

Previously on Quest Friends.

[Opening theme, "Friends" by Miracle of Sound, begins.]

Kyle (as the scanner)

Contraband detected! Dozens of books!

Kyle

You realize, oh. All books are outlawed here, and you will get severely punished, probably ex—no, you will get definitely expelled if you're caught with books.

Tom

[Groans.] No.

Hallie

Hopper groans out loud. Just like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Extended pained groan.]

Kyle (as Tattertop)

With this payment, I believe I can be of assistance.

Kyle

Oh, who uh, has the back door that you can use to access all these things. Tattertop has given one key, who wants it?

Emily

I'm gonna take it from him because we had that conversation, to give it to Soe.

Tom

I was going to vote that as well.

Hallie

Yeah.

Kyle

But if I recall correctly, there was this lil robot who you had saved from last episode, and who, you know, even if you got him an ID, couldn't really, unless you like Weekend at Bernie's it—

Tom

[Laughter.]

Kyle

Like, couldn't appear to like, use it. So what the hell did you do with this robot boy?

[Theme music intensifies.]

[The music ends and a cheery bell chimes three times.]

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

[Less cheery.] Morning. Day two!

Kyle

Alright. It is now morning of day two on the Prodigious. Congratulations! We have made it to the morning of day two.

[Jaunty, player-piano music begins to play.]

So you're back in the dining hall. It is still a scramble. Although there are no scramble eggs, which are Ninth World eggs. They're ostrich eggs.

Ari

Just the shoes. Uggs.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Kyle

There are scrambled uggs. No scrambled eggs, some scrambled uggs, but nobody likes those. At some point, two students started fighting over an egg over easy. So they do have some eggs. And this fight does not go over easy, because a Zhev just comes in and, using its six arms, sucker punches both of them, and you can just see them get dragged out of the room.

Hallie

Hopper makes the exact face I just made, which is incredulous at just the obvious brutality exhibited by these Zhev.

Kyle

So everyone's having breakfast. Jesse is almost like our dog Charlie, where they're very tired and their face is on the, uh, on the table, and they just close their eyes. And then they open them up and they're like, trying to keep alert of everyone, and then they're sleeping. Everett is brooding in a corner. In fact, he found the place where the most corners converged, and that is where he is brooding. Uh, Soe is great. Soe's hanging out with, uh, with Meeghan, and she's fashioned her hair to make the fin shapes that Meeghan's hair makes? Soe has fashioned her hair to be synonymous. And then there is...

Emily

[Crosstalking excitedly.] My baby's making friends!

Kyle

And then there is Misha, Hop, and Elee, and you're all at the table together. And how, how are you feeling this morning?

Hallie

Um. Hop, when he got back to his room, he...he eventually fell asleep, but a fitful, like, maybe two hour long bout of sleep. So he didn't really sleep at all that night. He's got like some shadow—he just doesn't

look great? Is what I'm saying. He looks tired, but he also, he's thinking about something. He looks tired but thoughtful. Except for the Zhev, the Zhev just, just sucker punching these two kids fighting over a single egg over easy. That was the only thing that roused him from his thoughtful state.

Kyle

Do you want to talk about what he's thinking about?

Hallie

[Thoughtfully.] Um, well, he was a little overwhelmed by the events of last night, because first of all there's a time bomb on the ship, that is the engine. He doesn't know what to do about that. He worries. He's not in like, a good, competent place, but he can't help himself from worrying and trying to help. And then he's also thinking about...

[Pauses, then continues hesitantly.] Seraphinia...Delphine...Willow...there's a...

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Ah, let me pull up the name.

Hallie

I got two of those right.

Kyle

You, yeah, you did. Seraphin—Princess Seraphinia Delilah Willow Brackleberry.

Hallie

Delilah. He's thinking about Princess Seraphinia Delilah Willow Brackleberry, because he's a little bit afraid about this engine that's on the ship. But he also feels like this woman that he met has a pretty good handle on it, despite not having a handle on it at all when he was in the room with her last night. He feels...like he trusts her.

Kyle

Is he familiar with, uh, why should be called Princess at all?

Hallie

He is not. That threw him for a loop because, you know, he was in his pajamas. Had soot in his face. His hair is his like, bed head not hat hair, so it's real messy and sticks straight up in the back. He wasn't, he wasn't expecting to meet a princess, and he doesn't feel like he made a very good impression, but that's fine.

Kyle

Meanwhile, Elee. How do you feel about your own princess or Professor? How do you feel about your, your uh, your professor?

Emily

[Uncertain and a little sad.] Um.

Kyle

I'm assuming that's what Elee's thinking about?

Emily

Yes. She has...

Kyle

[Crosstalking, wryly.] Found something scarier than the ship?

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Emily

Yeah! Exactly. She's mostly consumed by that. She did, when she got to the scramble, she would have seen Hop and checked to see if he had a plate in front of him. And if he didn't—

Kyle

[Amused.] Is my boy eating?

Emily

[Trying not to laugh.] Basically! That's what she did yesterday, and she's still not, like, convinced that he's going to take care of himself.

Hallie

[Resigned and amused.] You're right. *[Laughter.]* He probably would not have eaten if someone didn't just give him food.

Emily

Alright, so Hop probably didn't have a plate in front of him. And so she would go and just grab a bunch of food and set it down roughly in front of him. She'd have a plate for herself, but she'd kind of pick at it because she's still not feeling that great, and now there are other things that are making her feel nauseous.

Hallie

[Cackles a little.]

Emily

And it's Rei!

Kyle

And then Ari, how-how's Misha doing? What's Misha up to?

Ari

Well, I guess Misha's sitting with, with the crew, just to keep company. But first thing, they're gonna notice that Hop is not wearing his hat, but they're not gonna mention it, and they're just gonna, like, be fine with that.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Great. *[Laughter.]*

Kyle

[Pretending to pout.] I'm fine. I'm fine.

Ari

[Quickly.] I mean, they like, you know, it's fine! They, they just, Hopper doesn't have to wear the hat.

Hallie

He loves the hat! He just—

Ari

[Crosstalking.] No! It's, it wasn't to guilt trip you, I promise! It—

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Oh, no, Hopper just feels guilty. I don't.

Ari

Okay, good.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Hopper does.

Ari

Yeah, so they're going to notice that but they're not going to mention it. And then they're gonna be a bit worried. What they're going to be worried about is that when—well, two things. One is, ah, they're gonna notice that Jesse's kind of tired? And so they feel really guilty about it being their fault. They might even try and mention this to Elee, because they don't know how to, uh, they need like, advice to not keep this going for the rest of the trip? Because they don't want Jesse to be actually non-functioning? But before that, they are also a little bit confused as to why Xoc is not here even though everybody's here, so they might also reach to Xoc, but I don't want to, like, expand the scene so I don't know what to do.

Kyle

[In a very deliberate, "up to something" tone of voice.] Ari, please, reach out to Xoc.

Ari

[A little uncertain.] Okay? So they're going to reach out to Xoc, and say,

Ari (as Misha)

Um, Xoc...I do believe breakfast is ready, so I was wondering where were you, and if I could be of any assistance? Otherwise, I believe your food might not get eaten, and you need that to having energy for the classes this morning.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Stressed out.] Ahhhh.

[Louder.] Ahhhhhh!

[A faint whooshing "changing scenes" noise.]

Kyle

So. It's the morning! Everyone's gone for breakfast. Everett has finally lumbered out of bed, and Xoc, your mind is just thinking. You're like, I can't help Everett. I couldn't help Loell, assuming he wanted to be helped at all, I don't know what's going on with him. Well, maybe I can—maybe there is somebody I can help though.

And so you take up the backpack and you spill out its contents, and amidst, ah, just a metric crap-ton of spray flesh and spray metal, out comes a small robot! The robot you saved from the Zhev when you first entered Qi back in part two.

