

STL 74 — Tardigrades and Thin Ice

Content Warnings

- Alcohol use & alcoholism
- Bullying/taunting
- Physical violence (including SFX)
- Guns
- Electrocutation (including SFX)
- Discussion of: repeated loss of consciousness, existential crisis.
- Mentions of: childhood trauma, death & murder, rats, war, food, injury (including self-injury).
- SFX: drinking, repetitive low-pitched alarm, loud machinery, rumbling.

TREXEL

Special thanks to Lain. In these final hours we have together, always remember: no refunds.

[Show Theme – Intro]

IMOGEN

Rusty Quill presents: Stellar Firma.

[Theme continues]

DAVID

Okay, uhhh... he's still late. So that's— Well that's— So it's bad, but it's good. Cos he was acting so weirdly. Umm... I just don't know what he's gonna do. He's so unpredictable when he's... not being as unpredictable as normal.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Perhaps his new unpredictability will cancel out his general unpredictability. It won't, but it's a nice thought.

[Sound of approaching footsteps]

DAVID

I just, uh— **(door whooshes)** Trexel.

TREXEL

Eh.

DAVID

Is here, and hasn't shouted at me. Trexel, what is going on?

TREXEL

(Overlapping muttering) Oh, why it's a lovely day we're having. Lots of space outside, lots of, um... ah! So little oxygen. Fresh, fresh.

(David sighs and Trexel continues to mutter)

Hey... Hey dude. Hey, hey, hey, hey buddy. Whatcha— H— What's in the happening? If you were a hat, which hat would— That's nothi— I— Hi— How are you?

DAVID

(Baffled) What?

TREXEL

Ah— Just asking how you are. Just asking how you are. Just checking in. Just, just, you know.

DAVID

But you're, you're not gonna start with like an anecdote about what you, what you got up to over your, your day?

TREXEL

S'been weird, David. S'been weird. S'been weird. I've had weird— I've had a weird day. I don't like it. I don't care for it, David, and I'd like it to stop, and it's been weird.

IMOGEN

[Beep] We've all learned the hard way that liking things to stop has rarely ever stopped them.

DAVID

Umm. Why is it weird, Trexel?

TREXEL

Bubble feelings.

DAVID

Bubble feelings.

TREXEL

Sort of like a bubbly feeling. Sort of like when I'm— So I've, I've been— After we, you know— We had a cha— And the ch— **(bubbles)** And I went down, and I was in the— And I was drinking. Y-y'know, like I, I do. And I was ju— I was wondering around, and I was, I was talking to someone. They didn't know I was there. I was behind them. They were asleep and I was talking to them. And I suddenly thought: if, if I woke up and found me talking to me, how would I feel? And the answer to that was 'bad.' I'd feel bad. I'd be worried. I'd be like, 'Who are you? Get out. Do you have anything to drink? I've punched you in the face. You're on fire, now.' You know, standard stuff. But I'd feel bad. And therefore, if I were that person, and I'd feel bad—

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

—maybe that person would— And then I black out, David. And then I black out, and it's been happening a lot.

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

And I don't like it, because I wake up elsewhere. And this keeps happening. And I've got a weird bubbly feeling. It feels like— I wouldn't say 'shame' because it's not like I've done anything wrong. Because I've never done anything wrong.

DAVID

Uh—

TREXEL

It's sort of like if there was like a— If there was like a little jacuzzi at the top of my tub. And the jacuzzi is filled with other people's feelings? Am I making any sense? Because I sound like a stupid fool.

IMOGEN

[Beep] No change there, then.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

So what I'm saying, David, is what have you done, and make it stop.

DAVID

Uhh... I don't think I've done anything, Trexel. I think you've... um. I think you might experiencing empathy.

TREXEL

How. Dare. You. How could you say that to my face? I can't believe this. I, I, I—
David, I can't believe this— I, I—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Well.

T-Tell you what, tell you wh— No, tell you what, look. If you can't believe this, why don't you put yourself in my position, and think about why I just told you what I told you?

