

Terminal Hospitality

Written by

S. J. Ryker

Based on "The Grave Robber" by Junior Sisks & Ramblers Choice

Breathing Space includes mature content such as adult language, sexual situations, violence, and substance use.

This episode contains gaslighting, manipulation, and mentions of death and murder.

Additional sensory contact warnings can be found in the show notes.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

Hey there, good lookin'. Couldn't help but notice you're drinkin' alone.

Glass clinks, then taps against a hard surface.

CASEY

Look at you, able to see people doing things. Ma and Pa must be proud.

(sigh)

How about you just keep walking, stranger. Last thing I need is some new face coming in here, thinking he's the most important part of my day.

BARFLY

Goddamn, that's a little harsh, don't you think? Thought folks around here were supposed to be all friendly and welcoming. So much for Terminal hospitality...

Glass clinks again.

CASEY

Tch... fine, take a seat. But cut those starry eyes out before I kick your ass. I am just here to unwind.

BARFLY

You got it. No games. Just straight shootin' from here on.

(to bartender)

Two more of what they're havin'?

(back to Casey)

Say, those are some nice boots ya got there.

Chair scrapes against floor.

CASEY

I warned you.

BARFLY

Ain't flirtin'! Those are some right fancy boots, that's all. Like I ain't got better lines than complimentin' some boots.

CASEY

(bemused)

Hm. Fair enough. Thank you. For the compliment, I mean.

BARFLY

You are very welcome. Though I'm a little curious about them.

CASEY

Curious how?

BARFLY

Don't take it the wrong way, but they don't exactly go with the rest of the ensemble. Makes me curious about them. Got to be a story there, right?

CASEY

Yeah. Yeah you could say that.

BARFLY

Well, lucky fer you, folks say that I'm a great listener. And if you change your mind about the flirting at any point, let me know.

(short pause)

BARFLY

If! No pressure! Please, tell me about the boots.

CASEY

It happened about two years ago, right here on Terminal Station...

Intro fades in

I ain't got no home to go to
I ain't got nothing to sell
But my stars will never leave me

Even when I'm sold to hell
I was born under a blue sky
And I'll die out in the black
When I'm gone don't no one mourn me
'cause my debts will drag me back

Intro fades out

INT. STATION DOCKS - DAWN

CASEY

(voiceover)

I worked over at the docks. Was doing that since before Pa passed away, and most of the time, it was boring, shitty work. Maintenance and cleaning, keeping things ready for ships that don't show up.

Sweeping sounds.

DAVID

(over loudspeaker)

Casey, I need you at Dock 3. We got a ship coming in.

Faster sweeping sounds, Casey humming

Casey. Casey, can you hear me? Casey! Casey, turn off that damn music and listen to me!

Beep

CASEY

Oh, what was that, boss? I couldn't hear you. I had my music on.

DAVID

Just get to Dock 3 and begin the protocol already before I... before I do something!

CASEY

Yes sir!

(voiceover)

I was so excited, which might sound stupid to you. Everybody likes to think folks on Terminal are dumb. That we're a bunch of oxygen scrubber ballast who can't keep up with all those clever people closer to the Sun. But they don't know Terminal. They don't know Terminal folk.

Mechanical whirring

CASEY

Alright, everything looks good here. You can tell them to begin docking sequence, David.

DAVID

Yeah, about that. They've already started.

CASEY

What?!

DAVID

Why do you think I said it was so urgent for you to get your ass over there?

Electronic hum, descending in pitch, begins

CASEY

What kind of moisture-sucking, dust-brained exo-stuffer starts docking before confirmation?!

DAVID

Casey, relax.

CASEY

Relax? Relax?! David, if I hadn't gotten over here in time, we could have had a serious problem. The kind of problem where I die in the cold vacuum of space.

DAVID

Just make a good first impression. I'll be right down.

CASEY

Oh, I'll leave a good impression, alright.

Cracking knuckles

CASEY

Right in that dumb-

Airlock hiss

CASEY

-face.

(voiceover)

I'm not too proud to admit it: my brain absolutely shut down at the first sight of him. No offence to the folks around here, but we're workers, and work comes with a certain amount of wear and tear. But him? He looked like he was printed to perfection, not a blemish on him. He walked with absolute confidence, dressed up in something that cost more than I'd make in a lifetime. So yeah, I got my wires a bit... twisted.

FELIX

Finally! After such a long sojourn, I arrive at my promised land!

CASEY

N-now hold on a minute. You think you can just come in here, dock without confirmation, and-

FELIX

Without confirmation? Now hold on I-

Keyboard tapping

FELIX

I swear, it was right here. I saw it and I... well. If that ain't a slice of fungus for ya. I must have been so damn excited that I got confused.

CASEY

You could have seriously hurt the station. Or us.

FELIX

No, you're right! You're absolutely right! Just docked and already I'm makin' a fool of myself.

CASEY

Hey, it's okay. Accidents happen, and we're all safe. Just, be more careful next time.

FELIX

Well, ah, I'm hopin' there won't need to be a next time. The name's Felix Theodore LeGris, and I hope you'll extend me the courtesy of a second first impression. And maybe an apology over dinner?

