

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Chapter 25: Your Mom.

By

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Midnight Burger

Chapter 25: Your Mom.

THE SOUND OF GLORIA SCRUBBING THE GRILL.

CASPAR

Hey.

GLORIA

Hey.

CASPAR

... You want me to do that?

GLORIA

No, I need to do it.

CASPAR

... So Leif and Ava are still upstairs.

GLORIA

Yeah.

CASPAR

... What do you think they're talking about?

GLORIA

Even if we knew what they were talking about we wouldn't know what they were talking about.

CASPAR

True.

GLORIA

I sent them up there with the radio. I told them not to talk to me until the Mucklewains can understand what they're talking about. They're going to be a while.

CASPAR

Not a bad idea... So I was gone when you declared war on an intergalactic empire.

GLORIA

We missed you.

CASPAR

I get the feeling that when you made that decision, you acted a little like this.

GLORIA

Like what?

CASPAR

Focused. Focused Gloria.

GLORIA

Yeah, sure.

CASPAR

And now you've decided we're going after Clementine and you're very grill focused.

GLORIA

Ava has a booth, Leif has a roof, I have a grill. What do you have?

CASPAR

I mean, I keep trying to talk to you about a pinball machine.

GLORIA

Find something else.

CASPAR

Ski ball?

GLORIA

Caspar.

CASPAR

Are you sure this is the right move?

GLORIA

Look, that asteroid yesterday? It may not have even been there until she talked to two people at a bar about asteroids. She got the word "asteroid" in her head, and then accidentally made one. Somebody's got to do something and there's nobody else who can. What do you want me to do? Call Jean Claude Van Damme Time Cop?

CASPAR

I'm not saying you should call Jean Claude Van Damme Time Cop, I'm asking if we should be going after this woman without knowing exactly what she's capable of. According to Ava she made two universes collide.

GLORIA

Well maybe that's easier than it sounds.

THE BACKDOOR SWINGS OPEN.

LEIF

You're out of your mind.

AVA  
YOU'RE out of YOU'RE mind.

LEIF  
Gloria, she's out of her mind.

GLORIA  
Hang on, hang on. Am I going to understand this?

AVA  
The Mucklewains can officially understand what we're talking about.

ZEBULON  
We can.

EFFIE  
And we hate it.

AVA  
You did not say the Mucklewains needed to like it, you said they needed to understand it.

GLORIA  
Okay, fine. Let's hear it.

LEIF  
She wants to make wind chimes.

GLORIA  
What?

LEIF  
You remember our friends The Teds. Remember how they trapped us using a very dangerous experiment with Time Crystals?

GLORIA  
Yes.

LEIF  
Ava wants to do the same thing.

AVA  
There's some kind of relationship between Clementine and the damage to the fabric of space time that we've been seeing. I don't know what it is, though.

CASPAR  
By the way, can we come up with a term for the damage to the fabric of space time? I feel like there should be a term for it.

AVA

We've seen the diner be able to fix the damage. The shopzies were all trapped inside the diner and they were fixed.

GLORIA

We're not calling them that.

CASPAR

But yesterday I pulled a whole bunch of the meteor people in here and they were still seeing the meteor.

AVA

Right. Because in *that* situation you would have to put literally every person on Earth in the diner for the diner to heal the damage to the fabric of space time.

CASPAR

Is that true?

AVA

Who knows? ANYWAY. Theoretically if we can keep Clementine here for a while, we may be able to throw water on the witch, if you know what I mean.

GLORIA

She can vanish any time she wants, she's a little hard to keep here.

LEIF

Can you see where she's going with this?

AVA

We zip around through space and time as well. And what did the Teds do to us?

GLORIA

Trapped us in three galaxies.

AVA

Right!

GLORIA

You want to trap her in three galaxies?

AVA

No, I want to trap her here.

CASPAR

Wow, I really hate this idea.

GLORIA

The thing The Teds built was huge. We can't build something like that.

AVA

We wouldn't need to. I suspect the Teds' wind chimes were so big because of scale. They needed to cast a wide net. We don't need to cast a wide net, we just need her to stay either in here or in the parking lot long enough for the diner to zap her.

CASPAR

Then what? You put her on a slab and dissect her?

AVA

Preferably.

GLORIA

So, what is the problem with this plan?

ZEBULON

Well, firstly we would be using the tools of our enemy to do our good work.

EFFIE

And another, I don't want this woman within 5 miles of these front doors.

LEIF

And my thing is, it's impossible to make and also incredibly dangerous.

AVA

It's not impossible to make.