He is a small, boxy humanoid robot with a head that has big glowy eyes. They kind of look like light bulbs. He has two prong grabber arms on hose-like arms, tiny little shoes, and then this robot inside of your backpack has a little backpack of his own. It looks very similar to yours. It's precious.

Tom

Xoc...Xoc would have done this with this sort of faux secrecy. Like, this clear smile on his face, just like looking around in a sort of exaggerated way like, "oh, I hope no one sees me taking this small robot child out of this bag!" And then, and then sets them out on the table and gets to work.

Kyle

Alright, and since we are science fiction, we need in every series at least one obligatory jargon-filled scene.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

Oh, oh, I was born ready for this talky and techy bullshit, step aside.

[Gentle, nostalgic string music begins to play.]

So Xoc spreads out his tools and hearkens back to lessons learned long ago, far away in the Weal of Baz when an old machine named Jaqel told him about machine life and all the various components it can be made up of. And so he begins with a quick analysis of things, you know, trying to see, is this some sort of self-replicating metallic organism? Is this just purely mechanical combustion, what we talking about here? Is there some sort of, um, force reactor fueling this little fellow?

And determining that it's a fairly, fairly standard, fairly ancient build, circuit boards, lil nuclear battery, all that jazz, Xoc is going to take out his most advanced tool:

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a screwdriver.

[The music stops.]

And begin by unscrewing the back to do a little bit, of let's say he's got to realign those electrons. Yeah. That's the jargon. I'm sorry. I walked into this a lot more confidently.

Ari

[Dryly.] Those electrons.

Tom

He's got an electron arthro—ehh. Electron arthroscope. Nailed it. Did, I did the jargon.

Kyle

There's a little stutter. It doesn't make too loud of sounds because, again, this robot, he's very small. But eventually the eyes light up, he leans up, he looks at you, and he says,

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Deeply suspicious.] The fuck are you?

[Playful music begins in the background.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Startled.] Eh, uh, hello, small friend! My name is Xoc.

Hallie

The small robot looks around.

Hallie (as the small robot)

This doesn't look like...a street? Or outside? Or Qi. So Xoc. Xoc. You wanna, you want to, you wanna tell a buddy what's going on?

Emily and Kyle

[Laughing delightedly in the background.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Excited and oblivious to the robot's suspicion.] Oh, yeah! So when we were passing by, I saw you in the streets. You weren't moving, and people were stepping on you, so I took you away from there. We got on an airship, because that was where we were going, and I worked on fixing you!

[Pleased with himself.] And now I have!

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Incredulous.] What?! What do you—what? What do you mean about in Qi? You just took me off the street?

Emily and Kyle

[Laughing harder.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Slightly taken aback.] You were in trouble!

Hallie (as the small robot)

What, you just, you just, you just saw me on the street in Qi and were like,

[Mocking Xoc's voice.] Oh man, I'm Xoc, I'm gonna take this robot, put it on a boat! That's what the robot wants, to be on a frickin' boat, not where it was before!

[In its own voice once more, more frantic.] What do you mean I'm on a boat, man?!

Tom (as Xoc)

You weren't even conscious! Yo were just in the streets!

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Scoffing.] It was a long con.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom (as Xoc)

I don't believe you!

Emily

[Laughter.]

Hallie (as the small robot)

What, what, what—you barely know me. What do you mean you don't believe me? I should have started with, with, with a blank slate. You should believe everything that—I don't need this. I don't need this!

Hallie

And he starts collecting his backpack.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Puts it on, real angrily.

Tom (as Xoc)

Well, well—you don't have to stay with us, but I was kind of interested in hearing your story, and who you are, and where you're from. I don't even know your name!

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Very suspicious.] Who wants to know.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom (as Xoc)

Uh, Xoc? Myself?

Hallie (as the small robot)

Yeah but what, what, what are you? Like a, like a wizard hobo? Is that what this is? Is that what this is?

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

And he gestures to all of you.

Tom (as Xoc)

I...well, I do live in the wilderness a lot.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Tom (as Xoc)

And I am a wizard, but no! I'm a nano, and I—

Tom

Xoc does this very intensely through a telepathic link opening up with this robot, whose name he doesn't know. He's like,

Tom (as Xoc)

[In an intense, dramatic whisper.] I can also speak to machines minds!

Emily

[Snorts.]

Hallie

So the small robot will kind of recoil a little bit at the mental link, and then go,

Hallie (as the small robot)

Sorry, there was like a weird interference there?

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh, did, did the signal—

[A quirky accordion tune begins to play.]

Hallie (as the small robot)

Oh, there it is again!

Tom (as Xoc)

Did the signal not go through?

Hallie (as the small robot)

No, all the, it keeps happening!

Tom (as Xoc)

You're...you're lying to make me feel upset!

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Crosstalking, a little mocking.] That's so weird! I guess your link is broken!

Tom (as Xoc)

You're lying to make me feel upset. I can tell what you're doing here!

Hallie

[Laughing.] He's already broken the link.

[Laughter from the rest of the party has been increasing in volume through the entire scene.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Aghast and offended.] Okay!

Tom

And now it's out loud again, and Xoc is gesturing with his arms out to the side because that's the thing, I, Tom, do when distressed.

Hallie (as the small robot)

You can just sit here in your boat room and reflect on what you've done!

Hallie

And then he pitter-patters out of the room on his little boots.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Still not fully understanding what's happening.] What's your name?

Hallie (as the small robot)

[Mocking Xoc's voice again.] But what's your name!

Hallie

As he shouts down the hallway, in like, the Spongebob alternate capital letters meme.

Tom

At that instant, Xoc will both mentally and audibly go,

[The music stops.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Loud and frustrated.] Auugh!

Kyle

[Laughter.] So we don't know what the name of this robot child is, but we, as the audience and the players, know who he is. So Xoc, do you want to explain one of your new abilities you have not told us about yet?

Tom

Yes. There was another power made in secret at tier four.

[Jazzy, waiting room type music begins to play, like Tom is introducing something on the showroom floor.]

Xoc's focus, Talk to Machines, at tier four gives him an ability called machine companion. The text says you create, but we've decided to take some liberties with this.

Kyle

We've taken so many liberties with this. If you want, if you want the full stats, look on the website, because I've completely changed how companions work.

Tom

Oh, yeah. That's right. Is anything that it says on my sheet right now accurate even?

Kyle

Uh, level three is the accurate part.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

Okay. So, well, you create a level three animate, intelligent machine that accompanies you and acts as you direct—theoretically.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Tom

Ahh, the text goes on to say some mechanical stuff that probably is no longer true. In the baseline game, it can be replaced if it's destroyed, but, it's, we—we're not gonna deal with that, I don't think.

Kyle

This robot is—unless it's like a plot thing where, like, someone's gonna target the robot, in all combat and things he's just going to be, he's going to be safe.

Tom

Yeah, that's reasonable. But yeah, I have a small... *[Hesitating.]* Friend? Question mark?

Hallie (as the small robot)

Fuck you!

Tom

And Hallie will, Hallie will play the small friend because we want to take a page

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out of Predation's book.

[The music stops.]

Kyle

Alright, anything else before I segway?

Tom

I think that was a pretty good cut, since we matched it up with, ah, Misha giving a call.

Ari

Yeah.

Hallie

It worked out really nicely.

Kyle

Alright, so you all get back to the table, you, you sit down, and you hear over the loudspeakers,

Kyle (as Captain Jebediah Ishmael)

[The bell chimes. Smooth, beachy "Muzak" begins to play underneath the announcements.]

Good morning students! I hope you had a good evening. And today, the temperature is 75 degrees, and we are moving northeast at—

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

[Crosstalking, an abrupt interruption.] Alright, listen up you little shits! You don't need to know where we're going! It doesn't matter! What you gotta think about is your fucking classes, alright? So what you gotta do is open up that WingPal—

Kyle

And then a student, like, picks up a WingPal, and you hear VIRGULE say, as the camera shifts over,

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

No! Not you Josie! I don't care if you two are in love or whatever, you got your own WingPal! You got your own classes! Look at your own! Alright, so when you're gonna open up the WingPal, it's gonna tell you where you go, who you see, alright? So I don't want any nonsense about how you're lost! You're gonna follow, it's gonna get you to your classes.