Footsteps approaching

DAVID

(unsurprised laughter)

Well look at that! Everyone's still in one piece, that's a welcome surprise.

FELIX

Don't worry, I've been given a thorough reprimand for my callous error.

DAVID

Sure. Just want to go over your particulars. Normally we'd get all that squared away at confirmation, but...

FELIX

Ah, right. No, of course. Go on ahead!

DAVID

Thanks. Name is Felix Theodore LeGris, ship name is the Renowned Wraith.

FELIX

Well, it's... uh, no, that's correct.

DAVID

Then the only thing I need from you is the reason for visit.

FELIX

Well that's simple: immigration.

DAVID

...I beg your pardon?

FELIX

I want to live here on Terminal Station.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

So the boots are his?

CASEY

Do folks not know how to tell a story where you come from?

BARFLY

Seems pretty obvious that's where it's goin'. Let me guess,

y'all fell madly in love. Then he up and left or died and now you keep these to remember him by?

CASEY

If you interrupt me again, you're going to be telling the next person you try to pick up in a bar how you got your scars.

BARFLY

But I don't got any s- Oh! Oh. Sorry.

CASEY

To be fair, you're right. These are his boots.

INT. THE RENOWNED WRAITH - NIGHT

CASEY

(voiceover)

He took me to dinner that night. He didn't think much of it, but shit, any place with a table cloth is Terminal fine dining. Even shared a nice bottle of Terran whiskey with me back in his ship. We were feeling pretty good, and I... Look, it had been a long time. And I sure wasn't waiting to book time in private quarters. But I also wasn't going to be one of those people who makes a real steamy show in berthing, either. So yeah, we spent the night in his ship, doing things I will not be divulging.

Inhale through vape pen, exhale

FELIX

Got to say, that's one of the warmest welcomes I've ever had. They ain't lyin' about Terminal hospitality.

CASEY

Hmhm, you seem pretty hospitable yourself, handsome. Might have what it takes to hang around here after all. Curious why you'd want to, though.

FELIX

Why? Something wrong with the place? You all ain't gonna knock me out and turn me into stew, right?

CASEY

Ugh, you know what's a big turn off? Stuff like that.

FELIX

Oh come on now! You know I don't believe in that kind of malarkey! I wouldn't be movin' here if I did.

CASEY

So then why are you here?

FELIX

Well... I guess I'm just lookin' to change things up. I'm tired of livin' the way I used to. And uh... nothin' seems like more of a change than Terminal.

CASEY

And what sort of life are you getting away from? Had to be something lucrative.

FELIX

A little bit of this and that. Mostly the shippin' business. But I'm tired of that, I just... wanna try an' be a simple man.

CASEY

(soft laughter)

Well, it doesn't get much simpler than here. Folks might be a bit slow to warm up. Terminal is friendly, but it takes a while to not just be a visitor, you know?

FELIX

Well then it's a good thing that I'm not going anywhere. And, ah, hopefully you ain't goin' anywhere too soon neither.

CASEY

I could be persuaded to stay longer.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

CASEY

Things were nice. Felix found a place for himself faster than I could have ever imagined. Granted, it's pretty easy to do when you're offering off-station liquor, fancy outfits, and high-end electronics. He even had some industrial grade shipwright's tools. And after all that, he had them scrap the Renowned Wraith as his final peace offering.

BARFLY

Hold on now. You said this fella was in shippin'? What's he

doin' with all that freight?

CASEY

You're not near as dumb as you look, you know that?

BARFLY

Mama didn't raise no fool.

CASEY

Well, I'll get to that, don't you worry. At first, people thought he was just being hospitable. Maybe brought a few peace offerings, expecting us to be hesitant to accept him. And it worked. Took a while to find him a job that fit, of course. He was...

BARFLY

A dandy who can't dock a ship that Mommy and Daddy LeGris probably bought for him when he turned eighteen?

CASEY

He'd prefer the term *refined gentleman*, but yes. Felix LeGris was, for the most part, ornamental. Then he got put in resource reclamation.

BARFLY

You put him on trash duty? Bet he didn't like that one bit.

CASEY

Not at first. We'd catch drinks, enjoy some alone time in private quarters... enjoy some private time in whatever area of the station we could be alone in...

BARFLY

Ever enjoy some public time in a crowded place?

CASEY

Shut up. The point is, we'd be having fun, but I could tell it was eating at him. The monotony of it was just making him miserable. For a while, I thought he might try leaving.

BARFLY

And this is where we talk about him having a cargo hold full of things he's just giving away?

CASEY

I'm getting to it!
(clears throat)

Like I said, I thought he was going to cut ties and run.
But then Mal passed away.

INT. RESOURCE RECLAMATION - DAY

CASEY

(voiceover)

Mal was one of the sweetest people to ever live on Terminal Station. He grew up in hard times, but all it did was make him that much kinder, that much more giving. There wasn't a person on Terminal that didn't show up to see him off.

Shushing

ZANE

(gradually more tearful)

I want to thank you all for coming here today. Looking out at you all is a testament to just what kind of man I married. We got engaged right before the Drought. After that, it was long days checking the pipes for leaks, making sure people stuck to their rations. And he never admitted it, but I know he skipped some of his. When we had our wedding, he told me that no husband of his was going to go without a toast on his big day. He cut his rations in half for two months, just for that. *For me.*

SHERIFF GRANT

It's okay, I've got you. You don't need to be here for the rest-

ZANE

Get your hands off me, Sheriff! I'm not done. He needs this.