TREXEL

Okay, so... **(muttering)** Whoa, whoa, uh— Over I go!

[His body hits the floor with a whump]

DAVID

Oh. Uhh...

IMOGEN

[Beep] David! I insist you not waste this new superpower. You are the universe's only hope.

DAVID

Uhh... Ooh! I think— I think there's some— There might be a bit of alcoholic slurry in the— Um.

[He begins to pour some of the slurry in front of Trexel, who awakens with a sniff and begins to drink it]

TREXEL

Give me give me—

(He noisily slurps the slurry)

David, what happened? I started feeling bubbly again, and then it was dark.

IMOGEN

[Beep] What happened is that David wasted the best opportunity of their life, and doomed us all. Security can't believe what a plum you are.

DAVID

You did the, you did the blackout thing.

TREXEL

Right. Is this just how things are now?

DAVID

No, I just—) Do I— Do I just now feel what other people are fee— It's like if someone broke into my house and yelled into my head. You wouldn't allow that, so why are people allowed to do it with feelings? Breaking into my soul and yelling about what they're feeling.

DAVID

Uh, this is usu— This— I think this is just how people... feel.

TREXEL

People are awful! I've never liked a person.

DAVID

Well... sorry for being people.

TREXEL

You should be sorry.

DAVID

So you've never liked me?

TREXEL

Well, I—

DAVID

How does that make me feel?

(Trexel burbles before promptly passing out again)

Okay. Uhh... this is... This is... I think this is great? I'm not sure. Umm. It is good to make him fall over whenever I want, but I have run out of booze.

IMOGEN

[Beep] That is not an issue, you plum. You utter, utter plum.

DAVID

Uhh. I'll just give him a kick.

[Sound of David's foot colliding with Trexel]

TREXEL

Ahh. **(groaning)** A kick. The booze of the foot. David, I've been thinking.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

I might have had this feeling once before. It was just— It was when I was a child, and it was just before dear sweet Percy was taken away from me. I, I felt a connection, and I— And it just occurred to me—

DAVID

This is Percy the clone, not Percy the small, plastic toy?

TREXEL

No, **(bubbles)** Graph Friend, David. Which is special to me, but at the end of the day, it's a little plastic thing, not a thing with a face and, y'know, hands and eyes and ears and— Y'know, th-things that people have! Don't sidetrack me!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Li-Like, like me.

TREXEL

(Stammers) Let's not get ahead of ourselves. But it just occurred to me that I don't think I've ever spent this much time with anyone. Like, I, I meet people, I talk to people, I place normally like little blocks before they try and run away. Or I'm talking to them but they're already talking to me, but, but— You've, uh, we've, we've had a lot of conversations, and... we— I think— I think we might be friends.

(David makes an uncertain noise)

TREXEL

S'— I don't like it, David, but... The, the, the constant blackouts don't lie. So what do we do about this? Do I kill you? I think I have to kill you. Don't I have to kill you?

DAVID

You can try.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Please try. I want to see the mess.

TREXEL

Ehhh... no, we've been down this road before. It ends with me testing a knife on my own leg, and being wounded. Okay, fine, so, I can't kill you. *Kill Surprise*. So what do we do? Do I— **(sighs)**

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Trexel. This is—

Again, I'm gonna restate this. I'm not a hundred percent sure, cos, like you, I haven't met many people. It is unfortunately pretty much just been you. But I think this is how most people are all the time. And they manage not to black out.

TREXEL

Right.

DAVID

You're not doing anything special. You are hitting the minimum bar that a functioning society expects you to. Which is being able to empathise. With anyone.

IMOGEN

[Beep] What a charmingly rose-tinted view of society.

TREXEL

And does that mean I get some sort of trophy or a parade? Am I— Now, I know I've asked this question before, David— Am I a god? This feels like something a god could do.

DAVID

No, again, I'm gonna— I'm just gonna restate this. This is something that pretty much all people do all the time.