[The music stops. A long pause.]

[Angrily.] Open it already!

Tom

[Stammering.] Xoc will open it, startled by this angry J.A.R.V.I.S.

Hallie

[Dryly.] Yeah, alright.

Kyle

So you open up your WingPals.

[Chipper 8-bit menu music begins to play.]

And each of you gets, like, a little GameBoy style minigame to show you what class you're in. So, it's like, you know, pew pew, pew pew pew!

[Quiet laughter from the party.]

You, you all play Space Invaders.

Emily

Elee will hand hers to someone else to play the game for her.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Emily

And like, glare at it, and then take it back when they're finished.

Tom

Xoc'll do it. Xoc'll play the game for her.

Kyle

Xoc, you go and play Elee's game, and you get...something kind of weird.

Emily

[Strained.] Oh no. [Huffs out an awkward laugh.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Cheerily.] Oh! Elee Badge, it says you're teaching the music class.

Emily (as Elee)

[Incredulous.] I'm what?

[Marching band music begins to play – a band of snare drums, a flute, and the heavy footfalls of a loud bass horn section. The music intensifies and then fades.]

Kyle

Hello! And welcome to the announcement break for Quest Friends Episode 41, Crime and Courtship, Part 6. I'm Kyle, your GM, and our intro and outro music is "Friends" and "Hitoshio," both by Miracle of Sound. We've got two Patreon shoutouts for you today. Again, Patreon shoutouts go to Patreon supporters who support at a five dollar level or above. I've already got the NPCs up here, and one of them's really barking to get started. So let's just get going with that.

Kyle (as Fayz)

Hi. Hi, hi! This is me. This is Fayz! You know, the dog, the one that Elee had in her memory? It's me! I'm the one that's here. So I'm here to shout out Fayz!

[A surprised gasp.] That's the, that's the one that I named after, right? It's not my reflection this time? This is the one I'm actually named after?

[A pause.]

Okay, yeah, I was told this is one I was named after! This is a shout-out for Fayz, who gave me my name, and Fayz just wants to say that no matter who you are, and no matter how you feel, you're just, you're valid how you are!

And what makes you feel comfortable is, is, is good! And it's what you should do, and it's what you should be, and if anyone says anything otherwise, they're a bunch of dingleberries.

[Gasps.] Now I'm really hungry for berries. Is that something dogs can eat?

Kyle

[Quietly, like he's looking it up as they talk.] Berries can dogs eat? Alright. So, according to MadAboutBerries.com, a completely unbiased source, they can.

Kyle (as Fayz)

So, yeah, no, I think I'm going to go eat some berries.

Kyle

Thank you Fayz! Oh, and the last thing, y'all are valid!

Kyle (as Fayz)

Oh, okay.

Kyle (as Soe)

Oh, uh, he just he just ran off. So I guess I, Soe, will go for, uh, will do the next one! So our next one is for Barato, and he wants me to talk about a book that I've been reading lately. It's about a little girl with golden eyes, and she goes on adventures with her dad! And they find lots of treasures, and sometimes it's a little bit scary...but every time they know that they're, they just gotta stick together, and then we'll make it through okay at the end every time, no matter how scary it is! And then they get lots of treasures at the end too, which is really fun. This book is called Piper and the Dad. I really really like it. I can tell that Piper and the Dad love each other a whole lot, and it's just, it's a lot of fun. So thank you so much for having me talk about this book!

Kyle

Uh, thank you so much to our two Patreon supporters for those Patreon shoutouts. I'm actually having a lot of fun doing those. If you're interested in getting a Patreon shout out, you can check us on [Patreon.com/QuestFriends](https://www.patreon.com/QuestFriends), but if that's not the kind of thing you're looking for, don't worry, because we have lots of other ways for you to spend money.

That sounded a lot—that sounded real bad. Okay.

[Slinky casino music begins to play in the background.]

So the first thing I want to mention is that I've released a Roulettia module. It's called Welcome to Swagtacular Roulettia: A Quest Friends Module. It's a twentyish or so

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page Cypher System module, which is the base system that Numenera uses, and it basically lets you play Roulettia! It has basic descriptions about the locations, it has in-depth descriptions for items, NPCs.

If you want to be a vocile, like Soe, I now have mechanics so that you can be that species, or you can be a frogtaur, like Cart.

Kyle (as Cart)

The one who worked in the—

Kyle

I can't do his voice anymore. But Cart the, uh, the newsboy cap frog-man thing. I mean, it's called a frogtaur, but you can be his species as well. There's a lot of really fun stuff in there. If you're at all interested, you can check that out at the link below. It's on Drive-Thru RPG. And again, it's Welcome to Swagtacular Roulettia: A Quest Friends Module.

[The music fades.]

We also have one other big, big thing that isn't out yet, but that you might be interested in. So in September of this year, to celebrate our second anniversary, Quest Friends is going to be doing something completely unlike anything we've done before. We're gonna be releasing a Kickstarter! I can't really tell you the details right now, but if you follow our social media accounts, in particular our Twitter, every Saturday we'll be releasing just a little bit more information about the project using the hashtag Kickstarter Saturday.

It's a really exciting project, it is something that I've wanted to do since we started the show, but we, we, honestly I'm just baffled we're gonna potentially be able to do it in the first place. So keep an eye on that, and if you're listening in the future and you're like, wow, it's September right now, check later episode descriptions. Check our feeds. If the Kickstarter is up, I will have definitely put it as the, like, main tagged post on Twitter. So, please, please, please keep an eye out for that. Finally, I wanted to give name shout outs because we have two more suspects that appear this episode and both of them are named after listeners.

So the first one is named after @HardGoldstone on Twitter, and a second one is named after @Sir_Kent_M on Twitter. I just want to make one thing perfectly clear that I think both of these people are very sweet, and they're very nice, their names just gave me very, very fun ideas for characters that I decided to roll with. So I really, really hope you like your characters, who will be appearing in the second half of this episode.

Okay, that is all that I have for today! If you're following along with the Cookie Two, the next episode of that will release on Monday, July 29th.

[The marching band music begins again.]

And the next episode of our main campaign will be releasing on Monday, August 5th. I will see you then!

[The music ends.]

Emily

So...I'd like to set the scene.

Kyle

Please do! The only scene setting I have is just someone tuning a tuba. *[Makes tuba noises.]*

Emily

[Laughter.] From now on, you're not allowed to insert any actual tuba noises. You have to make them all.

Kyle

[Tuba noises continue.]

Emily

Um, Elee...*[Laughter.]*

Kyle

Keep going!

Emily

[Talking over Kyle's continued low tuba noises. The noises are low and inconsistent.] Elee stands in front of these students, and is completely silent, staring at them with huge, horrified, deer-in-the-headlight eyes.

Emily (as Elee)

[In a hesitant, almost robotic voice.] Hello, ch-children. Of...my class.

Tom

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as the class)

[In one slightly horrifying, multi-throated voice.] Hello!

Kyle (as Everett)

[Scoffs.] I'm not a kid.

Emily (as Elee)

I am here to teach you the music.

Kyle

[Tuba noises intensify.]

And then you just hear a fish voice go,

Kyle (as Meeghan)

Woo! Music!

Emily (as Elee)

[Stilted and awkward.] I am glad to see you are excited for me to teach you the music that I know, 'cause I'm a teacher. I, I, I do teaching. I, I do the professor—well, I don't...yeah.

Kyle

[Strained.] Oh no.

Hallie

Awww!

Emily

Yep. And enlightenment will strike.

Emily (as Elee)

Why don't one of you tell me what *you* have learned?

Kyle

And suddenly you just see a little flappy arm wave up, and you hear,

Kyle (as Meeghan)

[Excitedly.] Ooh! Ohhhh! Oh oh ohh!