(gradually more tearful again)

I wore these cufflinks at our wedding. They've been in my family since the beginning. And they're as irreplaceable as you are, sweetheart. I miss you.

SHERIFF GRANT

Come on, Zane.

Crowd fades in

FELIX

Now hol' on a minute, why's everybody leavin' somethin'?

CASEY

It's sort of a custom around here. When we lose a loved one, we give something up.

FELIX

To be reclaimed? Seems kind of silly. Gonna take all that time just to break it down an' turn it into-

CASEY

No, we give it up. Permanently.

FELIX

I don't follow.

CASEY

(sigh)

Look, it's just a thing we do here. We've been doing it since as far back as anybody can remember. So when someone dies, the body goes through normal processes to reclaim as much of useable compounds as possible. But to honour what that person meant, we give up something. Ma and Pa always told me it represented the loss we feel inside. That those people cannot be replaced.

FELIX

I mean, that's a pretty sentiment. But how much can you give up before you got to take somethin' back?

CASEY

I don't know. I'm not saying everyone has to do it this way. But it's what we do. And I like it.

FELIX

Yeah, you know, I do too. It's got that Terminal charm to it. Are you leavin' anything?

CASEY

Yeah. It's nothing too fancy.

FELIX

Oh, I don't know about that. It's a nice lookin' spanner! There a story behind it?

CASEY

Zane and Mal used to babysit me. They lived in our bunk room before Ma had the twins. And Mal, he'd tell me stories about the old days, sit me down, show me how to take stuff apart, work on it, put it back together.

FELIX

That's sweet. And it sounds like that's a pretty good thing to give up then. Want me to take that? I reckon I'll have to collect all this an' jettison it before I can do anything else.

CASEY

Oh, sure. Thanks.

Pause

CASEY

Oh, hey there, Sheriff. Is Zane doing okay?

SHERIFF GRANT

Yeah, uh, Zane will be okay. I mean as okay as you can be when you just lost your soulmate, you know?

(hesitates)

Uh, say Casey, d'you think I could talk to Felix here for a minute?

CASEY

Is everything okay?

SHERIFF GRANT

I'd really rather just, uh-

FELIX

It's fine, Sheriff. Anything you need to say to me, you can say in front of Casey here. Besides, I've- I've gotta get back to work once the ceremony's over.

SHERIFF GRANT

(hushed tones)

Well, that might depend on how our conversations go, Mister LeGris.

CASEY

Listen, Grant, maybe this isn't the best time to-

SHERIFF GRANT

Felix, what kind of work did you say you were in previously?

FELIX

Now Sheriff, you already know the answer to that-

SHERIFF GRANT

Tell me again. For the record.

FELIX

Shippin'.

SHERIFF GRANT

That's right. Shippin'. Takin' goods from one place to the other. You know, to sell them.

FELIX

You've succinctly captured the essence of the trade, yes.

SHERIFF GRANT

The problem is, Felix, that I don't think you paid for any of the stuff you brought here. I think you have been very generous with someone else's things.

CASEY

Grant, what the hell-

SHERIFF GRANT

Casey, I checked his ship's computer before it got salvaged. Nav plan seemed a little... *strange*. Origin was just shy of Jupiter, in the middle of nowhere. Sort of an unusual place to start a trip, right?

FELIX

I- I can explain. Just, y'know-

SHERIFF GRANT

Though, it is less unusual when you tick back through your navigation logs to the prior course. A nice, normal trip between New Houston to Ganymede. In fact, if I lay it over, I bet those two routes might just meet up. What do you think, Mister LeGris?

CASEY

Felix, tell him he's confused.

FELIX

No. No, I'm done lyin'.

CASEY

What?

FELIX

It's time fer me to confess my sins and accept the consequences of what I've done. I was in the shipping business. But times got tough, and when I needed work, I did something I'm not proud of. *I scabbed.*

SHERIFF GRANT

You-

FELIX

I scabbed, Sheriff! While good people were willing to stand up to YuKon, I did their dirty work, haulin' goods. And I made a pretty penny keepin' those products movin'. But at the cost of my soul! I got to where I couldn't look at myself in the mirror. I hated who I'd become.

Pause

CASEY

That's why you altered your navigation plan.

FELIX

It was too little, too late. I'd already hurt folks. Good, honest folks just tryin' to stand up fer what's right. But I thought... I thought that maybe I could start over, and be good, honest folk too someday.

(sigh)

Sheriff, I understand that what I did was a crime. And I understand if you want to reprimand me, incarcerate me, hell, kick me out an airlock. But I beg you. I beg you from the bottom of my heart, don't give a single thing back to YuKon. These things belong here more than they ever belonged with those bastards.

SHERIFF GRANT

Well, that's a lot to take in, Felix. But you're wrong about one thing.

FELIX

Uh... what's that?

SHERIFF GRANT

Stealing from YuKon isn't a crime.

Felix laughs in relief

SHERIFF GRANT

Don't worry. This'll just be between the three of us.