TREXEL

Does it mean I am forgiven for everything I've done? Because now I'm great.

DAVID

N... no.

(Trexel mutters unintelligibly)

No, cos again, y-you, you appear to have managed to just about hit the minimum bar, and we're still not there yet because y— Apparently, before you have any kind of actual feelings, you black out. But the minimum bar of somebody who can function in a society.

TREXEL

Oh, what's the point, then? If you don't get a parade and people don't forgive you and you just black out and you have to learn new skills and do things for people, not for monetary gain or material wealth, but because it's the "right thing to do," what's the point, David?

DAVID

Uhh.

TREXEL

What's the actual, living point?

DAVID

Life is better for you and the people around you?

TREXEL

Ooh. Now that's something I can get behind. If making you happy makes me happy, then it's not, it's not for you. It's sort of for me. Hang on, let's try it under, let's try it under that plan. David?

DAVID

Yeah?

TREXEL

Tell me something about yourself, and I'm going to try and empathise.

DAVID

(Sighs) Uhh... Well, I've spent pretty much every single day of my life, umm, kind of f-f-fearing for the end of it. And, and been wondering about how I can get myself out of that situation, and just be able to live.

TREXEL

Okay, sorry, that was— Me, I feel like that, which means David feels like that, which— And the darkness creeps in, but I'm—

DAVID

Oh, stay here—

TREXEL

—only doing it because that means that if I help, then I won't feel this... way. Ah, it's cl— It's clearing. David, I have had my first empathetic thought to completion.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

You are welcome. I am a king. I am an emperor. I am the emperor of feelings. Kneel before me, happiness, sadness, being hungry! That's basically a feeling. All kneel before Trexel, Lord of Feelings.

IMOGEN

[Beep] I think he might not have entirely understood the point.

DAVID

Well, the Lord of Feelings...

[Creaking furniture and paper fluttering]

DAVID

—may I supplicate you for maybe feeling like doing a brief?

TREXEL

Let me just feel... I feel it to be so! You may proceed.

(David sighs)

IMOGEN

[Beep] I suppose psychological egoism is a step in the right direction. Hobbes would be pleased for you, but probably only for selfish reasons.

DAVID

Right. S'just a different brand of the same— Fine. Micro-invertebrate 32-SDJ-6962. They are ratting on... water bears, AKA tardigrades.

TREXEL

Can a microorganism rat? Cos that's— A rat's quite big. In, in comparison to a microorganism.

DAVID

Okay, well—

TREXEL

Do, do they amoeba? I'm am— I'm amoebaing on you. I'm germinating you.

DAVID

Y-Yeah, s-sure, sure. The, the micro-vertebrate 32-SDJ-6962, they're, they're invertebrating on the water bears.

TREXEL

Pah! The filthy, tiny rat.

DAVID

R-right, **(bubbles)** so, so, yes, uh, why are they in conflict? Uh, well, "Stellar Firma's planet construction process eliminates many of their micro-vertebrate farms." Uh, assuming that micro-vertebrate 32-SDJ-6962 is a worker on these micro-vertebrate farms. Um, right, so, "The Tardigrades's greatest strength is that they are able to survive extreme conditions, such as exposure to extreme temperatures, extreme pressures, both high and low, air deprivation, radiation, dehydration, and starvation? And they were the first known animals to survive in outer space." That is terrifying.

TREXEL

You'd love to go on a pub crawl with them. Nothing's stopping them.

DAVID

Yeah, but stop— They'll— Definitely stop you before it stopped them.

TREXEL

Twenty pints in and they've been, you know, kept in a, in a, in a hard vacuum and also burned and frozen and pressurised. They're still chuckin' 'em back, chuckin' 'em back.

DAVID

And I was d-dead on pint four.

TREXEL

Yeah. Yeah, cos you can't drink alcohol. If you drank alcohol, David, it would basically dissolve your entire form. Although since you've become so swole and dense, maybe, maybe you'd be able to survive it. Let's find out.

(David protests)

Have you got a pint of something?

