

STL 71 — Bathin and Ballistics

Content Warnings

- Alcohol & alcoholism
- Bullying/taunting
- Emotional abuse
- Innuendo
- Germophobia and emetophobia
- Discussions of: physical violence, death, war
- Mentions of: smoke, bombs, guns, food
- SFX: repetitive alarm

TREXEL

Special thanks to Jay G. It's time to lay down the law — and also concrete, because law is a not a load-bearing concept.

[Show Theme – Intro]

IMOGEN

Rusty Quill presents: Stellar Firma.

[Theme continues]

DAVID

(Longing sigh) Play it again, Imogen.

IMOGEN

[Beep] I'd say that playing this for the eighty-fourth time in a row constitutes an unhealthy obsession. But then again... yum.

[Video transmission of Bathin's pre-recorded message starts with a whirr, followed by the sounds of a cheering crowd on Galactonium]

BATHIN

(Tapping mic, quietly) Uh, hey my dudes, is this on? It's on? Ah, radical. Alright, thanks man.

(Crowd quiets)

(Bathin speaks louder) My fellow Galactonians. When we announced that we would make this the chilliest year in the history of our glorious nation, people told us... People told us... that we were whack.

(Crowd begins to boo)

No, please, please. Please, chill. Chill, please, chill. It's okay.

They were sceptical, and rightly so. We all remember the Great Bummer of '57, and that time we nearly ran out of ice cream. But we had a vision. A vision of free buffets, a vision of having four Saturdays in every week, and a vision of chairs that recline **all the way flat**.

(Crowd cheers again)

BATHIN

When I took over for my father, the old Duke, may his soul abide in the chilliest of vibes, I knew that our nation was in trouble. We were uptight. Yes, yes, I think we can admit that now. And I realise that mere constitutional reforms,

public works, and charitable initiatives were only small parts of the puzzle. But nothing ties a people together more than being rad, being sweet, and above all else: being really, super chill.

(Approving roar of the crowd)

And so, it is with great honour that I announce that our coolest scientists have determined that this year has been the Most Chillaxed **Ever**. There are **so** many people to thank: our relaxologists, our good vibes wardens, all the animals that we trained to come nap with us, obviously that asteroid full of diamonds we found has been a real help, too. But most of all, I wanna thank you, my chilliest of citizens, for really bringing it this year.

(Crowd cheers)

And so, for the glory of Galactonium, and for the great vision that guides us, join me in saying, ‘Be cool. Come on... nice.’ And above all else: no bummers!

[The crowd cheers thunderously before the recording whirs off]

DAVID

(Sighing wistfully) Ahhh... To be in your arms. If only... just, just for one day. Just for an hour. A minute. Even to be brushed by those biceps for a single second.

[Door whooshes open]

TREXEL

Ah, David!

(David cries out in startled alarm)

Oh, David. It's, it's awfully sort of like, soft focus in here. What have you been doing?

DAVID

Ah—

TREXEL

I bet it's something weird. You've done something weird.

DAVID

(Stammers) N-No, no. No? No. No.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Nothing weird here!

TREXEL

What **have** you been doing? Because that screen— I haven't seen that screen before. What's going on— What have you done with Imogen? Have you looked up something weird?

DAVID

No, it's not... w-weird. It's... nice.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Well, what is it? What have you done? What have you been doing?

DAVID

It's... **(burbles)** Ba-Bathin.

TREXEL

Oh, what, you've been looking up pictures of Bathin again? Ol' topless Bathin.

(David mumbles)

Ever since Imogen took away that search block, every screen— Everywhere I go, topless Bathin. I don't wanna see that. I don't need that.

DAVID

(Sighing) No, it's... m-movie. F-Film.

TREXEL

You got a—

(David sighs happily)

That's not— David, that's not— That's not allowed. Still images is one thing. What d'you— What are you saying? What have you seen?

DAVID

It's— Imogen did it.

TREXEL

You've been watching restricted, intercepted communiques from Galactonium, haven't you? Haven't you?! Tell me!

DAVID

Yeah...

TREXEL

Oh, I knew it! You're lost. I tried to mould you in my own image, and all you want to be is in Bathin's strong, wide, gripping arms, held close, held safe, held tight, and that's awful, and nobody wants that. Just to... not think for a moment. Just to be held, squeezed, the pressure— Not too tight, but just a nice, firm— Hang on a minute, what's that door?

DAVID

Wha?

TREXEL

Th-the door. That big, evil, ominous, red, glowing, smoke-filled door. It's about two feet away from you, David, and—

IMOGEN

[Beep] Oh! That door.

TREXEL

David, this is it. This is the promotion. To business warfare. Look at this doorway—

DAVID

Bu—

TREXEL

—it's so ominous, so full of smoke. That's a door to war!

DAVID

(Dazed) B-b-b-buh chest. Bath... in.

TREXEL

Are you mean t—

DAVID

Chest.