Emily (as Elee)

[More confidently.] You!

Kyle (as Meeghan)

Um, okay!

Kyle

And Meeghan raises up and says,

Kyle (as Meeghan)

[Cheery, upbeat tuba music begins to play.] Hi everyone! My name is Meeghan.

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I come from the sea kingdom of Ghan, and, uh, a fun fact about me is that...I really like music!

[Exuberant laughter.]

Emily

[Conspiratorially.] And then Elee gets another strike of inspiration on how to do this teaching thing.

Kyle

[Hesitant but amused.] Oh no.

Emily

[Smug.] Get-to-know-you activities.

Kyle and Hallie

[Laughter.]

Emily

They always take up so much time! Nobody wants to do them, but it's great for the teacher.

Emily (as Elee)

[Still unsure of herself.] Say hi to two other students and show them the instrument you play!

Kyle

There's a flurry of activity and you can see people have quickly taken out their bricks and are marking them down. This actually, this takes up the whole hour. People are very thorough about it. And so you just see all these people moving around, and they're just punctuated by Meeghan who still seems to be, like, practicing something? So you just hear, *[Inconsistent high and low tuba noises.]*

[The tuba music stops.]

You just hear, like, a tuba playing music to the background of all this, all this stuff. And at the end you just get, like, pelted by a pile of bricks as they all show that they did their work with everyone.

But there are two things I want to point out. The first one is in between bursts of Meeghan tuning and playing her tuba, you could swear you hear the rustling of paper.

Emily

Okay, I would like to try to get a peek at what Meeghan is reading, because I have a sneaking suspicion of where she got whatever she has.

Tom

[Distressed exhalation.]

Kyle

I want you to roll me a perception or a stealth.

Emily

I'm going to pretend like I'm a teacher who is wandering around, and feels that it's important that the students are doing this activity.

Kyle

Cool, cool, cool! Roll deception then.

Emily

Okay, great. Um...

Kyle

You have any bonuses in that?

Emily

I am trained in deception. *[Dice roll.]* Ooh! *[Excitedly.]* Seventeen!

Ari

Wooo!

Kyle

Yes, you see a piece of sheet music for a song called the Sunshine Junction.

Emily

[Laughter.] Ohh.

I would like to, and I don't know if I need to roll a separate deception for this, but I'd like to go in, in the guise of, like, checking to see what Meeghan's playing on her tuba to, like, kind of talk quietly to her.

Emily (as Elee)

Meeghan.

Kyle

The papers quickly get shuffled into the tuba itself.

Kyle (as Meeghan)

[Stammering nervously.] Uh, yeah! Hi. Hi, Professor, uh, Elee. It's really great to see you again. I'll be honest, you didn't quite look like the professor type! Not that it was an insult just like, uh... *[Trails off.]*

Emily (as Elee)

[Amused.] Surprise Professor!

Kyle (as Meeghan Fishwife)

[Chuckles.] Well, I can stay in the class, right? That wasn't...insulting...

Emily (as Elee)

No, you can, you can, you can stay in the class, Meeghan. Actually, I just wanted to let you know you might want to hide those papers better next time.

Kyle

I'm gonna say roll to intimidate. Yeah, roll—how do you want Meeghan to feel?

Emily

[A little defensive.] But I'm not trying to intimidate Meeghan!

Kyle

Oh, you're trying to be supportive?

Emily

Well, I don't think that it's a good thing that they're not allowed to have papers on! But Elee will kind of want, on multiple levels, to establish, like, a positive connection with Meeghan because Soe really, really likes Meeghan, and so Elee wants to be, like, supportive of Soe having new friends.

Kyle

[Quietly, amused.] Are you just being the cool mom? I must be my daughter's friend's friend?

Emily

No, she just, she doesn't wanna intimidate.

Kyle

Okay.

Emily

And that's why.

Kyle

Okay, in that case I'm going to say it works, and Meeghan says,

Kyle (as Meeghan Fishwife)

Oh, okay! Thank you Professor! I'll be more careful about the...bricks.

Kyle

And she goes to wink, but she doesn't—varjellen, in my world, can't blink? So you, just a head nod to her side. And you are now at, you now have one heart with Meeghan.

Tom

[Singing the "Persona" bonding theme a little ominously.] Dun-dun. Da-dun-dun.

Emily

As I, as I begin to flee the group of students again, I want to tell Meeghan too, at her wink.

Emily (as Elee)

[Fondly.] You tried.

Kyle (as Meeghan)

[Boisterous laughter.]

Kyle

I'm not sick, I'm never gonna get sick of this laugh. Uh, who will get sick of that laugh, though, is Everett, and that's the one last thing I want to touch on before we move on is, you notice after you've gotten all the bricks, and everyone's gotten it, and everyone's gotten it back to you...

[The gentle, melancholy music that played when Mauve and Mako departed Fasten plays softly.]

That Everett has been sulking in the corner the whole time, and just staring at the door.

Emily

[Uncertain.] Well, yeah, and I wanted to try to talk to him after class, but I A: don't think we have time, and B: think he wouldn't be receptive even though I really want to talk to him.

Kyle

And C: by the time the bell,

[00:30:00]

which is just VIRGULE going,

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

BEEP!

Kyle

By the time that rings, he's already gone.

[The melancholy music fades into chipper 8-Bit WingPal music.]

Alright, so, pew pew-pew pew-pew-pew! So we're spiraling around, we've got three more games being played. Xoc is back on his, as are uh, Misha and Hop. Hop, you'd imagine Hop would be doing well, but—

Hallie

[Incredulous.] Would you? *[Laughter.]*

Kyle

I feel like, the thing is, I feel like Hop has a very slow but very strong learning curve? Where he's sitting there, and you just keep dying and you're, like, trying to figure out, alright. What are the specific patterns of how this works?

Hallie

I thought it was Space Invaders!

Kyle

It is.

Tom

It's Dark Souls now.

Kyle

Yeah, you get the Dark Souls of Space Invaders.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom

[Laughing harder.]

How fucking dare you say this on the podcast that will go on the internet Kyle.

Kyle

[Laughter.] So the, the end—and if you want, you could probably ask Misha for help.

Hallie

Yeah. Actually he will probably just—has Misha, is Misha clearly winning at the game?

Kyle

Misha, how are you doing at your Space Invaders?

Ari

Um. Well, I imagine that Misha is probably doing well, because they're really enjoying it, but I don't know. It's up to you to decide.

Kyle

Yeah, Misha's doing well. I'm going to say Misha hasn't won yet just because Misha has recognized the win condition and wants to keep playing.

Ari

Yes, I actually thought that if there's like a bonus level or something Misha's playing that.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

The thing is that if Misha is still actively playing their game, he would hand it to Xoc, who is finished.

Kyle

Okay. So you're all playing your Space Invaders, which in this world is called Zhev Clean-up. It takes place in the Zhev Gardens, and you're "discovering," with air quotes, the Zhev. You'll hand yours to Xoc, but, uh, I'm not sure how responsive Xoc will be to that, because Xoc, you just got your class.

[A bright, 8-bit victory noise.]

What are you taking?

Tom (as Xoc)

I...um, Simon.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hmm.

Tom (as Xoc)

What does...what does physical education mean?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Oh, it means, um, like sports and activities and, and physical stuff.

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh. I guess it never occurred to me that's a thing you would learn at a school.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yeah. It's a requirement to make sure the kids are active. It's like the rest of the school, kinda...

Tom (as Xoc)

[Indignant.] I'm a very active boy! I don't need to do more things.

Emily

[Trying not to laugh.] I'm a very active boy.

Ari

Very active boy!

[A shrill sports whistle blows.]

Kyle

Okay. So Tom, I want to, uh, to roll me a might check.

Tom

My dice have been very good to me lately. *[Dice roll.]*

Hallie

Never say that.

Tom

[Pained.] I got a six.

Hallie

[Insistent.] Never say that!

Ari

It's the six!