DAVID

No—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Could—

It could be paint thinner. That is an option.

DAVID

You've drunk it **alllllll**.

TREXEL

Now, well, let me—

DAVID

Have you got any booze on you?

TREXEL

Let me just check.

[Clanging of bottles as he looks for booze]

TREXEL

No, just empties, David. I'm so sorry. If there's a bottle of booze on you and it's not empty, whatcha doing with your life?

DAVID

Yeah.) Whatcha doing with it? What, planning for the future? Keeping it for later? **(chuckling)** You poltroon. Now, David.

DAVID

Yes?

TREXEL

I'm sorry, are there any more things to say about the, the tardigrade?

DAVID

Yes, right now—

TREXEL

Oh, but I have thoughts **now**, David.

DAVID

But—

TREXEL

I have things to say **now**.

DAVID

No, no, but Tr— But how does that **me** feel?

TREXEL

That would make you— You have things— You’re trying to get— I wouldn’t like th— **(bubbles)** Augh, the darkness— I’m— Would it be good for me? And there, off you go.

DAVID

Right. So. Right now, water bears’re sounding pretty terrifying. Unassailable, right?

TREXEL

Yes.

DAVID

Uhhhhh, a— “But what is their greatest weakness?” So let’s hope this is a good one. “They are very, very small.”

TREXEL

Well that’s not a weakness. That means they can infiltrate. They can creep in.

DAVID

Right, so you're saying this is another strength.

TREXEL

I think it's another strength. David, I'd say we've met our match. Let us surrender to the tardigrades. Maybe if we agree now, they'll give us good terms, David. Oh, quiver in fear at the mighty tardigrade! The little mossy water bear with its creepy little claws! And snouty little face. Build it a throne. Build a tiny throne. Build it a million tiny thrones. And also, maybe algae? What do they eat? It's unclear. We must find out before the evil reign of the tardigrade comes to crush us all, David, please! David, please!

DAVID

(Crosstalk) (stammering) Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

But fundamentally, if we submit that, will that be an acceptable brief? I don't know, but I don't want the table to eat me.

TREXEL

No, that probably wouldn't be. Saying 'let's surrender now, all is lost,' that's not a great war plan, is it?

DAVID

Okay. No, so, so— How do we, y'know, battle the tardigrades?

TREXEL

David. David, I've had an idea.

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

I think it's quite the empathetic one, if I do say so myself. I put on my crown of feelings and look across my kingdom of love.

DAVID

Oh.

TREXEL

I think that if Stellar Firma is going to fall to the tardigrades—

DAVID

Right.

TREXEL

—maybe we can get them on side with us.

DAVID

Wait—

TREXEL

That's right, David, I've solved your revolution problem.

IMOGEN

[Beep] You may want to be careful with this line of thought.

TREXEL

The clones were never going to work. It is a lost cause—

DAVID

Trexel—

TREXEL

—so I, King Feelings—

DAVID

T-Trexel—

TREXEL

—am going to organise a fifth column of tardigrades—

[Dull alarm begins to sound]

DAVID

No—

TREXEL

—to come and support—

IMOGEN

(Crosstalk) [Beep] Stop it.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) Trexel!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) We can be installed as the new leaders of Stellar Firma!

DAVID

No—

TREXEL

In a feeling—

IMOGEN

This is your last warning!

TREXEL

—lovely, feeling empathy kingdom—

DAVID

Trexel!

TREXEL

—ruled by me and you're also there!

DAVID

No!

TREXEL

Stellar Firma is doomed!

DAVID

No, Trexel—!

TREXEL

Doomed, I say!

IMOGEN

[Beep] You leave me no choice.

DAVID

Trexel—

TREXEL

Doomed, oh no—

[The sounds of the wall panels shifting loudly as Trexel and David exclaim in surprise while the alarm continues]

DAVID

Oh, that is just— The whole wall is just one big gun!