TREXEL

You mean to say, David, that this door has been open and smoking and glowing all day, because our promotion will have come through at the open of business **quite** a number of hours ago, David, and you've... just faced the other way and looked at Bathin's chest for that entire time on a loop.

DAVID

Oh, I dunno...

TREXEL

I think you do know, David.

DAVID

Yeah...

TREXEL

I think you do. Right, come on.

DAVID

Wha—

TREXEL

Come on, come on—

(David begins to protest with a series of ‘nos’ as Trexel gets him up)

—get up from your chair. Close that window. Close it— I’m closing the windows, David. I’m close the— There we are. Now.

DAVID

(Panting) Buh—

TREXEL

We have a place to be.

(David pants)

The most important place to be for an individual.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Haa... Fine.

TREXEL

Which is to say: higher on the hierarchy. This is—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh, actually—

Yes! Bigger office. Better office. Bigger screens. Better screens! Come on, Trexel, let's go!

TREXEL

That's right, fine, toward Bathin's HD nipples.

IMOGEN

[Beep] A rallying call we can all get behind.

TREXEL

And here we go.

[David and Trexel enter the door, coughing through the hissing smoke]

TREXEL

It's... very smoky.

DAVID

Right, okay... oooh.

TREXEL

You'd think they'd put more lights in here.

DAVID

Umm, where are we— Is that a spir— Spiral— Is that a slide? Is that a—

[Floor opens beneath them, leaving them shouting as they drop away]

TREXEL

(Fading out) Oh, it's fun, but scary as well!

[David and Trexel are dumped into a new office]

TREXEL

Oh, that's, uh— That's novel. Normally it's flushing, but now, an executive slide. This is the big time, David, we've made it now.

DAVID

Ca—

TREXEL

No more flushes for us. Only frictionless slides.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Only big, important people get to go on the slides, so you know you've really made it.

DAVID

Giving our bums an executive polish.

TREXEL

Ooooh... hang on, turn around.

[Clothing rustles]

TREXEL

You've got that executive polish. Look at mine?

[Clothing rustles]

DAVID

Ooh, that's— ah... disturbingly shiny.

TREXEL

Yes, well, I've got a lot of chemicals on my clothes. Don't ask me where. I don't know the answer.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

Now, David. See? See? The fruits of our labours? Look at this: a matte black room—

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

—with a giant circular table where **(bangs on table)** everything's harshly lit and also uplit as well for extra evil.

DAVID

Umm... this is... okay. I hope they have a... bed.

TREXEL

A bed— No, there's no time for sleeping. This is war, David! This is war!

DAVID

Maybe the table sort of just splits apart, or, um... Maybe— Hang on, just gonna—

TREXEL

It's not a pull-out conference table.

DAVID

I'm just gonna— I'm just— I've found some buttons, give me a sec. Uhh, right, what about, uhh— Ooh! Uh, 'start'!

[Hits a button and rumbling begins]

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Uh. Trexel. Um.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Okay, that's... that's a bit frightening.

DAVID

Trexel, is this normal?

TREXEL

I don't know, David, I've literally never been here in my entire life. I tried to break in here, once—

[A click, followed by louder rumbling and the sound of something like a car alarm blaring]

TREXEL

—but they wouldn't let me, **(coughs)** and threatened to cut off my face.

DAVID

Trexel, why is that hatch honking?

TREXEL

Oh, I don't know. I don't like the honking hatch. Maybe it's full of an evil galactic goose. I never told you this, David, but I have an intense fear of geese! Ohh, space geese, leave my sandwiches alone!

[Alarm stops, small wheels squeak as Head of Ballistics Akteraks approaches]

TREXEL

Uh— What? That's...

DAVID

(Crosstalk) That's just a—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) No, that's just a—

AKTERAKS

Good morning, gentlemen!

DAVID

Umm.

AKTERAKS

Welcome to Business Warfare. My apologies for the appearance. I know that this is, this is, uh... not quite what you were expecting there, but I'm just so busy, I couldn't make it down in person. Terribly sorry, but let's get right down to it, shall we?

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) I just— I'm sorry, sorry, so—

No, no, no, sorry, sorry, sorry, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop.

AKTERAKS

Is there a problem?

TREXEL

You are a s— You're a speaker on a stick.

AKTERAKS

Well, yeah. I-I, I just used whatever was handy, honestly.

(Crosstalk) I couldn't make it down there myself, so...

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Well, we have—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) I—

DAVID

But... we have the, the TV screens.

(Trexel says something indistinctly)

Like, there's a big one over on the wall there, it's huge.

TREXEL

It's like, every wall is a screen—

AKTERAKS

Oh, sure.

TREXEL

—and you've turned up as a speaker with wheels.

AKTERAKS

Well, I wasn't gonna waste the entrance.

IMOGEN

[Beep] You have to admire the dramaturgy.