GLORIA

Is it incredibly dangerous?

AVA

It *may* be incredibly dangerous but it's not hard to make.

LEIF

Oh really? Because before we make a time crystal we're going to have to make a quantum computer FROM SCRATCH.

AVA

Putting photons in a superposition is not hard.

LEIF

No, it's not hard. Producing entanglement is hard.

AVA  
I'm hearing a lot of "can't" from you.

LEIF  
Single photon emitter, beam splitter, camera detector, KLM protocol, you want me to keep going?

AVA  
Eye of newt?

LEIF  
Also NMR isn't going to do it so you're going to have to trap ions. Are you going to fabricate components and make a dedicated dilution refrigerator? Are you going to put everything in a vacuum chamber to contain the noise?

AVA  
Will you be inside the vacuum chamber?

LEIF  
Oh, and, by the way, everything will have to be kept just slightly above absolute zero so it'll need comprehensive environmental controls.

AVA  
I think you need comprehensive environmental controls.

GLORIA  
Well, it's a shame you can't do it, Leif.

LEIF  
No reverse psychology!... Of course I can do it. But if I'm just salvaging from whatever Earth we land on, it's going to take a while before I have everything we need. This is a long list.

GLORIA  
Well, it's the only option we have right now so work as fast as you can.

LEIF  
...Fine. Just one final warning. Working with time crystals, like we're about to, it's banned in The Triad for a reason. Experiments like this once turned an entire planet into a black hole. I'm sure we don't want an artificially created black hole to suddenly spring up in the diner.

AVA  
I mean...

LEIF

I'm sure *most* of us don't want an artificially created black hole to suddenly spring up in the diner.

GLORIA

Again, it's the only option we have. If you come up with something else, let me know. Effie, where are we going?

EFFIE

I detect a great gateway, Gloria. And great beginnings.

LEIF

Here comes the boom.

THE DINER SETS DOWN ON SOLID GROUND AND WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BIG MUSICAL THUD COMING FROM THE FRONT OF THE DINER.

LEIF (CONT'D)

What was that?

GLORIA

Did that come from the front?

LEIF

Uh... Come out here.

GLORIA

What is it?

CASPAR

What the hell?

LEIF

How...

ZEBULON

Leif, that appears to be a piano in the middle of the dining room.

LEIF

Yeah.

GLORIA

Where did it come from?

LEIF

I have no idea.

EFFIE

Y'all are we going to have to start looking out for pianos falling on us now?



ZEBULON

Are we not enduring enough?

GLORIA

Caspar?

CASPAR

I had to endure all sorts of things through the years but there was never a sudden piano.

GLORIA

Huh.

LEIF

Huh.

CASPAR

Hmm.

GLORIA

Well, can anyone play the piano?

CASPAR

Ava can.

GLORIA

Really?

AVA

What?

CASPAR

You can.

AVA

How did you know that?

CASPAR

You told me.

AVA

When?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

When did you learn to play the piano?

AVA

When I was a kid.

LEIF

Oh, so you can play Jingle Bells or whatever.

AVA  
No, I can play more than that.

LEIF  
How much can you play?

AVA  
I feel uncomfortable.

CASPAR  
Why?

AVA  
I don't know. Why did I tell you that?

CASPAR  
I don't know.

EFFIE  
Ava, I had no idea you were a musician, that's awful nice.

AVA  
I'm not. I'm not a musician. I can play the piano, okay?

CASPAR  
Why is this making you so uncomfortable?

AVA  
Because everyone's looking at me and not looking at the sudden piano. Isn't the sudden piano weirder than me being able to play it?

GLORIA  
... No.

LEIF  
You being able to play the piano is somehow weirder than one appearing out of thin air.

AVA  
I think that just makes you the weird one.

LEIF  
No, it's still you.

GLORIA  
Okay, whatever. There's a piano here. Okay.

LEIF  
Play something on the piano.

AVA

No.

LEIF

C'mon.

AVA

Don't say c'mon to me.

GLORIA

What kind of piano player were you?

AVA

There are kinds?

GLORIA

Yeah, like, Jazz or were you one of those genius kids you played the moonlight sonata when the were 4?

AVA

I took piano lessons, I play the piano, can we stop talking about it?

LEIF

Just play a short thing.

ZEBULON

I would love to hear Ava play the piano.

EFFIE

I would too dear, if only because it appears to upset her very much.

AVA

I'm not playing the piano.

LEIF

C'mon.

AVA

Stop.

CASPAR

I don't think this is going to stop until you play something.

GLORIA

How else are we really going to know?