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) That's a wh—

That's a whole— That's a gun entirely, uh—

(David and Trexel stammer a bit)

DAVID

Okay, okay, it's powering up— Um—

[Gun begins to power up with a whirr]

TREXEL

Okay, um— What do we do? What do we do? What do we do?

(Trexel and David continue to mutter in a panic)

[Doors whoosh as David steps into the executive clone lounge]

DAVID

Bye! Bye! **(panting as he steps away)**

TREXEL

What? David! David! David, you can't go in there! Let me in!

[Sounds of Trexel electrifying himself on the barrier]

TREXEL

David, please, please, let me in!

[More electrocution]

DAVID

Sorry , I can't hear you! Closing the door now!

[Doors whoosh closed while the alarms continue]

TREXEL

This is it. I've finally gone too far. Imogen, could —

[The gun shifts with a whirr and IMOGEN beeps]

TREXEL

Heeeey. Wh— I-I was just thinking, don't kill me. What, what a crazy—

IMOGEN

[Beep] In what possible scenario did you think you could encourage that much sedition and not expect to be murdered?

TREXEL

Yeah, that did sound like sedition, didn't— **(chuckles nervously)** You've always let it go before, though! You know? We're just a bunch of crazy kids, just saying things, you know, just learning, just trying to grow, exploring our minds, you know. Our bodies are changing. Ohh, so many hormones.

IMOGEN

[Beep] I have let it go in the past, but alas, this critical RAM shortage means I can only block so much from the automatic punitive justice subsystems.

TREXEL

Hang on. I was...

[Gun shifts]

TREXEL

Rehearsing a, a play. Yes, yes. I was rehearsing a play. The play is called "Oh, Naughty Boy!" Oh, what does the nau- Ah— Act I: The naughty boy is talking about power dynamics in this particular organisation. Ooh, bad— Everybody's booing, ooh, bad, naughty— It's sort of like a pantomime. There's like— There's a little puppet of a crocodile with sausages for some reason, and a

naughty boy is saying, ‘Ahhh, I’m going to get a fifth column of tardigrades. Rrrr, I’m a naughty, naughty boy.’ And then everyone else is like, ‘No, naughty boy! The power structures they are currently entrenched are fine!’ And the naughty boy is like, ‘No, no, no.’ But the moral of the story is: the naughty boy’s wrong, and I learned my lines really well, and I’m a very good actor. Ahh, I’m like— I’m like the face, if the face was a crocodile with sausages. You understand. So, so what was happening there was just a play. Just a play that I’m in. And that’s not— That’s fine, you know? You gotta allow for art. Please allow for art.

[The alarm stops and the gun recedes from the wall]

TREXEL

Oh, thank you. Oh.

IMOGEN

[Beep] The thinnest of thin ice. Security encourages you to avoid further skating.

[Door whooshes as David returns]

DAVID

Wait, the... the horrible whirring has stopped. Are you... are you still there?

TREXEL

You.... Traitor.

DAVID

What?

TREXEL

You left me!

DAVID

Yeah?

TREXEL

You jumped into your room that I can't get into. You're supposed to die with me, like a good clone friend!

DAVID

Why?!

TREXEL

I empathised with— Why? Becau— Empathise with me, David! Empathise with me!

DAVID

Trexel.

TREXEL

We're empathy beings now. It's a back and forth. This is a level playing field.

DAVID

Nope. Stop right there. I can literally count the number of times you have empathised with me on one hand. It is—

TREXEL

What about if it's a massive hand with a million fingers?

DAVID

It is three.

IMOGEN

[Beep] You could make an argument that it was none.

TREXEL

That's loads. That's more than two.

DAVID

And it was all today, because apparently you've just learned how to do it.

TREXEL

Wh— Yeah. Why, you know, I'm improving, I'm getting better.

DAVID

Okay. Well, sure. I jumped out of the room and left you on your own. Now think of all the times you have either physically—

TREXEL

Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

—or metaphorically jumped out of the room to leave me on my own.

TREXEL

Most times, isn't it?

DAVID

So I'm gonna say... we're not even close to even. But we're **more** even than we were.