TREXEL

It's a good entrance.

AKTERAKS

If I couldn't use it for myself personally, I at least wanted something to roll into the room.

TREXEL

I mean, I can, I can respect the logic there. But I have a follow-up question: who the Board are you?

AKTERAKS

Ah, yes! Of course. I am Head of Ballistics Akteraks, pleased to meet you. Uh, we really do need to get moving along, though. It is quite late in the day—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Yeah, sorry, you're—

Sorry, no, no, sorry, no, again, sorry— **You're** Head of Ballistics?

AKTERAKS

Uh, that's correct.

TREXEL

I thought Gertron was Head of Ballistics.

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) No, no, no, no, no, no.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Massive man! Twenty-foot high. Fists like hams, shouts everything.

AKTERAKS

Nah, we haven't, uh, seen him in quite some time now. Uhh, it's okay, I have been— The Board has pulled me to fill his spot. I'm not sure what happened. I

d— I don't ask questions. I don't know why I would. Uh, but, uh, that, that's, uh, where I find myself now, so, uh. Yeah. Hi, guys.

TREXEL

Wh-what were you doing before this? Before Head of Ballistics, what was your job?

AKTERAKS

Well, I was working in Ballistics, just not as the head. I was, I was, I was effectively doing what you do. Uh, you know, I was taking, uh, information in from certain informants. Making, sort of, strategic recommendations... and then, the previous Head, or really, Heads of Ballistics were the ones to make the final decisions, and now that's me.

DAVID

Right, well, oh, I mean, I guess that kind of makes sense, 'cos we get, we get promoted, Trexel, she get promoted.

TREXEL

Yeah... I... I'm not gonna lie, David. My entire life has been leading up to the point that I am a senior executive. Since I was a child, I've wanted to be a senior executive. So when I turned up, I imagined it being more sort of like, you know, ceremonies, and medals, and, you know, somebody terrifying shaking my hand in that way that men sometimes do where they crush your hand so that they— You know that they could kill you, but like in a friends way.

DAVID

Gertron's hands aren't here. And, and also, you are still eight hours late.

TREXEL

That's true.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Sounds like Gertron's hands might be dead.

TREXEL

You know, if it was a choice between a grand ceremony and being on time, I... I would... be late.

AKTERAKS

Oh, and you know, normally I would absolutely give you the ceremony. I mean, it's been a very important part of the whole process for so long—

TREXEL

So long.

AKTERAKS

—now, but I am just so tied up, you have no idea the paperwork that I have to go through in this position, so... So, uh, this is what we have, and, and my apologies it's not the fanfare you were expecting, but... ah, you know.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Okay, again, again, the fact that you're apologising to me— You're Head of Ballistics. I expect sort of, presence and anger, and you're sort of like, 'Ooh, sorry about the inconvenience! Kind regards.'

DAVID

This is nice! I haven't been insulted once. Thank you, Head of Ballistics Akteraks.

TREXEL

I don't know how to operate in—

DAVID

And you've asked Trexel to get on with his job!

TREXEL

I don't know how to operate in this environment! I don't— **(bubbles)** And 'Oh, it's nice! Oh, it's nice! Oh, would you mind doing this? Could I please push you to one of those?' Where's, where's the pointing? Where's the shouting? Where's the ka-pow? Where's the 'You can't handle the truth, because the truth is a lie, and lies are what makes us people!'

IMOGEN

[Beep] Also, you shouldn't be nice to Trexel. Because, you know. Trexel.

AKTERAKS

You know, again, this is all wonderful, this is all well and good and, and stuff that I would, I would absolutely love to be giving you right now. I simply do not have the time. Uh, and, with that in mind, I believe that— Wh-what's your name? David... 7, I think I remember?

DAVID

Y-yes, it, it is.

AKTERAKS

Excellent.

DAVID

You don't wanna just call me 'clone,' or 'You over there,' or 'Oi'?

AKTERAKS

Well, I mean, there's a lot of clones working around here. I need to know what, what their names are so I can refer to them. Terribly inefficient if I didn't.

DAVID

I— Hey, you know, it's the nicest I've ever been treated, and if it's in the sake of efficiency, so be it. Yes, uh, what can I do for you, Head of Ballistics Akteraks?

AKTERAKS

Uh, we should probably go ahead and get the brief so I can show you what to do, so I can move on. I have only about twenty-five minutes left in my first shift of the day, and I need to finish other things first as well.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Absolutely. Gr-Gr-Great minds.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) This sucks. This sucks.

DAVID

Um, Head of Ballistics, may I just ask, how am I supposed to get hold of the brief in this room? It's very dark, and none of the—

TREXEL

Ooh, is it perhaps some sort of trial of pain? You have to shove your hand in a glowing red box, which shoots pain rays into your hand? Because pain is knowledge, and suffering is power.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Only the Kwisatz Haderach will best the gom jabbar.