FELIX

Well, I- I appreciate that, Sheriff.

SHERIFF GRANT

Just looking out for the good people of Terminal Station.
Nothing more. You two take care, now.

CASEY

(simultaneously)

Thanks, Sheriff.

FELIX

(simultaneously)

Yeah, thanks.

SHERIFF GRANT

But if I catch you two in Store Room Fifteen again, I'm not going to be this friendly.

CASEY

Ahaha! Ha... yeah. Sorry.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

So your boyfriend worked for YuKon, grew a conscience, and pulled a Robin Hood? Well damn, no wonder you were so taken with him. You got a thing for a... *scoundrel* with a heart of gold?

CASEY

No, I've got a thing for people who come on too strong and simply cannot take a hint.

BARFLY

...Huh?

CASEY

Ugh, never mind.

(pause)

After our little talk with the Sheriff, things settled down. We went from being this new, exciting thing to... to...

BARFLY

To what?

CASEY

Nothing. Never mind.

BARFLY

Now, I know you've called my storytellin' into question, but I am certain that this isn't proper form neither.

CASEY

(sighs, grumbles)

Look, I'm not some jealous or possessive person. Relationships on Terminal are sort of open by necessity. Not just because of the obvious genetic reasons. But...

BARFLY

Oh! Your fella started makin' time with other folks!

CASEY

I'm telling you, I'm not like that! I don't care if other people make him laugh or make his heart race. That doesn't change what we have, you know?

BARFLY

I guess so. but somethin' sure got you bent out of shape.

CASEY

Look, it wasn't like we stopped seeing each other. And no offense to Sev, Rico, Maddie, Marti, Castor, or the others but-

BARFLY

Jeez!

CASEY

But there was nothing between them. Any of them! It felt so fake, and nobody else seemed to notice. Not even Felix.

BARFLY

It *sounds* like you might have been a *little* jealous.

CASEY

I'm *not*! I'm not saying it was fake because I thought Felix and I were some kind of *star-crossed lovers*. I'm saying it because whenever I'd see him or hear him with one of the

others...

(pause)

Have you ever played a... a dating game?

BARFLY

A... what now?

CASEY

A dating game! You know, like *Moonrise Heartthrob* or *Cosmic Crush*?

BARFLY

I am... so confused.

CASEY

The point is it's a game where you meet people and make them fall in love with you. And every time Felix was with one of the others? It felt like he was just playing one of those games. Picking choices off a list. Trying to win someone. I- I don't know how to describe it but it felt *wrong*. And... it made me wonder why he couldn't see that what we had meant more. To both of us.

INT. STATION DOCKS - AFTERNOON

Beeping and booping

CASEY

(voiceover)

I tried to focus on work when he was off cavorting and carousing. Normally, sweeping and periodic maintenance wouldn't be enough to keep me from overthinking. Thankfully, it was time for Homecoming.

DAVID

(over loudspeaker)

You about done, Casey? Cam's been waitin' fer a hot minute, and Bret's going to be here pretty soon.

CASEY

Do you want it done fast or do you want it done right?

DAVID

Both. Now.

CASEY

(hushed tones)

I bet you wouldn't be rushing me so much if it was anybody but Cam.

DAVID

I heard that.

CASEY

(hushed tones)

Keep your engines idle, Cam. Plenty of time to impress David with your dumb laugh and your fake-

DAVID

Casey!

CASEY

Stories! Her fake stories about what all she's been up to. If you thought I was going to say anything else, that's on you, David.

DAVID

Last warning.

CASEY

Yeah, yeah. Whatever you say, boss.

FELIX

Well ain't you popular today.

CASEY

Gah! D-damn it! Felix, don't sneak up on me like that! You almost gave me a heart attack.

FELIX

Oh, a medical emergency? Well, maybe I could give you some mouth to mouth when David ain't watchin'?

DAVID

I'm turning these mics off and taking my break. Casey, get these ships docked before you even dream of, uh. Anything.

CASEY

(sigh)

As much as I'd love to chat, I'm busy working.

FELIX

Since when do you get busy here?

CASEY
Since it's Homecoming?

FELIX
(oblivious)
Oh, right. Homecoming.

CASEY
You've been here this long and you still don't know what Homecoming is?

FELIX
Well, I ain't been around long enough to see one, have I?

CASEY
Mm, fair point.
(sigh)
What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think *Terminal Station*?

FELIX
Um. I guess... bein' out in the middle of nowhere, close knit community, the accent?

CASEY
I don't have an accent.

FELIX
(impersonating)
I do not have an ac-cent.

CASEY
That's not an accent. It's just speaking correctly.

FELIX
Is it bein' contrary? Because if it's not, I ain't got a clue.

CASEY
Come on. A certain fungus isn't coming to mind?

FELIX
Oh! Starlight Truffles!

CASEY
That's just the fancy name it gets sold under where you're

from. The real name is the Terminal Conk. Well, the *real* real name is *Grifola Terminus Stercus*, but that doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. Of course, there's other names for them...

FELIX

Such as?

CASEY

Hen-of-the-Vents. Or Sucker Shrooms.

FELIX

Sucker Shrooms?

CASEY

Felix, why do you think *Starlight Truffles* are so valuable?