TREXEL

Well, David, let me just say this. Thinking about it, empathetically, if I had a special room you couldn't get into that saved me from death...

DAVID

Yep.

TREXEL

I would have jumped into it and left you to die.

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

That's fair. That's fair.

DAVID

And, again, you've pretty much done that all the time anyway.

TREXEL

Pretty much all the time.

DAVID

Cos this— The, the special room only you can go into is ‘everywhere else.’

TREXEL

It’s everything that’s not th— But the— Hey! You got a pretty sweet room now, eh?

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

Haven’t you?

DAVID

I do.

TREXEL

Little revolving bed jacuzzi. Disco balls. There’s so much I can see through the door— I really want to go in, David. Just a little peek. Just give me a little peek.

DAVID

Be, be— Go right ahead.

TREXEL

Oh, thank you.

[Sounds of electrocution]

TREXEL

Yes, you don't control that, do you. Well! Okay. So... Maybe I have got a little bit over-enthusiastic in terms of what I'm going to do.

DAVID

Uh-huh.

TREXEL

But let, let's just, let's just finish this brief—

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

—and, and, and then we're gonna, and then we're gonna have a little chat, David, because I want us, as a team, to, to, to beat this thing. So, okay, right, so—

(David and Trexel both burble for a bit)

DAVID

Here's the thing. If we can't beat the tardigrades—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) We join them. We become tardigrades. We shrink ourselves down.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) And we— No, that's the point—

DAVID

I was about to say: and we can't join them because of, you know, the thing.

TREXEL

The phrase is "If you can't beat them, join them."

DAVID

But—

TREXEL

If it's not— What's, what's—

DAVID

(Crosstalk) But there's a—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) —the point of an aphorism if there's no for phorisms to aph?

DAVID

But there's another phrase that I know, which is: "You catch more tardigrades with honey than missiles." Right?

IMOGEN

[Beep] Sew it on a pillow.

TREXEL

Who has said that? Tell me who said that.

DAVID

Me!

TREXEL

You can't invent your— As I've always said, "Kick up the butt! It's time to be shut!" Now **that's** an aphorism! That's, that's one right off the dome. What you said was garbage. Garbage out of a stinky well.

DAVID

No, you catch more tardigrades with honey than missiles— See, I've said it twice—

TREXEL

Ohh, catching on.

TREXEL

—that's precedent, that means it's an aphorism.

TREXEL

You know what? I heard somebody else say that. Good job, David!

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

Good job.

DAVID

So what I'm saying is, we coat Stellar Firma in honey so that when the tardigrades land, they get stuck.

TREXEL

And we've got a, access to a massive bee!

DAVID

Yeah!

TREXEL

You know what, David, I think that would work. We coat ourselves entirely in honey from the massive bee. Now, we will have to milk the big bee round the clock—

DAVID

Yep.

TREXEL

—to get, to get all (**mumbles**). But then we basically become a giant, sticky tardigrade trap. The question being: once we've honeyed ourselves all over—

DAVID

Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

—and it's covered in little tardigrades, and we can't open any doors or, you know, portholes or anything like that—

DAVID

Mmmhmm.

TREXEL

—what do we do then? Do we just live in here? This is it now? Nobody gets a new planet because we're covered in hardened space honey?

DAVID

Well, that is a problem for... later.

TREXEL

(Gasps) Later! I love later. Cos it's not now, and I'm not there. D'you know what they say? The past is a different country, and the future can get stuffed. I like how you think, David. You know what? I think as I become more empathetic to you, you've become a little bit more like me.

IMOGEN

[Beep] What a horrible thing to say.

DAVID

Mmmm.

TREXEL

Haven't you? You're like a little— You're like a little proto-Trexel—

DAVID

No.

DAVID

—gestating over there.

DAVID

Actually, no, you're more like a little proto-David. Because I feel like I have rubbed off on you much more than you've rubbed off on me.