Hallie

You got sixed!

Ari

[Laughter.] You got sixed!

Kyle

Cool. So. Okay, so there are about fourteen aneens in your class. You outpace one of them, and it's just the one that isn't that into it. It's just walking. So Xoc, you are... *[Panting.]*

Slowly making your way around this, uh, track. So you are in the gymnatorium.

Tom

[Deep, weary sigh.]

Kyle

A bunch of the cleaning bots...

Tom

[Sighs again.]

Kyle

Have reformed, and they make kind of an impromptu track, and you're running the laps before class starts proper.

Tom

[Deeply distressed.] Before class starts?!

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

You're being outpaced by these aneens in gym shorts and with blinking ear tags who are just running past you, just laughing all to themselves. And how is Xoc feeling? How is our active boy doing?

Tom (as Xoc)

[Strained, panting.] I...I didn't have to run for my life as much as I have right now. *[Groans and pants.]*

Ari

I want to imagine that he hasn't even done a quarter of a lap. It's just like literally...

Tom (as Xoc)

[Crosstalking.] I don't feel very...these aneens are like, built for running on the plains!

Tom

Oh God, I actually made myself lightheaded with my heavy breathing. Woof.

Tom (as Xoc)

These aneens are like, they're, they're, they were born to run, run around on grasslands. Right? So Xoc, Xoc is telling himself this, like, it's, this is not, this is a normal occurrence for a human to be outrun by an aneen. That's, that's a thing that happens. The machinery is in his brain, not in his legs.

Kyle

[Extremely cool, bluesy rock music begins to play. It's very chill.]

What's not a normal occurrence is for you to be out run by another human who just appears to be speed walking, because in addition to the aneens, you see, with his kind of like hands in his pockets, you see this dudebro wearing a polo shirt and a monocle that is really just half of a pair of sunglasses just strolling around, like, looking at his WingPal like it's a, like it's a cell phone.

Tom

Xoc, between gasps for breath, which I'll stop ASMRing into my mic, is just gonna be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Who—who is this tacky yet strong boy?

Kyle

You just hear the pack of aneens go,

[00:35:00]

Kyle (as the pack of aneens)

[Frustrated.] Aneen!

Tom (as Xoc)

[Quietly, confused.] They—can't they talk with the ear tags?

Kyle

I haven't decided yet if they can talk.

Tom

That wasn't—that was Xoc just in character being just generally confused.

Kyle

And then as you say that you hear a voice say,

Kyle (as the dudebro)

Yeah, bro, they can! But sheep like this like staying with what they know.

Kyle

And you turn up and you see the dudebro looking down at you, uh, because I'm assuming—I just, in my head Xoc has kind of just like, like fallen on the ground from exhaustion, and he, like, lazily puts his hand down and he's like,

Kyle (as the dudebro/Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Sir Kentrim, Esquire.

Tom

Xoc will take the hand and stand up straighter, and be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

I—my name is Xoc. *[Groans.]* I'm really quite an impressive wizard, just not used to running. *[Huffs out a breath.]* You seem to do this physical education thing more often in your life. *[Huffs.]*

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Yeah, a bit, a few reps here and there, you know, just keep my body as strong as my brain. I'm kind of, uh, an intellectual of sorts. You know, I'm a, I'm a thinker, free spirit, not like these sheep, but, uh, I gotta keep the, uh, body toned.

Tom

[Trying not to laugh.] Xoc will look the body up and down, not, not so much as like, like, a checking it out thing. But just as like, is this what they speak of when they speak of bods?

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Still panting slightly.] Well, um, I'm new to this whole school in the sky thing. But um, I wouldn't mind talking more with a...*[Uncertain.]* Free thinker? Such as yourself.

Kyle

And he just points at you and says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Now that's the spirit man. Nah, you want to think free, you know, these, these are fake exercise guys don't realize that you gotta be toned in the mind as well as the pecs.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom

Also, as a side note, Kyle, when Kyle does the Sir Kentrim character, he has just the shittiest asshole face I've ever seen and it's, it's, it's upsetting me so much more than I expected it would.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Kyle

[A sharp whistle blows.]

Alright, and then suddenly you hear another whistle and all aneens and the robots go to the front of the class and Sir Kentrim says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Hey, it'll be later though, buddy. Let's go meet the new teacher. I hope he's cool.

Kyle

And so you walk up, and you make your way to the front of the classroom and you see a handful of things. On one hand an empty space with nothing but a rope and nothing to catch you if you fall.

Tom

[Quietly.] Nooo.

Kyle

But that's only the second scariest thing in the room.

Tom

[Pained.] Nooo.

Kyle

[The low, ominous notes of the Jagged Dream theme begins to play.]

Because next to it you see your professor. She stands on tall heels with a green professional business suit.

Tom

[Strained noise.]

Kyle

And she turns over to all of you, and your professor, Vera Layeni, says,

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

Thank you for your patience, students. Today, we are going to go through the strife of physical education. Through combat, we are going to evolve our bodies, and we are going to change into better forms of ourselves. And to demonstrate our growth, we are going to start with—

Kyle

And she points to the rope.

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

The rope.

Kyle

And you just hear the aneens, which would normally just go, "Aneen!" go,

Kyle (as the aneens)

[Chanting with increasing intensity.] The rope. The rope! The rope!

[Louder.] The rope! The rope!

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

[Amused.] Now, it might look intimidating to some of you now.

Kyle

And and she looks at you, Xoc.

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

It is a very nasty fall. But we learn to pick ourselves up again, and by the end of the semester, I promise you, you'll either be able to climb that rope or you'll have a very sturdy back. Do we have any volunteers?

Kyle

And all the aneens immediately raise their hand, and Sir Kentrim just looks at you, and looks at them and like, scoffs, like,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Huh. Losers.

Tom

Uhhh...Xoc. Xoc knows what he has to do, only he doesn't know if he has the strength to do it. Will you help me Han Solo?

Kyle

Do you want to—you've got one heart with Sir Kentrim. Do you want to lose that heart by becoming a poser like everyone else?

Hallie

Hah!

Tom

Oh, I think I misread the situation. Xoc will, trying to follow his cue, cross his arms and be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Hah! Yeah. I have nothing to prove to this crowd of aneens, and our new professor, Vera Layeni.

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Dude, you know, the professor's name?

Tom (as Xoc)

Umm...it was on. Oh!

Tom

[Slightly sleazy music starts to play—our very active boy is about to be a slightly fraudulent boy.]

Xoc has a moment of brilliance.

Tom (as Xoc)

Yeah. Now, I didn't do this myself, but some people I know definitely got into a fight with the teacher.

[00:40:00]

Yeah, we've, we've fought teachers before, we'll do it again. I hear it was a really tough fight, too, someone hit the teacher with a chair.

Kyle

Roll me deception.

Ari

It isn't technically a deception.

Hallie

It's not quite a lie!

Kyle

That's true. Roll me—

Tom

I'm taking a penalty regardless.

Kyle

A stretching of the truth, an artist's reinterpretation. That's what we'll call this roll.

Tom

Heart of the cards! Heart of the cards! *[Dice roll.]* It occurs to me I could have spent effort on this roll.

How's an eleven do?

[The music fades.]

Kyle

Do you have any XP you want to use on that?

Tom

Do I? That's a good question. I do. So I'll, I'll burn my 1 XP. And this time, this time let's use some of my copious amounts of effort. In fact, I can just spend intellect effort for free. So let's actually spend two levels of efforts on this, which costs me a single point of intellect.

[Dice roll.]

So it's a 10 this time, but now I have two levels of effort making it better. So it's good now, right?

Kyle

Sir Kentrim's going to take his monocle, and he's going to put it down, and he's going to kind of raise his eyebrow at you.

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Dude. Try hards like that aren't gonna be the popular kids that get on the proligarchy, trust me.

Kyle

And he puts his monocle back and he leans back.