CASPAR

Do you know any Warren Zevon?

AVA  
Jesus fucking-, here, fine. Fine.

AVA SLAMS OPEN THE COVER OF THE PIANO, PLAYS THE FASTEST 16 BARS OF PIANO MUSIC EVER HEARD, THEN SLAMS THE COVER BACK DOWN AGAIN.

LEIF  
Wow!

AVA  
I'm having a cigarette.

DOOR CHIME.

EFFIE  
Well that was quite a performance.

GLORIA  
Why does she hate knowing how to play the piano?

ZEBULON  
I wish I could play the piano.

LEIF  
Me too, what's going on?

GLORIA  
We should ask her...

LEIF  
...

EFFIE  
...

CASPAR  
What? Oh. That's my job?

GLORIA  
Yes.

CASPAR  
Why is it my job?

GLORIA  
Because you're the guy in the self-defense class who puts on the puffy suit and people beat the crap out of.

CASPAR  
Am I?

GLORIA  
Yes.

LEIF  
Put on a helmet and pads and get in there.

CASPAR  
Okay fine.

DOOR CHIME. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A LARGE CITY.

CASPAR (CONT'D)  
Hello. How are things out here?... Any idea where we are?... You know what's funny? Here we are, the sun is setting, and we show up in places at all times of day but we say "we open at 6". Which we hardly ever do, so I don't know where that came from. Then I remember I was here for about a lifetime before you showed up so... probably me?... Ava what's wrong, why did you get mad at a sudden piano?... Okay... Oh hey, that's the Gateway Arch, we're in St. Louis... Oh, we're in St. Louis... Where you are from.

AVA  
Stop knowing things about me.

CASPAR  
Ava, you've been here a few years now, I'm going to know things about you.

AVA  
Take the things you know about me out of your head.

CASPAR  
Look, if I could take the things I know out of my head, where you were born and your piano skills are low on the list.

AVA  
What else do you know about me?

CASPAR  
I don't know. That's not how brains work.

AVA  
It's how mine works.

CASPAR  
I mean real brains though, ones that aren't fueled by coffee, cigarettes, and pure darkness.

AVA  
... Stop knowing things about me.

CASPAR

You know things about me. Do you want to know more things about me? I like birds.

AVA

... I just... I hate so much that I know that about you now.

CASPAR

I have assigned a bird to everyone in the diner, would you like to know what your bird is?

AVA

I'd rather have my organs removed... what year do you think it is?

WE HEAR GROUPS OF PEOPLE TALKING AS THEY WALK INTO THE DINER.

CASPAR

How would I know? Hi there, folks. Welcome to Midnight Burger... Wow, influx of customers all of a sudden... I'm going to say late seventies judging by the clothes people are wearing.

AVA

Hm...

CASPAR

Weird being back home?

AVA

I doubt it's back home.

CASPAR

Okay... Okay well this has been fun. I love it when we talk. I'll be inside.

DOOR CHIME. THE SOUND OF THE DINER FILLING UP WITH PEOPLE.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey, lot of people all of a sudden.

LEIF

Yeah, have you got this? I've got a ton of work to do now that we've decided to make this ill-advised attempt at capturing Clementine.

CASPAR

Yeah, should be fine.

LEIF

Thanks.

CASPAR

... Uh, Mucklewains it's looking like Saint Louis in the mid 70s, I don't know how they're going to react to The Hour of Power but hey you never-

RADIO STATIC CRACKLES FROM THE RADIO.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Oh, jeez.

ZEBULON

It is six-o-five in the PM here in lovely Saint Louis, it's Friday night and the feeling is right and we want to make sure that you've got the sound you need to keep the party going until the break of dawn. This is the Disco Funkslinger and I'm ready to get funky up with you. Up next is OTE with "Sea Lion."

CASPAR

Who?

SONG: OTE, SEA LION.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Okay, whatever.

CASPAR WALKS INTO THE KITCHEN.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey.

GLORIA

Hey.

CASPAR

Leif is on the roof, Ava's being weird, and I think the Mucklewains have turned into some sort of 70's disc jockey situation.

GLORIA

Okay. Kind of a big crowd.

CASPAR

It's weird, right?

GLORIA

It's nice. I'd like to do some normal restaurant shit for a second.

CASPAR

Me too, honestly. Not that I've ever done that but I'd love to see what it's like.

GLORIA

Well go on, get me some orders.

CASPAR

Here I go.

CASPAR WALKS INTO THE DINING ROOM.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey there, welcome to Midnight Burger, what can I get you?