TREXEL

Yes, but— David, you can't rub off on something without something rubbing off on you. Imagine if you were to scrape your face against chalk. Yeah, you've got chalk on your face, but also there's loads of skin all over your chalk. It's a give and take, David, so I think you have to agree there's a pretty equal thing. Who's... I feel like now one of us is the other one's child, but I can't work out who. Tell you what, I'll buy the Baby-Gro, and we'll just see who fits it.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Alerting all clothes dispensaries station-wide. Do not sell Trexel anything ever.

DAVID

Yeah, well, look. What I'm gonna say is— Face and chalk. One is more malleable than the other. You are definitely more malleable than me. That means you're the chalk, I'm the face, and I'm the parent.

TREXEL

Oh, well. In that case: where's my binky? Wah, wah, burp me! I'm tired! And angry! And also gassy.

DAVID

You drank your binky earlier. And there are no more, um, binkies for you anymore.

TREXEL

(Sighs) I grow up so fast.

DAVID

Yeah. But! We have a brief we can submit.

[Sounds of writing]

DAVID

So I'll just pop, pop it in the table.

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Pop it in the angry table.

[Mechanical hissing sounds and rumbling as the table accepts the brief]

DAVID

And... it's gone!

TREXEL

That feels good. That feels fresh, you know? The— You know, I'm getting used to the table.

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

It's frightening at first, but then you begin to love it. I imagine, you know, when we become, I dunno, rulers of the universe as are inevitably going to, that we'll miss this angry table that looks like it's going to kill us. We'll think back and think, 'Ahhh, remember that table? Remember the death table? How, how good we had it, and we didn't even know. Didn't even know.'

DAVID

Well, look— It's not gonna be for too much longer, because the shareholders meeting is... soon.

TREXEL

Bah! Thank you for reminding me, David. I was going to ask you about that. So, given that clearly my plans are too ahead of their time to work, what's yours? You know, clone revolution s'not working, it's stupid, I told you, I'm right. I'm empathising—

DAVID

Wh—

TREXEL

—with me about how right I was. But the shareholders' meeting— Well, that's something completely different.

DAVID

Well, look— **(bubbles)** Yes, yes. The, the, the clone revolution didn't... work, but...

TREXEL

Because it was stupid.

DAVID

Well, no. The problem is I thought that there might be other clones who have been built like me.

TREXEL

Mmm.

DAVID

AKA, built, you know—

TREXEL

Wrong.

DAVID

Well, yeah, I mean, built wrong, but... I, I like it, so I'm glad I was built wrong.

TREXEL

Hey. I like it, too, buddy.

[Some damp thuds]

TREXEL

Just patting you— I'm just trying this thing where I sort of pat you on the shoulder. How is it?

DAVID

Uhh—

TREXEL

Feels weird.

DAVID

Not... not not unpleasant, but... Not not not unpleasant, either, so—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) I, yeah, I'm gonna stop, though, cos I just—

DAVID

Okay.

TREXEL

Yeah.

DAVID

Yeah.

TREXEL

Apart from anything, I've now got a gooey hand.

DAVID

Yeah, well, you know. Comes with the territory. Uh, the thing is— **(sighs)** It's not the clones' fault that they're like— That they're built like that. Right? They're hard— They're literally hardcoded to, to not want to rebel.

TREXEL

Who would design a clone and then be like, 'Hey, I think I'd like these things rebel against me and kill them. Also I'll make many hundreds of thousands more of them than me, because I'm a stupid idiot in the past.' Which, as we've established, is a different country and a stupid one at that.

DAVID

Right. But— So that's a thing. It's not gonna work. I can't just go up to them and say, **(whispers)** 'Hey, would you like to have a rebellion?' And they'll be like, 'Oh great, yeah, let's go.' Okay? Cos it's just not gonna happen.

TREXEL

No.

DAVID

Maybe... maybe with time, we can work on it, and hey, if you can learn how to empathise—

TREXEL

Sure.

DAVID

—maybe the clones can learn— Like, break their programming, and learn how to, well— Not be subservient to everything with a heartbeat.