Tom

Xoc will do, like, a pouty face, be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

[Sulry, pouty noise.] I did the human custom thing of the bad boy!

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

He says that under his breath, even though I shouted it just now.

Kyle

And either because she saw that you were stewing and wanted to let you sit in it, or because she didn't want to appear too suspicious, Vera actually doesn't call on you first. And she lets the aneens go, and you just see this dog pile of fourteen aneens try to climb their way to the top of the, uh, rope.

Tom

[Slightly horrified.] Oh god! No!

Kyle

Really, they're just climbing each other like World War Z.

Tom

Their arms are so small!

Kyle

[Laughter.] Don't do this aneens!

Kyle

It doesn't work out for 'em. And so we're, uh, we're wrapping up. We're almost done. I mean, you still got your heart with Sir Kentrim because you--

Tom

[Crosstalking quietly in the background.] I am thou, thou art I.

Kyle

--you stood your ground. But before we go, there is one more thing that you must do.

You walk up, and you just look up at this rope that's so high in the air. It doesn't matter how tall it is, because to you, it feels like a skyscraper, and she just leans over to you and she quietly says,

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

You know, there are worse ways to learn how effective our methods are.

Tom (as Xoc)

What if they don't though!

Tom

[Trying not to laugh.] Nice once Xoc. Got 'em real good!

Emily and Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

She's gonna, she's just gonna nudge you forward and say,

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

Well, you cannot know until you have tried. So please, Xoc. Try.

Tom

[Slightly panicked.] Xoc do an audible gulp and try to climb the rope.

Kyle

What's your method? Before we get into this, I want to know your method for climbing this rope.

Tom

[Bewildered.] M-method? Is there a method to climbing? Actually, that, I feel like that's almost a thing Xoc would say in character.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Stammering slightly.] Method to climbing...you just, you just, you just put the hand above the other hand, and you do the feets, and, uh, the, your knees, you hold the rope and you wrap, just you, you...you...you're trying to hold on to the rope real tight with all parts of your body and you just pull yourself up, right?

Emily

[Stifled laughter.]

Kyle

So, you know how in video games, sometimes they're like, oh here all the options you have, but you haven't fit certain requirements. So certain options are locked off. Tom's speech just locked off the option that said, climb the rope using intellect.

Emily and Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

And so the only option left is climb the rope using might.

Tom

[Resigned.] Well, I mean that was—I never assumed there would be an option to climb using intellect, because this is a rope. This is a thing that scares even Tom, the real person.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Tom

This is just awful. I almost feel like Kyle tailored this nightmare for me.

Kyle

[Chanting.] Climb that rope!

Tom

Alright, so I would like...how much is that?

Emily

Are you seeing how many levels of effort you can use to consume your entire might pool?

Tom

[Sheepishly, like a kid with their hand in the cookie jar.] Yes...maybe?

Emily and Tom

[Laughter.]

Tom

I could use, I could do four levels of effort, consuming all nine of my might points but...

Kyle

No, Tom. Tom, please. Please do it.

Tom

[Hesitant.] You want me to use all of my effort?

Kyle

Yep.

Tom

Okay, then. Xoc spends four levels of effort, consuming all nine of his might points. He will be, regardless of what happens here, he will be impaired at the end of this.

[Chanting.] Heart of the cards. Heart of the cards! [Dice roll.]

[Deeply relieved.] A fifteen.

Kyle

Xoc, how does it feel as you triumphantly climb this rope?

Tom

[Triumphant music begins to swell.]

So Xoc, Xoc perhaps heard some sort of triumphant music in his head. Maybe I'll Make a Man Out of You from Mulan. Perhaps it was just...oh, I swear I had another song in my head. Whatever, I've got nothing. But Xoc goes into this

[00:45:00]

sort of fugue state. He doesn't really remember what happened between the bottom and the top of the rope, but at some point his aching limbs pull him to the top of the rope, and he's free at long last.

[The music stops.]

Kyle

So, who do you want to give your other GM intrusion point to?

Tom

I would like to give it to Hopper.

Hallie

Yay!

Tom

Because I just, I want Hopper to have nice things.

Hallie

I was certain you were going to say it's a pity XP, so that was nice.

Kyle

[The unsettling, low music begins to play once more.]

So, a series of expressions cross Vera's face. First, bemusement. Then surprise, then curiosity, then almost pride in Xoc. Xoc, who embraced the conflict he has with her, and used it to force himself beyond what he probably would have normally.

But then he gets to the top, and she sees how tired and impaired he is, and just sadness and pity crosses her face. Because the thing about climbing a rope, Xoc, is that you have to have the strength to climb back down again.

So you want to give me...either figure out a way to get down, or you got to give me a roll.

Tom

[The music stops.]

[Immediately.] Far step. I far step back down.

Hallie

[Faint laughter.]

Kyle

There's a silence, and then Vera just says,

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

Alright, everyone. Good work today for most of you. We will assemble again Tomorrow.

Kyle

And she'll turn over to you, Xoc, before she leaves, and she'll just say,

Kyle (as Vera Layeni)

I know we're not on the best terms, but I'm a little disappointed. You need to commit to your actions in full, or one day, you will fall without your magic to protect you.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Firmly.] Your approval means nothing to me.

Tom

And Xoc will leave on that fucking mic drop.

Hallie

As Xoc is walking, from the background,

Hallie (as the small robot)

You know, I gotta admit, I didn't think you could do it.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Xoc makes a startled noise—the sound you'd make if you turned a corner and something made you jump. Upbeat, quirky accordion and xylophone music begins to play in the background.]

Hallie (as the small robot)

Alright, you just ruined all the cred you had. I give, I gave you a chance, and you consistently disappoint, and I've met you twice.

Tom

Xoc is, like, that thing where someone's like sort of sunk down, so they're like, kind of crouching and their arms are on their knees just panting heavily. Like, Xoc is drenched in sweat. He doesn't look good right now. He's like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh, hi. *[Pants.]* I oh, I think I need some water soon. I—

Hallie (as the small robot)

Yeah, that can wait. Uh, I have a thing to say. *[Very reluctantly.]* Uh, I'm not saying that I...maybe overreacted earlier, but maybe I reacted over what was called for. So, um, I'm so...sor....I apologize.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie (as the small robot)

So you said that um, I was broken on the street? And you fixed me. So, um, I guess...

Hallie

And his little robot mouth is struggling to say the next thing.

Hallie (as the small robot/Ness)

[Slowly, stammering.] Th-th-thank you. Ugh. Anyway, my name is Ness.

Kyle

[The bright, 8-bit WingPal music begins to play again.] Pew-pew-pew, pew-pew! We're back. We're back again. We're at our final two games. Have you, have you given it to Xoc to finish for you then?

Hallie

I absolutely have.

Kyle

Okay. So Xoc, who is I guess true gamer boy now.

Hallie

[Dryly.] He's a very active boy.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

So, uh, Xoc finally, finally finishes, and you hear,

[A victory chime plays.]

And I'm going to let you decide, Xoc. You can either read it out or you can hand it over to, uh, to Hallie.

Tom

Ah, Xoc will hand it back to Hopper.

Hallie

Alright, Hop will look at the WingPal and go,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Cooking. Yeah, okay, that could be fun. Maybe. I don't know.

Ari

Misha's gonna hear that and say,

Ari (as Misha)

[Curious.] Oh, you have a class to learn how to prepare foods?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yeah.

Ari (as Misha)

Huh. Well that surely something completely unappealing to me as I do not eat.

[Laughter from the party.]

And cannot in fact taste the food, compliments of humans, so I would not know how to even begin to that. Oh, I sure hope I got into either Elee's music class, or learn the physics of education with Xoc.

Ari

And then they are gonna continue playing their bonus level.

[A swooshing 'scene change' sound effect plays.]

Kyle

Alright, so Hop and Misha, you're both making your way to cooking class. It is on, uh, the main deck. It's actually pretty short walk. It's right next to the kitchen.

[An upbeat synth-pop tune begins to play in the background, maybe more reflective of Hop's mood than Misha's.]