FELIX

Because they're rare.

CASEY

No. They're valuable because people *think* they're rare. These things grow on our air filters!

FELIX

They do?

CASEY

Well, not all our filters. Only special ones.

FELIX

And which ones would those be?

CASEY

The ones in bio-waste management. Something about certain *compounds* in the air there getting entrained in the filter fibers, creating an ideal bed for the mycelium.

FELIX

You're tellin' me that *Starlight Truffles*, one of the most expensive delicacies in the whole damn system, grows like a weed in your shit room vents?

CASEY

(barely holding laughter)

Yes.

FELIX

And y'all have just been griftin' everyone?

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

Wait, y'all *have* just been griftin' everyone!

CASEY

Shit. Look, it's not *really* a grift. You've got the Starlight Truffle Company to thank for the prices.

BARFLY

Don't worry. Swear on my Mama, I ain't gonna tell a soul.

CASEY

Good. Keep this up, I might start to like you. Or maybe I just don't want some Starlight Truffles goon coming after you with a plasma torch because you know too much.

BARFLY

Wait, what?

CASEY

Oh I don't know, I've already said too much.

BARFLY

(uneasy)

Heheh. That's a good joke.

(changing subject)

So what's that got to do with your Homecoming thing?

CASEY

Well, when else would the Comets show up?

BARFLY

The hell's a comet?

CASEY

Some folks don't want to live on Terminal Station, but they still want to be a part of it. Those folks become Comets. Migrant merchants who take the Terminal Conks, go sunward, raise funds to help the station. Then they come home and repeat the process.

BARFLY

But why Comets? Isn't that a Solar Scout thing?

CASEY

A what scout?

BARFLY

...Never mind.

CASEY

We call them Comets because they make periodic trips in and out of the system. You know, just like a-

BARFLY

But you're not even near the Oort Cloud.

CASEY

It's just a cute nickname! How can you be so pigheaded and yet apparently such an astronomy stickler?

BARFLY

I contain multitudes. I am an enigma wrapped in a mystery, tucked lovingly in the soul of a poet.

(belches)

Shit. 'Scuse me.

CASEY

The important thing is that Homecoming is the time when all our Comets come home. It's a week-long event with two whole days of harvest, then we pack them full of Conks and send them on their way. I was running around in circles trying to get them all docked one after the other after the other, all while trying to act like nothing was wrong between me and Felix.

BARFLY

(low whistle)

When it rains, it pours, don't it?

CASEY

I wouldn't know, but I'll take your word for it.

INT. RECREATION ROOM 03 - EVENING

CASEY

(voiceover)

It started like any other Homecoming. I got everyone docked, everyone shook hands and hugged. The first day is

all emotional. Day two starts all the work, scraping the Conks off the filters, packing them up, loading them on ships. By day five, everything should be sorted out, which just leaves the send off.

(sigh)

I swear, there's nothing better. Pretty much everyone that can comes out for the festivities. We even rotate so folks stuck on the job can get some time away for a shift. There's good food, games, dancing, singing, contests... it's just everything you love about Terminal. The heart of it. It was almost enough to help me forget Felix, who had latched on to one of the Comets named Thao and was having a very fun time making the merchant blush and stammer with well placed whispers. That is, until Felix went and walked up to me, smiling with a drink in his hand.

FELIX

You ran off after all the ships docked. Didn't get a chance to keep talkin'.

CASEY

Yeah, well, you were pretty busy talking to all the new folks. I didn't want to distract you, you know?

FELIX

Okay now, no need for all that.

CASEY

There is no *all that*. I'm just enjoying myself right now.

FELIX

Cut the shit, Casey. We're both old enough to dress ourselves. How about we act like it?

CASEY

What did you-

FELIX

I know why you're all snippy at me. Don't take an advanced particle physicist or nothin' to see: you're jealous.

CASEY

I am *not* jealous.

FELIX

You're sure actin' jealous. And I get it, but I also never

said we were some sort of exclusive couple neither.

CASEY

I don't want that! You know, it's such sunward thinking that you'd expect I wanted that.

FELIX

(sigh)

Then why're you over here poutin' and huffin' up a storm? Tonight's about fun, ain't it? I want to have fun. And you're the most fun in the whole galaxy.

CASEY

Just answer me one thing. What do you get from the others? Because they might not see how empty the connection between you is, but I do.

FELIX

Of course y'do, Casey. And that's why you're the one. The *real* one.

CASEY

What does that mean?

FELIX

You said one thing. I answered. Now no more questions, let's just... forget about anyone but us for right now.

CASEY

(voiceover)

And I did. Even then, even seeing the cracks in the mask, I couldn't help but find him charming. I still liked the idea of being the person he'd keep coming back to. And from there, the days went by pretty uneventfully. Felix kept up his philandering ways, but made sure to pepper in dashes of affection to remind me why I'd fallen for him. And that was how it was for us. Meanwhile, Terminal went on living.

(pause)

And dying. A couple of our beloved old timers passed away. Dana in comms choked to death on a Luna Pie in her bunk. But those were nothing compared to what happened at Reactor 4. Farris and Erin died working on one of those circuit breakers. Folks who saw it said the fireball was so big it looked like it wasn't ever going to stop growing. Just swell up and become a new Sun. The send-off was tense. The coroner had determined that Farris had been drinking before

shift. There was a lot of blame and a lot of heartbreak.
And then there was Felix, standing there, watching it all.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

Felix is startin' to sound like a real charmer.