AKTERAKS

Ahh, I do remember the days when things were like that to get briefs, but no, no, I'm afraid— Uh, you see the button panel in front of you, David, there, on the table?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Yeah, yeah, yeah?

AKTERAKS

It's actually not on that panel, it's immediately underneath the table.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Al...right.

AKTERAKS

There's a little foot pedal. If you go ahead and press that for me.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh! Okay.

AKTERAKS

That should release the brief.

[A whump as the brief is released, paper rustling as it floats down]

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Oh yeah, just—

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) Aaand... yeah.

DAVID

Ah, just fluttering down from the ceiling. Like a beautiful bird.

AKTERAKS

There it is.

TREXEL

A bird of— A bird of war? Could you, could you give me that? It's a bird of war, swooping down to destroy its enemies.

AKTERAKS

Well, certainly.

TREXEL

Well, there we go, there we go.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Come on, meet me halfway.

DAVID

This is from... Yula Nozz, she/they. Oh, she is— Oh, telling us about Pokey & Beam Space Law. Cos—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Cos she's a snitch.

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

DAVID

They've been marked as a threat? Well, what are we—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) She's a snitch!

DAVID

Okay, what—

TREXEL

You can trust a snitch. Throw it out! Burn it!

AKTERAKS

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. So, so... listen. So you understand: snitches are our clients in this division. This is, this is what we do. We take people who, who want to give us information that will benefit Stellar Firma, and benefit the Board. We take that information on board from them, and we figure out who needs to die in order to protect the interests of the company. We kill them, I sign a mountain of paperwork, and we move on. That is what Business Warfare basically entails.

IMOGEN

[Beep] It's just common-sense governing.

TREXEL

D-do at any point do we give these snitches any sort of quotient or, or, or, little, little package of stitches? Just a little package of stitches.

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) Uhhh, not here.

That would be Security, if the snitches snitch on Stellar Firma. That'd be their role. We here tend actually tend to give them... money.

DAVID

Okay. And, and if they, if, if they repeatedly, um, sort of snitch for us in a very good w— We, we kind of, you know, we, we just rub them behind the ear, you know, of course, cos snitches get scritchies.

AKTERAKS

Exactly that. Exactly that. The clone is right on board with it. Alright, so, in that case, to quickly explain what you would do here from this brief, obviously we need to go through all their— There should be some extra information on the page. Once you've gone through all that, I just need you guys to give it a talk over, come up with a couple different suggestions on how we eliminate this person in the way that minimises liability to the Board, and, uh, then ship it off to me. Job done, I'll finish it up from there.

TREXEL

Akteraks— Can I, can I call you Akteraks?

AKTERAKS

Uh, sure, yeah.

TREXEL

It's unacceptable. You should have shouted 'no' and said 'Call me Head of Ballistics,' but okay, we'll push on. Um, I'm gonna level with you. I've got good news and bad news.

AKTERAKS

Okay.

TREXEL

The good news is: in terms of organising the sudden death of people for any particular reason, pretty good. Got a track record as long as a gravestone full of tears.

IMOGEN

[Beep] A track record and a criminal record are subtly, but importantly, different.

AKTERAKS

Sure, I imagine there's a reason you made it here.

TREXEL

Exactly. It's not because of some really, kind of vague, but mysterious plot that we spent ages fleshing out. No, it's because I am great at people being dead. Now, in terms of liability, on the other hand... Got a worse track record with that. Liability and me go together like, um, oil and water, in that you mix them up together and pour them over a salad as a trick, and you're like, 'Ha ha ha,

this is gross! Look, it's all separating on your plate!' and then someone sues you.

DAVID

His, his middle name is 'Liable.'

AKTERAKS

Mmm... mmm.

TREXEL

Trexel K G K brackets Liable Geistman. It's nightmare for forms. Cos they do those little boxes. You know those little boxes— It's like one letter per box. My name is incredibly long, and difficult to spell, and I've never once done it the same twice.

AKTERAKS

Believe me, I know all about forms. All of the paperwork in this place, in this division, it all comes through me now. We used to have secretaries and clones and other people to do this. No, now it all just comes across my desk. So, uh, on that note, though: the good news for you is you don't have to worry about the liability. I will be taking on all of it, because, hey, that's what the Board says. The Board says I get to deal with the liability issues.

IMOGEN

[Beep] We call it a flat management hierarchy. In that you are flattened by its intense, unending pressure.

TREXEL

Oh, I love it. Oh, I love it, I feel so free. I feel so free. Throw a bomb! Don't worry where it lands! Turn away, don't look back at the explosion, cos you're a cool, unliablous guy. David, the brief.

DAVID

Right. Yes, okay, okay. So... so, we— The, the, the barrel of the gun is pointed at Pokey & Beam Space Law.

AKTERAKS

Yes.

TREXEL

Oh, Pokey & Beam. They've defended me.