And, uh, you open the door into the class and you see a variety of a little cooking stations.

Hallie

Is it like a science lab?

Kyle

Yeah, it's like a science lab basically is how I was thinking. Science lab, you each have your own cooking stations. They are filled with, like, American cheese and crackers.

Hallie

That somehow survived eight apocalypses?

Tom

A billion years.

Kyle

I mean American cheese lasts forever.

Hallie

[Exasperated.] God. Fine.

Kyle

But essentially, there's a lot of, like, just you know, those very packaged, processed foods. And then, uh, you don't recognize any of the students with the exception of two that stick out to you. The professor doesn't look like they're here yet. You see L'Adrien is actually in cooking class, and they've set up at a station, and then you also see, sporting a newly duct-taped on blond mustache, Inspector

[00:50:00]

Cecilios is also hard at work investigating his ingredients.

So, uh, yeah, let me know where you, uh, where you park yourselves.

Hallie (as Hopper)

You have any strong feelings regarding a cooking station?

Ari (as Misha)

Uh, I have strong feelings regarding me being in the class. I was hoping that the professor of this class was here so that I could explain the potential misunderstandings of an android that cannot cook or taste food being in a class that necessitates those talents. *[Upset.]* I truly do not care for any of this.

Ari

And Misha has been, um, dragging their feet all the way towards the class.

Hallie

Aww!

Ari

They are, I think it's like, the most visibly, like, actually upset that they have been since they joined the party.

Hallie

Seeing Misha legitimately upset, he's like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Trying to be comforting.] You know, you might like it, you know, cooking is kind of fun. I mean, for those of us who can taste things and do need to eat, sometimes things that aren't so good on their own are better when they're paired with something else. You know, when you make it into something else.

Ari (as Misha)

I suppose—

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Crosstalking.] For those of us who need to eat.

Ari (as Misha)

I, I suppose so. I was not meaning to insult you or any human being on this class. I just do not understand the mixing of the foods, and I do not truly care for understanding how to do so. But I suppose if the professor isn't here, I can wait until they are, and then I can attempt to potentially switch classes.

Hallie (as Hopper)

If that'll make you happier.

Ari (as Misha)

I believe so, yes.

Ari

Misha's just gonna go to, like, the farthest away station and like, slump down.

Hallie

Hop will follow.

Kyle

So Misha, you walk ahead. And I don't know if you notice this or not, but Hop, you're suddenly stopped, and you hear a voice say,

Kyle (as Cecilos)

[A jazzy, almost Pink Panther-esque mystery tune begins to play.]

Oh, Invest-Investigator Accountant. If you can come over to my station, I would very much like to discuss your findings over this past evening.

Hallie (as Hopper)

My, my find—my findings?

Kyle (as Cecilos)

Oh, of course! Nighttime is a great time for research, and I can tell from your eyesight that you have spent many, many hours up. I'm assuming very hard at research with your investigations, of course.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Speaking carefully, uncertain.] I discovered a new thing last night. Yeah. Yeah, I do investigating.

Kyle

And by this point you've gone back to Cecilos' station.

Hallie

He's just like, yanked Hopper back. Yeah, that's fine. Hopper has no resistance.

Kyle (as Cecilos)

Yes, accountant detective. So I heard that you found something very interesting. So what was that thing that you have, uh, you found?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Okay, so it's not like, a clue but uh, you know, I'm still not entirely sure I can trust you. So... *[Trails off.]*

Kyle (as Cecilos)

I'm an inspector! You understand.

Kyle

And he slowly rips off the mustache.

Kyle (as Cecilos)

It is me! Inspector Cecilos.

Emily

[A snort followed by laughter.]

Kyle (as Cecilos)

I'm the inspector that you're working with.

Kyle

And uh, he puts it back on.

Kyle (as Cecilos)

This is just a disguise. I am still the same person. I understand that is very difficult to follow, but it is me, and you can trust me.

Hallie (as Hopper)

No, I, I—I know.

[Laughter from the party.]

Uh, look. I, I won't do anything to hinder your investigation. You're probably on the up and up, but I, I feel kind of weird about sharing any findings with a stranger. So I'm just gonna go not do that over there.

Ari

Aw!

Kyle (as Cecilos)

Oh, okay. I completely understand, just—no. I completely understand your need. Uh, just...

Hallie

[Amused and exasperated.] Oh, now Hopper feels bad.

Kyle

He, he looks a little sad, and he's like,

Kyle (as Cecilos)

I just, I, uh, I, no, I planned for us to work together. I didn't want to add you to my suspect list. But if that is the kind of suspicions that you want to do and you want to be added onto my suspect list, I can absolutely do that.

Hallie (as Hopper)

That's not quite—that's not what I said! No, I didn't mean to offend, just, you can't be too careful in this line of work.

Kyle (as Cecilos)

I, I understand that you cannot be too careful, but you have to understand the importance of allies as well. I didn't understand that until some years ago, but now that I have very close allies that I work with, it has really changed my life.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Do you have a team with you on the ship?

Kyle (as Cecilos)

My, my team is, my team is always with me. Yes.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hopper, like, looks around to see if there's, if he's, like, visibly with a posse, or if he's referring to like, a, like a phone or like a Bluetooth thing or something.

Kyle

No, all you see, he, it looks like he is pointing to himself when he says my team.

Hallie

Okay.

Kyle

He's like pointing to his chest.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Look, um, maybe if we got to know each other better we could work together more effectively. I don't know how many people are supposed to be to a cooking station, but do you want to come join me and my friend over there?

Kyle (as Cecilos)

[With increasing intensity.] Join you at your cooking station? Investigations? Multiples of us together? Investigating the food? Going on the investigation of how to put food together. That's the best way to learn investigations! I will happily do that. But it seems like your friend is preoccupied. Maybe we should stay here for this time.

Hallie

Is Misha still pouting in the corner?

Kyle

Let's go over to Misha. So Misha, you make your way to your station and you're pouting.

Ari

They haven't even noticed that Hop has been yanked back. They are just really upset.

Kyle

And suddenly, uh, you, you notice that there—

Ari

[Crosstalking.] Oh—

Kyle

[Crosstalking.] Is there something you want to do?

Ari

Well, no, I was just saying like, if there's something, like, that obviously doesn't match together at their station, like, I don't know, cilantro and, like, chocolate, they're just like, putting it together, like.

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

Just already starting cooking.

Kyle

So you're slamming it together, and you just hear a voice lean over
[00:55:00]
to you and say,

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Ooh, cilantro and chocolate, a particularly devious combination.

Ari

Misha will turn around and say,

Ari (as Misha)

Oh! Salutations, L'Adrien with an apostrophe. I will be quite honest, I have not an idea of what am I doing, but I believe that combining these foods together is what you humans term cooking. So, I have made my first food!

Ari

And then they'll show the concoction to L'Adrien.

Emily

[Crosstalking under her breath delightedly.] I have made my first food!

Kyle

Uh, they're gonna look at you and just grab their spoon and say,

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Might I?

Ari (as Misha)

Oh, certainly! I do not know how well it will taste, but you certainly can be my first, uh, taster.

Kyle

Alright, they dip in the spoon and they put it in their mouth, and then they sour up and they say,

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

This is absolutely atrocious. *[Strangely impressed.]* Raw, impressive cruelty lies within this concoction, not similar to dark magics. You're not familiar with those at all, are you?

Ari (as Misha)

Uh, well, I do not believe I am. I suppose you could teach me more about that. I am confused, as you seem approving of my cooking even though you said it was atrocious. So, you're certainly a very curious individual.

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

[Chuckles.] To make things good, you have to know how to make them bad, and to understand esoterics you have to understand all sides of them. You...do you know...

Kyle

He's just going to cut to the chase and say,

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

I'm just going to cut to the chase. I heard the companion you were with last night is a Nano. Might you have those abilities as well?

Ari (as Misha)

Oh! I'm, I am also a Nano.