CASEY

I mean, they had talked a lot. They'd done *more* than talk.
But here he was, absolutely expressionless, more of that
playing the game garbage. I was angry!

(pause)

No, I think I was more than that. I couldn't figure out
what it was, but it kept pricking up in the back of my
brain every time he'd glance over at me during the funeral.
I didn't know what to make of it at the time.

BARFLY

That "at the time" is doin' a lot o' work there.

CASEY

Yes. Yes it is.

(pause)

Barkeep? One last one.

BARFLY

On me.

CASEY

Much obliged, stranger. You should start off with something
like that, for future reference.

BARFLY

Duly noted. Now am I going to find out about these boots
before Terminal hits its One Year Anniversary? We've only
got a few hundred years left.

CASEY

Oh, you're going to find out, alright, because this is
where everything goes ass up.

INT. STATION DOCKS - NIGHT

CASEY

(voiceover)

It wasn't long before the next Homecoming was upon us. We

needed it. All in all, we'd lost eight souls since the last one. That might not seem like much, but with a population of six hundred twenty-one, you feel each and every loss. I got tasked helping load the harvest. It was day four and I was feeling it in my back and arms. Hardly noticed when Thao snuck up on me.

THAO

Hey, Casey!

CASEY

Shit! You scared me half to death, Thao! What do you want?

THAO

I was hoping I could talk to you?

CASEY

Sure, but make it snappy. We're already running late.

THAO

Uh... I was hoping we could talk in private.

CASEY

Um, sure? Okay. Hey David, I'm going to take care of something.

DAVID

(over loudspeaker)

Oh, sure. Go ahead. We'll just be here doing work. Very important work.

Footsteps, door opens and closes

CASEY

So, what is it?

THAO

Well, I was with Felix yesterday and-

CASEY

I do not need to know about Felix and his-

THAO

It's not about that! Casey, please! You were there for Mal's funeral, right?

CASEY

Yeah, I was. But what's this got to do with Fe-

THAO

What did Zane give?

CASEY

What do-

THAO

Just tell me what Zane gave up!

CASEY

Cufflinks! He gave a pair of cufflinks. They were something special.

THAO

(dejected)

Antique silver cufflinks. Terran. With an onyx stud.

CASEY

If you knew, why were you asking me?

THAO

Casey, Felix came to me earlier today, he gave me a box. I asked him what it was, and he told me he needed a favor. He said he'd taken some of the scraps from the harvest and packed them up to send to his family on Luna. I tried to tell him no, that I couldn't do that, that the Harvest is for the station. But he just kept begging me, saying it would mean so much to his family to get a chance to try *Starlight Truffles*, even just the scraps! So I agreed!

CASEY

I didn't even know he had family on Luna.

THAO

I was just going to stash it in my locker, but Braun and Izzy were fooling around in berthing and grabbed it from me. They started tossing it about, just teasing, you know? I told them to stop, but then Braun dropped it, busted it open and...

(deep breath)

I shoved them out of my quarters, tried to clean up the Conk scraps. But it wasn't just the Conks in there. There was other stuff packed in. Trinkets and jewelry, hidden in the mushroom bits.

CASEY

Thao...

THAO

Are these Zane's cufflinks? Did- di- did Felix steal them?!

CASEY

I don't know! I didn't get a good look at them. But I'm sure there's an explanation. Maybe Felix has... uh, has a pair of antique Terran cufflinks too? He likes to dress up.

THAO

Yeah. Yeah. Maybe.

CASEY

Don't worry. I'll go talk to him. Just give me those and... and I'll get this sorted out.

Scene Break

INT. RESOURCE RECLAMATION - NIGHT

CASEY

(voiceover)

I didn't want to believe it. I didn't want to believe that someone could do something so disgusting. I felt myself twisting into knots inside, trying to find a way to keep my vision of Felix alive.

FELIX

(singing)

I got tired knees livin' on the ground,
Scraped 'em up scroungin' around,
But that ain't me, not anymore,
look to the sky and watch me soar.

Footsteps approaching

CASEY

Felix! Felix, we need to talk.

FELIX

Hm? Oh, hey there Case'. Where's the fire? You look- uh-

CASEY

Where did you get these?

FELIX

(pause, sigh)

Well I don't know what *these* are. C'mere, let me take a quick look.

CASEY

No. No, that's close enough. You know damn well what these are.

FELIX

Casey, you're being ridiculous. I don't-

CASEY

You gave Thao the Conk scraps and *these* were in there. How did you get Zane's cufflinks, Felix?

FELIX

(deep sigh)

Oh, well shit. Y'ask one dipshit to carry a fucking package for you, and they can't even do that right. What a pain in the ass.

CASEY

What the hell is going on? Why are you-

FELIX

Oh, cut the shit, Casey. You're not that stupid. You know exactly what's going on. Stop acting like the rest of these backwater morons and just admit it to yourself.

CASEY

You're stealing... from the offerings.