MILLY

I'm actually waiting for someone.

CASPAR

That's fine. You want to wait?

MILLY

I... Don't know if they're coming.

CASPAR

Okay. That sounds...

MILLY

What?

CASPAR

...Nothing. Um... How about this, order some food. The food's good here. If they don't show at least you had some food.

MILLY

Okay. Um... Is it weird to have breakfast at night?

CASPAR

It's five AM somewhere.

MILLY

Great. Okay uh. Pancakes.

CASPAR

Side of strawberry jam?

MILLY

Yes. How did you know?

CASPAR

Lucky guess. I'll bring it right out.

RADIO CRACKLES AGAIN.



EFFIE

Saint Louis, this is Saren Farbeyondthestars and I am sending out all the love I've got tonight. It is Friday I hope you're headed out, and hey if you're not headed out that's fine too, nothing wrong with a night in, watching a little WKRP, why not? In fact, I'm going to start with everyone *not* going out tonight, I'm going to send this one out to you. Here is Tellsonic with "Rain on a Sunny Day."

CASPAR

Never heard of 'em... Hey. Pancakes for table 12. Side of strawberry jam.

GLORIA

What's that about?

CASPAR

She likes jam in between two pancakes and syrup on the top.

GLORIA

Okay I kind of get that... What else?

CASPAR

It's my mom... My mom is here.

GLORIA

Shut up.

CASPAR

Yeah.

GLORIA

Let me see... Well look at that, it's your nose.

CASPAR

There's my nose.

GLORIA

Did she live in Saint Louis?

CASPAR

No, I don't know what she's doing here. Although Effie and Zebulon are playing "the hits" and it's music that never existed so I think we're somewhere to the left of our home dimension.

GLORIA

Are you born yet?

CASPAR

I would be. Odds are I'm at a neighbor's place or something.

GLORIA

Where's dad?

CASPAR

Never knew him.

GLORIA

Ah. Sorry.

CASPAR

It's fine. I mean, look at me, I turned out fine, right?

GLORIA

No.

CASPAR

No, I did not. Though I doubt him being around would've changed things.

GLORIA

So she's just here by herself?

CASPAR

She's meeting somebody.

GLORIA

Oh God, are you going to have to watch your mom go on a date?

CASPAR

Maybe.

GLORIA

I really hope he has a butterfly collar and feathered hair.

CASPAR

I'd bet against that if I were you.

DOOR CHIME.

MILLY

Maggie, over here.

CASPAR

Heh... Here we go. I'll be right back.

GLORIA

Caspar, are you okay?

CASPAR

Yeah... It's good to see them.

GLORIA  
Them?

RADIO BUZZES AGAIN.

ZEBULON  
Y'all we're having some technical difficulties here at the studio but the Funkslinger is back! Let's get the party back on, here's Chantrelle with "Carnaby Street."

CASPAR  
Nobody has heard of these people... Hey there you two. I've got one order of pancakes in the hopper, what can I get for you?

MAGGIE  
Breakfast at night again, huh?

MILLY  
Can't help it. Hey, can you guess her order, too?

CASPAR  
I'll give it a shot. Hash browns with fried eggs over the top and a ham steak. Tabasco sauce on the side.

MAGGIE  
That's amazing.

CASPAR  
Well, you do this long enough you get to know a thing or two.

MAGGIE  
How long have you been doing it?

CASPAR  
173 years. I'll get that right out to you...

RADIO BUZZES AGAIN.

EFFIE  
And we are back again.

CASPAR  
Y'all, pick a lane.

EFFIE  
We're sorry for the technical difficulties everyone, it's all part of the business of live radio, what are you going to do? Maybe there's something out there in the air? Radio is mysterious, it can pick up on all sorts of things.  
(MORE)

EFFIE (CONT'D)

Once again this is Saren Farbeyondthesatrs and let's try and smooth it all out with a little Guy Trevino and Friends, shall we?

SONG: "DANDELIONS" BY GUY TREVINO AND FRIENDS.

CASPAR

Ah, yes. This old classic. Can't get enough of it... Okay, Hash browns, fried eggs on top with a ham steak.

GLORIA

Night breakfast people, I love it. Who's your mom's friend?

CASPAR

... That is my mom.

GLORIA

... No.

CASPAR

... Yes.

GLORIA

... Really?

CASPAR

... Yes.

GLORIA

Caspar has two mommies.

CASPAR

Caspar has two mommies.

GLORIA

God, everything I learn about you is just perfect.

CASPAR

Why is that perfect?

GLORIA

I don't know. I just imagine them being pretty great but also driving you really crazy.

