer: Katie Seaton

Executive Producer: Alexander J. Newall

Editing: Maddy Searle, Michelle Snow

Mastering: Jeffrey Nils Gardner

Music: Samuel D.F. Jones

Artwork: Anika Khan

Cast

I.M.O.G.E.N. – Imogen Harris

Hartro Piltz – Jenny Haufek

David 7 – Ben Meredith

Trexel Geistman – Tim Meredith

Bathin – Travis McElroy