Clap

FELIX

Thank you! Finally! Damn, it has been *so agonizing* watching you hover around this.

CASEY

So what? You came here just to... to rob us?

FELIX

(scoff)

What the hell kind of ass backward plan would that be? This damn station's too small to really move anything here, and

you're all so... so, uh...

CASEY

Close?

FELIX

I was going to say clingy, but sure, whatever you want.

(sigh)

No, I came here, and I mean this, from the bottom of my heart, I really did want to get away from my past.

(pause)

At least 'til the heat died down.

CASEY

Because of the YuKon freight you stole?

FELIX

Oh Casey... come on, *really*?

CASEY

What did you do?

FELIX

You're smart. Let's see if you can guess. We have a dashing rogue who seems to be making a normal transit from Luna to Ganymede. And in the middle of open space, he stops. Then he changes course. Now what could I have done that would be so *bad*, I'd choose to live on *Terminal Station*?

CASEY

...You're a vulture.

FELIX

(Excited)

Yes! Yes! Oh, I knew I was right about you! I mean, I'm not a *vulture* vulture. It's more of a... supplemental income. But you're right! I got caught and I had to haul ass and lay low.

CASEY

You monster! I trusted you! *We* trusted you! We let you into our *home*!

FELIX

I know. And it was easier than you'd think. All it took was that cargo I was *supposed* to deliver for YuKon...

(pause)

and what I lifted off that cruise ship once that final hull section gave way.

(chuckle)

Hell, you all were even eager to take my tools off me.

CASEY

It wasn't bad enough you came here, you had to make us complicit in this too?

FELIX

Casey, Casey, Casey. You need to think about this from a different perspective. Shut off that Terminal doctrine and just consider this: people are a resource. Always have been. They're the suckers you can trick into handin' over a fortune. They're the rubes you can convince to let you in. And they're the bones you can pick while the pickin's good.

CASEY

And what about me? What am I?

FELIX

Well you? I think you've got the makin's of a great partner.

CASEY

Oh sure. You say that and then what? You just throw me out of an airlock?

FELIX

Well that's just stupid. You don't get rid of a tool while it's still useful. And I don't see you gettin' dull any time soon. Here. Seemed a shame to get rid of it so I've been holdin' on to it.

CASEY

My spanner? I...

FELIX

I know you're nervous. But we could be a good team. Between the Conks and what I've saved, we could-

CASEY

The conks?

FELIX

Right... see, the problem is that you didn't find those cufflinks, right? That'd be our nosey Comet. And as slow as

Thao is, eventually they'll realize one plus one is not eleven.

CASEY

I could talk to them. Tell them that you have a pair just like Zane's. Or that he-

FELIX

(chuckling)

First rule of this business, Case': if people think you're lyin', they *know* you're lyin'. So, if we want off this station, we've got to take care of 'em.

CASEY

Take care of them? Felix, I'm not going to murder someone!

FELIX

Keep your voice down! I know it's a lot. Hell, I ain't ever done it before neither. Well, not *really*.

CASEY

Not really? What the hell does that- Farris. You and Farris were together. Hell, you were together the night before. You were together and he was drunk. Felix, did you get him drunk on purpose?

FELIX

What? No! I mean, we had drinks. Spent the night together. Maybe had a little somethin' in the mornin'. And sure I might be a heavy hand when I pour, but he's the one that went to work, right? Hadn't had any troubles all the other times we had our tippy tussles in the mornin'.

CASEY

You killed him. And Erin.

FELIX

Casey, please. That was a *genuine workplace accident*. 'Course, anyone who's dumb enough to go pokin' around in high voltage drunk is practically *askin'* to get vaporized. But any reasonable person would agree I'm completely blame-

Casey grunts, a spanner impacts a skull, Felix grunts, a body hits the floor

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

You clocked him? With the spanner?

CASEY

I did.

BARFLY

Damn! Well what happened next?

CASEY

Instead of the last day of Homecoming being a party, it was a trial. Open and shut. Sheriff confirmed warrants off-station for the arrest of Felix Theodore LeGris for failure to render aid and unlawful salvage of a ship in need. And that was before we found him guilty on seven counts of theft, two counts of murder, and conspiracy to commit the aforementioned crime again.

BARFLY

Good. Rat bastard. What'd you do? Shoot him out the airlock? Use him for target practice? Hang him?

CASEY

No. We put him in the brig and informed the authorities.

BARFLY

You what?!

INT. STATION BRIG - AFTERNOON

CASEY

(voiceover)

After about a week, the transport arrived to take him to Diotima. I knew I shouldn't, but I couldn't stop myself.

Heavy metal clunk, footsteps

FELIX

Well hello there, Case'. I just want you to know, I forgive you for viciously attacking me when I offered you an olive branch.

CASEY

Eat shit, LeGris.

FELIX

Obviously, I overestimated you. You don't have what it takes to survive. You're just another sucker.

CASEY

Yeah? We'll see who's the sucker when you're enjoying life in prison, asshole.

Felix begins laughing

CASEY

What? What's so funny?

FELIX

Oh, nothin'. Just how damn slow all y'all are. You think I'm just gonna roll over and die? Nah. Felix LeGris? He's smarter than you. All of you.

CASEY

You're not going to slip your way out of this, you slimy bastard.