DAVID

Ah.

TREXEL

I mean, it feels like a shame to kill them, but I'll do it, but they have defended me, and they're pretty—

(Sings) Pokey & Beam! Ooh, ooh.

Pokey & Beam! Ooh, ooh.

Nobody's seen, nobody's heard,

Pokey & Beam, ooh, ooh.

You see in that trash can, it rumbles and rattles,

Then out pops me with a subpoena and chattels!

If you need law and you need it fast, then,

Give us a call! I'll make you coffee in a flask!

(Back to normal speaking voice) They're mostly about, you know, snacks.

DAVID

Law and snacks?

TREXEL

Law and snacks.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Law, snacks, and apparently, slightly aimless rhyme schemes.

AKTERAKS

I do remember that commercial. Ahh...

TREXEL

It— **(burbles)** Earlier it was Pokey & Beam Victuals Ltd. And then there was so many lawsuits about the victuals choking people, they just swung into law.

AKTERAKS

Yeah.

DAVID

Well, uhhh, so the reason they're in conflict with Stellar Firma— So, uhh, 'I,' and that means Yula Nozz, has 'heard that they're taking on a class action

space lawsuit in attempt to restrict Stellar Firma’s access to under-developed planet zones.’ Uh, ‘they think that Stellar Firma is adversely affecting the natural progression of space and planetary formation, and hurting people while they do it through carelessness.’

(Trexel laughs incredulously while Akteraks ponders this)

TREXEL

It’s not carelessness, it’s wilful negligence! There’s a difference. You don’t know you’re doing one; you’re actively trying to do the other. Case closed.

DAVID

I can never really work it out with you, to be honest.

TREXEL

What?

DAVID

Well, there’s— I mean, you obviously don’t care, but there is a streak of malice in you that makes me wonder sometimes.

TREXEL

Yes, I suppose in a way, many of the things I get wrong is because I don’t know how things work, but I’ve also made a very active choice never to learn or try to learn. So, in the wash, when it all comes out, that’s wilful negligence.

DAVID

Okay. Or malicious carelessness.

TREXEL

Malicious carelessness! 'I'm actively horrid, whoopsies.'

DAVID

Yeah, I think they've got a case.

AKTERAKS

Yeah, well, on the other s— On the other hand, you know, it would be lovely if there was a way to, you know, a department who could go and talk to them about these things. Explain this, maybe, you know, deliver the threats verbally before we have to act on them. But, uh, no, this is the way that the Board has decided we do business. They're gonna bring the lawsuit, we blow them up, and, uh—

TREXEL

Yeah.

AKTERAKS

— it is more efficient. So... uh...

TREXEL

Historically, there has been a mediation department here at Stellar Firma, but they tried to mediate a pay rise, and then we mediated them out of an airlock.

IMOGEN

[Beep] It's hard to mediate in a hard vacuum.

AKTERAKS

Yes. Yes, exactly, and ever since then it's just us.

TREXEL

There's only really two settings here at Stellar Firma. One is 'Hey buddy, wanna buy a planet?' and the second one is 'Kaboom! You're dust.'

DAVID

Well, uh, so their greatest strength, the thing we really have to watch out for? They can spell any word right on their first try.

(Trexel gasps)

Which makes them look and sound really, really smart.

TREXEL

Well, maybe we shouldn't cross them.

DAVID

Well—

AKTERAKS

Ah, that was the easiest way to go from, from victuals into law, I assume. You just have to appear very smart. The bar is not very difficult— The Space Bar is not difficult to pass.

TREXEL

No. No, it's just a bar in space. You can fly around it, it's not infinitely long and high, and space is quite big. You just navigate around it. Have I misunderstood what the bar is? It's not like a bar in space, just hovering?

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) No, you've, you've basically got the premise right, I think.

IMOGEN

[Beep] There used to be an exam, but at a certain point we all agreed that revision is irritating, and exams take up time. So that's when the actual bar came into play.

AKTERAKS

That's about where we stand at this point.

TREXEL

Okay, you just go, 'I hopped over the space bar, let me into a court room.'

AKTERAKS

Yeah!

TREXEL

And they're like, 'Hang on a minute, show me a snap from your hols' and you do, and they're like, 'Hm! That's a space bar.'

AKTERAKS

I mean, if you look at Stellar Firma, we don't have any judges or justice system or whatever, we just have Imogen, so...

TREXEL

Yeah.

AKTERAKS

It's not as though there's such a demand for it anymore. The regulations have lapsed.

DAVID

That's true. I mean, Hartro and you, Trexel, were the prosecution and defence in my trial. And neither of you— You are both definitely like— You've been in a lot of bars—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Yeah, yep, yep.

DAVID

—but you haven't passed the bar exam. You actually can't pass a bar, you have to go into a bar if you see it.

TREXEL

Well, what— I'm just— I'm only human, David. What am I supposed to do, go past and not see if they've got unguarded whisky?