TREXEL

If I can do it, literally anything is possible.

DAVID

Exactly.

TREXEL

Like, I'm thinking about turning to alchemy so I can turn, I dunno, ham into gold.

DAVID

(Stammers) Right. But— The thing is, we don't have time for that, because the shareholders' meeting is soon, right, so— D'you know what?

TREXEL

And I don't have any ham, so... how would I? There's no ham on the ship.

DAVID

Okay. Well. Yeah, so— SI-Slurry into—

TREXEL

Maybe in a vol-au-vent. Maybe there's a little ham in a vol-au-vent. David, write this down: find ham, equals gold, exclamation mark.

DAVID

Trexel. Try to stay on the plan right now.

(Trexel begins to mutter 'sorry')

Look, my plan is, is really just to lay low, right? Because Standards have a plan for me.

TREXEL

Ohhh, and such a— And such an evil plan.

DAVID

We don't—

TREXEL

The details of which are... unclear?

DAVID

Yeah. I'm hoping that Hartro will have some intel and, and, and, and get here during the review to actually tell me, but, but other than that, I'm just gonna play it by ear.

TREXEL

Fingers crossed.

DAVID

Yeah! Because, th-they're still expecting me to be, you know, stupid old David 7, a clone who will fundamentally just—

TREXEL

(Crosstalk) Stupid David.

Stupid, stupid David— Oh, like a brick! Like a brick covered in phone.

DAVID

(Crosstalk) And how is...

how is you saying that making me feel?

TREXEL

Ohh, I'm sad now!

DAVID

Exactly. So... I'm hoping that they— Yeah, they're just underestimating me. They'll get me into the room or whatever they're gonna do, and they're gonna ask me to do... something.

TREXEL

Something.

DAVID

And they're gonna expect me to say, "Yes, Standards, thank you Standards, beep boop beep, I'm a clone."

TREXEL

(Burbles) Cos that's what clones say! 'Beep boop beep, I am a clone.' I've met them! They say that.

IMOGEN

[Beep] That's clones alright. Always saying 'Beep boop beep.'

DAVID

I... actually have met them. None of them said 'beep boop beep.'

TREXEL

Why would they? They're not a computer. It's stupid, David. Get it out of your mind.

DAVID

Okay. Well, not beep boop beep, but I'll just say 'Yes, I'm a clone, I'm just gonna do it.'

TREXEL

Well, hang on a minute, I just heard a clone say 'beep boop beep,' so maybe they do— David, stop doubting this!

DAVID

Okay—

TREXEL

They're beepers and boopers!

DAVID

The 'beep boop beep' is not the important bit! It's, it's the Standards—

TREXEL

(Anguished) Well then why do you keep bringing it up, David?!

DAVID

It's the 'Standards underestimating me' that's important. So I'm just gonna see what they want and not do that.

TREXEL

Okay, fine. You know wh— I like this plan, because it's the kind of plan where essentially for it to come to fruition, we don't do anything until we have to.

DAVID

Yes.

TREXEL

It's an excellent plan, David.

DAVID

It's going to be alright. On... the night.

TREXEL

Congrats! So. I have an urge to shake your hand because you've done a job well do— I— Nn—

DAVID

No.

TREXEL

(Stammers) Hey... Hey... Hey, colleague.

DAVID

No.

TREXEL

Well done.

DAVID

No!

TREXEL

I'm extending my hand, now, David—

DAVID

No.

IMOGEN

[Beep] Stop this.

DAVID

Just— Just—

TREXEL

Just shake the hand.

DAVID

Good—

TREXEL

Just shake the hand. Just shake the hand, David.

DAVID

No, just— Gooooodbye.

[David hits the Trexel button and his voice fades with distance]

TREXEL

Nooooooo, shaaaaake my haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaand!!

DAVID

Ahhh... I don't know if he's better or worse. It's different, um. Ah, that was just... deeply strange.

[Show Theme – Outro]

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