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Yes, I could sense that.

Kyle

[Haunting, almost choral music begins to play.]

And, um, suddenly Misha, you see around you, like, a rainbow coloring of light, and they say,

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Almost like a radiant light, surrounding you.

Kyle

And the light leaves from you and it extends out into his hand, and, um, they turn into a pair of tickets.

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

These are very fake tickets for a very real event. If you and your companion were interested, I think you in particular would make, oh, the most devious of opponents.

Kyle

And he sets the ticket down in front of you.

Ari

Uh, can I, can Misha like, inspect the tickets? Like I want to see what this event is.

Kyle

Yes, so you go to touch it and it disappears, and it, like your hand goes through it. It looks like this is almost an illusion.

Tom

[Wryly.] Almost an illusion.

Kyle

And it seems to be for an event being held in a room. Let me find what room in the...

Tom

I sort of want it to be in the courtyard.

Ari

Oooh, that sounds fun.

Tom

That's what I personally, as a human, and also I said that while leaning way away from the mic, I do apologize.

Kyle

Oh, that's fine. So you see tickets for an event in the courtyard tonight called Nano Fight Club.

Ari

[A little startled.] Oh.

Kyle

And then it might say, it might at the bottom, all kinds of characters welcome.

Ari

[Laughing a little awkwardly.] Uh, Misha would look at that and say,

Ari (as Misha)

Oh! A club! That sounds fun. I believe I could go, uh, and I could bring my other companions as well. Are you going to be in this event?

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Well, my body will be there but I don't think L'Adrien will be.

Ari (as Misha)

[Uncertain.] Uh, that is an interesting...do you, could you explain what that means?

Kyle (as L'Adrien)

Come tonight, and I promise you'll find the truest villain on the ship.

Ari (as Misha)

Hmm...I will do so then.

Kyle

L'Adrien walks away.

Ari

I was just going to say that as Misha watches him walk away, they kind of, like, squint a little, and then they, like, they're like thinking of something that would like, look good with that walking? Like, uh, stance, and then like, just make a mental note of bringing something specific to give L'Adrien later.

Kyle

Alright, so you acclimate yourself in class. Hop, are you going to stay with—what are you going to do now that you see L'Adrien has left Misha.

Hallie

Um, now that L'Adrien has left Misha, Hop's going to say,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Look, my friend isn't really excited about this class, so I think I should partner up with them at least for the first day. But again, I don't know how many people are supposed to be at a cooking station, so you, you could just join us? We could be a team of three?

Kyle (as Cecilos)

I-I would really like that.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[A little awkwardly.] Okay! Good! Yeah, let's, uh, Misha?

Hallie

Leading Cecilos over to the back.

Hallie (as Hopper)

You remember Cecilos? Um, he's going to cook with us.

Ari (as Misha)

[Lost in thought a little.] Oh! Salutations, Inspector Cecilos. You're very welcome to cook with Simon Scotch as I watch.

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

I made efforts to include you!

Ari (as Misha)

I have already cooked my concoction. I don't believe I need to do anything else

Ari

And they are going to just show their, uh, cilantro filled with chocolate.

Kyle

Cecilos is going to say,

Kyle (as Cecilos)

Oh! You have already figured out the mystery of this cooking class? Very interesting.

[01:00:00]

Kyle

And he dips his finger in and licks it, and says,

Kyle (as Cecilos)

Oh, there is something quite sinister on this boat indeed!

Kyle

And so you get ready for class, and after a few moments the door slams open.

[Bagpipes begin to play.]

And this furious middle-aged man with a, like, a rock-like face, bald head, and a bushy golden beard comes storming in and he gets up into class and he says,

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

Alright! None of you students want to be in this class and frankly, I didn't want to teach it either! My name is Professor Garry Goldstone and you can call me NOTHING. Alright? I'm gonna run this class, and you, none of you pipsqueaks are gonna make a squeak, you got that?

Alright, so the first thing we gotta do is we gotta take our ingredients and—

[The bagpipes stop abruptly.]

Kyle

And he suddenly gets quiet, and Goldstone, Professor Garry Goldstone, turns and he looks to Hop.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

Well now, look what the seski dragged in.

Hallie

Hopper, as soon as this man walked into the door, has been like fixing his collar slowly like farther up his face, and attempts to make him look slightly different.

Ari (as Misha)

[Startled.] You know Professor Nothing?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Sheepishly but trying to play it cool.] Um, we've crossed paths. It was a long time ago.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

[Closing theme, "Hitoshio" by Miracle of Sound, begins.]

A long time ago...feels like yesterday.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Does it?

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

That I caught the no-good, rootin' tootin', book-thieving nemesis of the University of Qi. Everyone, meet our most prolific criminal: Hopper Scotch.

[Ending theme music intensifies.]

Kyle

[Theme music fades.]

Realigning the, uh, the common metal neurons, uh—

Tom

Uh-huh.

Kyle

To, to create...

Tom

[Whispering dramatically.] Life.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

To create synapses between the cells. Um...

Tom

Don't you dare out-jargon me, Kyle.

Hallie

He's not though! He's just naming words that exist.

Kyle

I'm just trying to like, do—

Ari

[Crosstalking.] Are you trying to do a personal attack against, like...

Kyle

I'm trying to do neuroscience as hard as I can.

Ari

Yeah, this is just a personal attack.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom

Tell us Ari, tell us of the AI neuroscience.

Kyle

You just use a whole lot of, uh, Sonic the Hedgehog protein. That's very important.

Tom

[Laughter.] That's a real thing that exists.

Ari

[Scoffing.] It's Sonic Hedgehog, Kyle.

Hallie

Yeah, Kyle.

Kyle

Hey, hey, hey, hey, one billion years? He got the "the." If, only after the great Sonic Copyright War of the Fifth World. Many lives were lost.

Ari

And, and so I assume that this screwdriver now, it's just a screwdriver, even though technically it's a sonic screwdriver?

[Laughter and "eyyyys" from the party.]

Hallie

Ari wins the jargon battle. She just wins.

Tom

[Impressed.] Damn.

Kyle

Also, Hallie. I'm just gonna let you know, I have no planned time for Ness to come back.

Hallie

Oh, okay.

Kyle

So just whenever.

Hallie

He's going to.

Kyle

Yeah, just whenever, have him come back.

Hallie

Alright!

Kyle

I just imagine like the very finale happens, Vera is about to kill Xoc, and then just suddenly a backpack to the head.

Hallie

Thwack!

Kyle

And Ness appears.

Hallie (as Ness)

I need him to fix my electron arthroscope. Back off!

Tom (as Xoc)

That was the tool I used to fix him! Damn it.

Hallie (as Ness)

Whatever!

Kyle

And before we continue, let's get out, let's just take a moment to appreciate what Ari said.

Tom

[Through laughter.] Sorry, that line doesn't even mean anything to me. But it just, I just fucking lost it.

Hallie

What's happening.

Tom

So—

Ari

Kyle asked Emily if, like, Elee was feeling the magic, and so I typed, "Are you feeling it now Mr. Krabs?" and just broke Tom.

Hallie

He has no context for that, even! Are you feeling it now, Mr. Krabs?

Tom

[Still laughing.] I just heard it in Spongebob's voice and it was automatically funny.

Ari

[Laughter.] I'm so happy.

Tom

I'm gonna be able to breathe soon, I'm sorry.

Kyle

I'm gonna have to share this clip when we're done. I pulled it up. It's very good.

Tom

Noooo.

Ari

Are you feeling it now Mr. Krabs?

Hallie

Now Mr. Krabs? Are you---

Tom

The more you say it, the more I laugh though!

Spongebob Squarepants

Are you feeling it now. Mr. Krabs? Are you feeling it now Mr. Krabs? Are you feeling it? Are you feeling it now? Mr. Krabs? Are you feeling it now Mr. Krabs? Art thou feeling it now, Mr. Krabs?

[Episode end - 01:04:44]