DAVID

Well, if you want to pass the bar, you do.

TREXEL

Well, I don't want to pass the bar.

DAVID

Well then you'll never be a lawyer.

TREXEL

You can't handle the truth! And the truth is I can't pass the bar.

DAVID

Speaking of people who've passed the bar, their greatest weakness is, uh, well, uh, Yula Nozz believes that they're germaphobes.

AKTERAKS

Mmmm....

DAVID

She says specifically they hate public doorhandles.

TREXEL

How do they feel about private doorhandles? Your secret, special— The doorhandle that you only show to a significant other.

DAVID

Uhh... Yula Nozz doesn't... really make that very clear. Uh, she just says specifically they hate public doorhandles.

TREXEL

Ah, fair enough. Okay, well. Akteraks, I've got an answer for you. You fill a bomb with vomit and shoot it at them. Done, case closed. We can go home? We can go home now? It's all fine? All done? Great.

DAVID

Why wouldn't you just— Why, why, hang on— Why wouldn't you just fill the bomb full of explosives?

TREXEL

Well, because they're germaphobes, David. You've gotta use the brief. Otherwise it's just like, 'Hello, we've got to kill them.' 'Kill them with a bomb.' You know, there's no art there. There's no— You wanna, you want—

DAVID

Ohhhh. Right.

TREXEL

You want them to know it was you, you know?

DAVID

So we have to—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Like a, like an intergalactic horse's head in your exploded bed.

DAVID

Okay, we've kind of gotta make it ironic, or appropriate in some way.

AKTERAKS

Sure, and, also, just, just to make it absolutely clear: I deal with so much of the logistics and the admin of this whole thing, bombs themselves, just straightforward bombs, are so much more paperwork than you would think they are. Y-you come up with these really complicated schemes, and, and they're very, very difficult to pull off. Very elaborate things you have to do, and somehow, despite being that much more work, they are that much less paperwork.

TREXEL

Really?

AKTERAKS

So I tend to like it to be a little bit more... on the creative side.

TREXEL

There isn't just a tick box that said, 'We exploded them, tick please'?

AKTERAKS

Oh, no, see, the reason is, is that, uh, the, the regulatory people have, have had a lot of time to make forms up around bombs because they've thought of bombs before.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Sure.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Ahhhh.

AKTERAKS

But, uh, as you say, a— Dumping vomit on somebody, we might not have done that before. There's only really one form, which is to say 'We did a new thing— it's vomit! Here you go, job done.' So... the more creative you get—

TREXEL

Okay.

AKTERAKS

—the less paperwork I have to do.

IMOGEN

[Beep] It's hard to legislate around incomprehensible actions. As such, they are encouraged.

TREXEL

Fine, okay, yeah, I, I'm happy to indulge. Okay, right, okay, so. Picture the scene: you open the hatch to your floating space law office.

DAVID

Okay, **(bubbles)** I have passed the bar, and I am a space lawyer.

TREXEL

And I say, 'Hello there, I'm a door-to-door salesman,' and I just start flinging doors at you. Just flinging a door, like 'ha ha, wang, wah, flang!'

DAVID

And I'm like, 'Ohh, I've been hit in the face with a door, it's quite heavy! But I, I've—'

TREXEL

Now, now, now look at the door, now look at the door.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Specifically look at the handle.

DAVID

Okay, what's, what going on there?

TREXEL

Sniff the handle.

DAVID

Um, okay.

(Sniffs)

TREXEL

What's, what's it, what's it smell of?

DAVID

I will need to be told because this is a roleplay.

TREXEL

No, no, David, come on, what's, what's it smell of?

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Wh— Oh, you want me to—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Smell, smell the mime.

DAVID

Um—

TREXEL

No, no, no, no, don't come up with your own idea—

DAVID

Oh.

TREXEL

—you have to smell the mime—

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

—cos I, I know what's it covered in—

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

—but, but smell the mime, and tell me what's on it.

DAVID

Cardamom.

TREXEL

C-Cardamom?

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

Cardamom?

DAVID

Cardamom.

TREXEL

So, so, so you think that my plan to upset germaphobes with door handles is to cover them in delightful cardamom?

AKTERAKS

Yeah, I do have to be honest with you, the idea is losing itself a little bit if you're gonna give it cardamom scent. I was thinking—

TREXEL

Yeah.

AKTERAKS

—it might be something like a, a bathroom door? Or something?

TREXEL

That's— You know what? You know what, Arkteraks? That's what I was going for.

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

But David here apparently hasn't got an acute mime nose.

DAVID

And—

TREXEL

Give, give me the door, David.

(David mumbles)

Give me the door over.

DAVID

And, uh— Bathroom door, yes. I imagine... **(quiet, dreamily)** Bathin would apply some sort of cardamom aftershave.

TREXEL

Okay, you know what? The mime's over.