FELIX

Maybe. Or maybe I have a chat with that pilot. It's a long trip, after all. I tell him about a few friends I know. Friends with deep pockets and connections. I'm sure I could convince him to make a quick stop and let me go for a stroll. After all, we're out in the middle of nowhere. Who's going to find me?

CASEY

You're bluffing.

FELIX

It's only a matter of time, Case'. And if it's not on that ship, it'll be in a cell. I'll find someone who can't wait to prove what an idiot they are. Like your dear ol' sheriff. Say, how's he doin'? Ain't seen him around much. He was lookin' mighty rough.

CASEY

You're going to get yours, Felix.

Footsteps

FELIX

I'll send you some pictures from Luna when I get there.

Scene Break

CASEY

(voiceover)

As much as I wanted to try and pry more information out of Felix, I couldn't stop thinking about Sheriff Grant. I went over to his quarters, hoping it was just that asshole messing with me again.

Door knock

CASEY

Sheriff? Are you in there? It's Casey.

(pause)

Grant, please open up. I haven't seen you since the trial and Felix said some stuff that made me... Please open the door. I'm scared.

Door rolls open

SHERIFF GRANT

I'm s- sorry I scared you.

CASEY

Fucking shit! Grant, it smells like a still in here. Aren't you on duty?

(pause)

Hey! Hey don't walk away from me! This is serious! What- What's going on? This isn't you.

SHERIFF GRANT

(bitter laugh)

Oh yeah? And what am I, Casey?

CASEY

...Listen, how about we get out of here, sober you up and-

SHERIFF GRANT

What am I, Casey?!

CASEY

You're the sheriff!

SHERIFF GRANT

Yeah. A piss poor one.

CASEY

Hey, don't say shit like that. You're a good sheriff and-
Glass shatters

SHERIFF GRANT

I wasn't good though, Casey! I let him in here! I knew something was wrong and all he had to do was flash me a smile and feed me a line and I took it.

CASEY

We all fell for it, Grant. That's what he does. Hell, before I knocked his ass out cold, he was saying all sorts of trash about how smart I am. But you're a good sheriff.

SHERIFF GRANT

(snort)

No. No I'm not. But maybe Felix... is right.

CASEY

What do you mean?

SHERIFF GRANT

You are smart. He saw it. That's why he wanted you to run off with him.

CASEY

Sheriff, what are you saying?

SHERIFF GRANT

That I don't want to be sheriff. Not anymore. And my recommendation for replacement is you.

INT. NOISY TERMINAL BAR - EVENING

BARFLY

Wait, you're the *sheriff*?

CASEY

I sure am.

BARFLY

Well, if I'd know that, I'd have definitely made a better entrance. So... what happened to Felix?

CASEY

He got on the transport and made his way to Diotima.

BARFLY

That ain't right. You shoulda thrown him into space. Naw, shoulda strung him up. Naw, you shoulda-

CASEY

This isn't how things are done here. Life matters to people on Terminal.

(pause)

I checked in with Diotima. The prisoner Felix Theodore LeGris never arrived. Official report was that he had a medical emergency at a waystation. Body was disposed of there to reduce fuel consumption and prevent any red tape over "the spread of potential pathogens".

BARFLY

So he did it. That slimy bastard got away. If I ever get mt hands-

CASEY

Maybe he got away. Maybe not. See, I was still working the station dock at that point.

BARFLY

Wait, did you... did you do somethin'?

CASEY

Nothing unusual. Diagnostics. Maybe a chat or two with the pilot. All perfectly standard.

BARFLY

What happened to all that "life means something" Terminal shit?

Pause

CASEY

(hushed, threatening)

Life means something to Terminal. But Terminal means something to me. So yeah, I'll kill someone like Felix. And do you know why? Because he's a monster. But they can't know. They have to believe in the Right Thing. Because most of the time, the Right Thing works.

BARFLY

And when it doesn't?

CASEY

(normal tone)

It's my job to protect Terminal Station now. The people and the way of life.

BARFLY

I just got one last question. One that you owe me an answer to.

CASEY

And what's that?

BARFLY

Why the boots?

CASEY

Felix was in prison clothes when he shipped out. All his personal effects were confiscated. I kept these.

BARFLY

But why?

CASEY

To remind myself of him. To remind myself that, for a moment, I almost got on that ship with him. Right up until he wanted to hurt one of us.

(pause)

I wear these to remind myself how close I got to being just like him.

Scene fades out

Thank you for joining us for this episode of Breathing Space.

This episode, Terminal Hospitality, was written and directed by S. J. Ryker and edited by Aaron Olson.

Barfly is voiced by Rachel Scully
Casey is voiced by Sophie Borjón
David is voiced by Scott Paladin

Felix leGris is voiced by Max
Newland
Zane is voiced by Ari Ingalls
Sheriff Grant is voiced by Ness
Rocker
Thao is voiced by Lafayette
Uttarapong

Our theme, Blues for the Black,
was composed by Michael Freitag
with vocals by Jeremiah and lyrics
by Scott Paladin.

You can find links to learn more
about our cast and crew in the
show notes and more information
about our show at our website,
breathingspace.lawofnames.com.

Breathing Space is a Law of Names
Production.