DAVID

And open the door...

TREXEL

You know, the mime's over. David's ruined it.

DAVID

What? What? What?

TREXEL

As with everything, David's ruined it.

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) What in the world is he going off about?

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Well, actually— I— Actually—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Uh, what, uh—

TREXEL

I— I, ac— Don't, don't even try, Akteraks. I, I spent weeks with this fool, and it's, it's just, there's no pot of gold at the end of this greasy rainbow. It was spit, David. I'd licked all the door handles—

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

—thus to upset them.

DAVID

Okay. Now, that doesn't work, because I do know that you have drunk so much alcohol that your spit is sterile.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Germs can't live in him. The environment is just too hostile.

TREXEL

Ooh, good point. Yes, the natural bacteria in my body is all dead. Which you'd think would make me clean, and yet somehow I'm still dirty. Who can say why? Science is baffled. Also, Science hasn't checked, cos Science is hiding from me. I think I saw Science once, but then again it could have been a goose. **(sighs)**
Ahh, the terrible, honking goose.

AKTERAKS

Alright, so... this is a good start to a brief here. But—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Is... Is it?

AKTERAKS

It's a start. I would say, you know, again, I give you very good marks, I asked for creativity and something that we wouldn't have done before. You've certainly given me that. Ummm... but there— Where— It's lacking some kind of, je ne sais quoi. There's some—

TREXEL

Oh, a joie de vivre, perhaps. Uhh—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay, uh— maybe, oh—

AKTERAKS

(Crosstalk) Yeah, you know.

DAVID

You need something sort of ironic and, and sort of related to, to what **they're** doing so that, so that Stellar Firma really sends a message.

AKTERAKS

Yeah, yeah, you—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Not only, not only have we destroyed you, but anybody watching thinks twice before they cross us.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay. Well, I caught a holovid about a lawyer's office once.

TREXEL

Which one? Which one of the lawyer procedurals did you catch?

DAVID

Oh, Clusky and Highbone.

TREXEL

(Gasps)

(Sings) Clusky and Highbone— Will they kiss at the eeend? Ahh.

(Normal voice) They never do.

DAVID

Oh, see, I only saw one episode, but there was a lot of longing looks.

TREXEL

Yeah, oooh, the looks are longing, the lips never touch.

DAVID

Well, well, I, I do know that one thing that I think lawyers do, or somebody who works for the lawyer, but people get served. But not, not like a waiter, not like a lovely drink.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Like in tennis.

DAVID

They sort of— Well, no, no, they sort of run at people with pieces of paper, and then sssslap them with them. And then when they peel it away, what was written on the paper is then written on the person's face, and that identifies them as a crime-doer. And then a judge turns up and reads the piece of paper that's kind of on their face—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

DAVID

— their sort of tattoo — a-and, and then serve a sentence.

IMOGEN

[Beep] A flawless system with no chance of abuse.

DAVID

So we could serve Pokey and/or Beam with this piece of paper, slap it upon their faces, and when they're like, 'Oh no! The ink is on my face!' and they touch their face, and maybe they sniff their fingers, they find out that we have been harvesting the droppings of space cats.

TREXEL

Ah, **(stammers)** that is, that is the wor— You know when you go into a room, and you see, 'Oh there's a space cat in here, it's got in a vent. Oh, I don't know how,' but you just shoo it out. It's just part— It's just part of the daily routine here at Stellar Firma. And then you get that kind of sickly twang in the back of your nose, and then you know that somewhere in a room, this cat's done a whoopsie. And because it's a hover-cat, it could be anywhere. It could be inside a, a, a wall sconce. It could be on top of your cupboard. You're never gonna find that, and you've just gotta start a fire and walk away.

DAVID

Sure, and they can't burn down their own face, so they're stuck with it.

TREXEL

No, no, I, I should know, I tried.

DAVID

Yeah, and, uh, well— I mean, y-you, you've, you've slapped it on their face, and then, I assume they just sort of spontaneously expire.

TREXEL

If they truly are a germophobe of that calibre, they'll just spontaneously implode in a pop of soap bubbles.

AKTERAKS

We are moving in the correct direction here. This was a good suggestion, especially because as we know there are just so many of these hovering cats around the station. Yeah, I suppose it is better than those hover rats that were here before the cats evolved to catch them, but, uh, well.

TREXEL

Tough times.

AKTERAKS

You take what you can get, I suppose. Uh, the only issue I would have with that, uh, particular suggestion with this brief is, um. It's not very violent.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Are you sure that is your *only* issue?

AKTERAKS

We are... Warfare. We're Business Warfare.

TREXEL

Akteraks, don't worry, I've got us covered. They're so distracted with all of the, all of the, all of the cat faeces on their face, that they don't that we've snuck up behind and tied a big rocket to their back that says ACME, and they whoosh up into the sky, and we all watch as the fireworks glitter and explode in space.

DAVID

Ah, ah, yes, but we make those fireworks say 'WITH LOVE, FROM STELLAR FIRMA.'

TREXEL

Oh, more threatening! 'Stellar Firma: You wouldn't want it to happen to you.'

DAVID

Oooh! Yes, okay, yeah, no, that's good.

TREXEL

Perfect! Well, I know I'm not in charge here, but also, I'm also in charge everywhere, so I say it's done! Pop it up the tube, David, well po— There's no— What do we do? There's no tube, it sort of floated down from the ceiling.

DAVID

Yeah, Head of Ballist—

TREXEL

How do we submit it? Do you t— Do you, do you sort of fold it into a bird and throw it wistfully into the air?

AKTERAKS

Oh no, of course not. Do you think that this table is so ominous looking for absolutely no reason? No, no, no, no, no, no. See, on the console in front of you, David 7—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Uh huh, yeah.

AKTERAKS

—I know that you did press the button to allow this speaker robot into the room at the beginning—

DAVID

Yeah, the start button.

AKTERAKS

—of the meeting here. Yeah, there is an ‘end’ button...

DAVID

Okay.

AKTERAKS

Don’t press that one, whatever you do.

DAVID

Y— Okay.

AKTERAKS

That one i— will, will self-destruct the room. That’s a last, uh, last resort in case—

TREXEL

Oh.

AKTERAKS

—we have, uh, uh, uh, anyone on board that we need to take care, of course, you understand.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Okay, I’m just gonna put a—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) So, ‘end’ as in ‘end of life.’

AKTERAKS

Yeah, I— Well, exactly, exactly.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) That’s a very ambiguous button, I like it.

DAVID

Just, just gonna put a cup over that button.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Coward.

AKTERAKS

Very good idea. There is a 'submit' button immediately past that one. If you press that, the centre of the—

DAVID

Right.

AKTERAKS

—table will open up, and you can drop the brief in there. It will make its way to me.

DAVID

Okay.

[He hits the button and the table opens with a soft roar]

DAVID

Oh, it's just a sort of, big sucking mmaw. I thought it was gonna be a little hole, but the entire table just becomes sort of a, a— Ooh. Um.

TREXEL

Now that's frightening. I like it.

AKTERAKS

Ahh, I like it too. It's one of my favourite things about being in this division. Anyway, I am so sorry. I would ask you at this point if you have any questions or if I can help you with anything else, but I really have to go. I have another meeting to get to right now. Um, and I have to obviously make a decision on

what we're gonna do about these lawyers, so, uh. Uh, lovely to meet you all, even though I didn't meet you all, and can't see your faces, and will not recognise you next time I see you.

[Begins wheeling out as the car alarm starts blaring again]

AKTERAKS

Bye!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Oh, bye... Bye! Oh, there—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) B-bye, bye! S'just...

TREXEL

There she goes. There she goes. **(sighs)**

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

I didn't like her. Not violent enough.

DAVID

What?

TREXEL

She said ‘Lovely to see you.’ I wanted something more like, ‘War to see you! Kaboom!’

DAVID

(Crosstalk) She seemed nice!

TREXEL

And then someone throws an axe into a table.

DAVID

For once, someone was nice.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Nice in comparison. Still quite murderous.

TREXEL

Yeah, ‘nice’, David. But, but if you think about it, nice whilst also calmly deciding upon the deaths of people she’s never met, so.

DAVID

We started by making planets that killed everyone that was on them.

TREXEL

But that wasn’t the point of the planets, David.

DAVID

Death becomes you, and you become death.

TREXEL

I have—

DAVID

You are literally a destroyer of worlds.

TREXEL

I have become death! Would you like me to sign anything?

DAVID

Uhhh... no, actually. Umm.

TREXEL

Ah.

DAVID

Unless you're supposed to sign the briefs, but we've never done that. So, i-it—
Probably not, it's fine.

TREXEL

Okay, well, David. Once again, we have come into a room that I do not know where it is. That corridor was long, and that slide was very twisty, so I'm gonna wander around and see if I can find— **(gasps)** Maybe there's a new bar, David! Maybe there's a new bar! Better than the Cosmic Lounge! Better than the Astral Bar! **Probably** better than the Asteroid Booth, cos a punch in the face is better than that. So I'm gonna go look for that. I can't be banned from something I haven't found yet. **(laughs to himself)** That would be ridiculous.

DAVID

Uh-huh.

TREXEL

So, you just stay here, in this terrifying, ominous room without a bed, and apparently lots of buttons that will murder you, and I'll see you tomorrow I suppose!

DAVID

Okay. Yes, alright. Uh, bye!

TREXEL

Bye!

[Door whooshes]

DAVID

Okay. Now... How do I get this screen working? There is a button here that says 'monitor,' but I don't trust it.

[Show Theme – Outro]

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Stellar Firma 71 – Bathin and Ballistics

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