CASPAR

They are pretty great and, yes, they did drive me absolutely fucking bananas.

GLORIA

You should go hang out with them.

CASPAR

Eh, I don't know. To hear her tell it, it was pretty rocky when they first started out. They might be meeting in neutral territory so they can argue about things.

GLORIA

I can't believe your parents are here.

CASPAR

I know, right?

GLORIA

This is good. You should enjoy this.

CASPAR

Well, we both know how good I am at that.

GLORIA

Seriously, though.

CASPAR

Is Ava still out in the parking lot?

GLORIA

Yeah, what's her problem?

CASPAR

She's from Saint Louis. She may not be having the same trip down memory lane that I am. I'll go check on her.

GLORIA

Take some orders on your way, please.

OUTSIDE. AVA IS SMOKING.

CASPAR

Hey... Ava?

AVA

What?

CASPAR

What's going on?

AVA

Nothing.

CASPAR

There's about nine cigarette butts at your feet right now.

AVA  
Who died and made you Surgeon General?

CASPAR  
I came out here to check on you because you're being weird. You're being weird and Effie and Zebulon are being weird.

AVA  
What are they doing?

CASPAR  
They're acting like two 1970s disc jockeys.

AVA  
They're probably just adapting to the environment.

CASPAR  
But it's weird, it's two different broadcasts and they're fighting for position in the radio.

AVA  
Huh.

CASPAR  
Yes, "huh," Ava... Also my mom is here.

AVA  
Your mom is here?

CASPAR  
Yes. Both of them. Both of my moms are here.

AVA  
Really?

CASPAR  
Yes.

AVA  
You have two moms?

CASPAR  
I do.

AVA  
Huh... That makes sense.

CASPAR  
... Okay see what I'm doing is being forthcoming and what would be great is if you did the same.

AVA

I've got a lot on my mind, Caspar, I don't give a shit about whose Mom shows up.

BILLIE

Hey, can I bum a cigarette?

AVA

...

CASPAR

Ava?

BILLIE

What's the problem?

AVA

...

BILLIE

Why is she just staring at me?

CASPAR

Here, here, give me one. Here you go, here's a cigarette.

BILLIE

Thank you. Do you know who the manager is?

CASPAR

Yeah, it's Gloria she's in the kitchen. She's kind of busy though. I work here, is there something I can help you with?

BILLIE

Well, I'm performing here tonight.

AVA

WHAT.

CASPAR

... Ava?

BILLIE

...And I can't find my piano player so I thought I would give her a heads up.

CASPAR

Oh yes, I'm sure she'd love to hear that entire story. She's all the way in the back.

BILLIE

Thanks. Thanks for the cigarette, weirdo.

CASPAR

... So.

AVA

Shhhhhh.

CASPAR

... Ava?

AVA

Be very quiet.

CASPAR

Why?

AVA

Because... Because that... was *my* mother.

CASPAR

*Your* mother.

AVA

Yes.

CASPAR

... How-

AVA

Shhhhhhhhhhh.

CASPAR

My moms and your mom are here at the same time,  
that's nuts.

AVA

Shh.

CASPAR

What are we supposed to do with this information?

AVA

Sh.

CASPAR

I guess it makes more sense than my moms, at least  
you're from here.

AVA

Caspar, I am trying to figure out how I can very  
quickly drink all of the alcohol in Saint Louis  
right now, I need you to shhhhhhhh.

CASPAR

... Well I guess we know why the piano's here.



AVA  
How mad do you think Gloria would be if I chopped  
up the piano and set it on fire in the parking lot?

CASPAR  
On a scale of one to ten or-

AVA  
How can I make this not be happening?

CASPAR  
Ava, this is kind of minor leagues compared to the  
usual stuff we deal with isn't it?

AVA  
How *dare* you use a sports analogy with me.

CASPAR  
She seems fine. She seems a little mean. She does  
not seem like a mother, there's no mom energy and  
I'm an expert because I have two of them.

AVA  
... I may spend the rest of the night in the  
parking lot.

CASPAR  
You realize of course that that's ridiculous.

AVA  
You realize of course that I am the one who decides  
what's ridiculous.

CASPAR  
Fine. Have a wonderful night in the parking lot.

AVA  
I will.

CASPAR  
Would you like me to bring you a club sandwich or  
something?

AVA  
... Yes, bring me a club sandwich.

CASPAR  
Fine.

DOOR CHIME.

MAGGIE

-Listen, this is how I live my life. This is how I have to live my life, it doesn't work for me any other way-

CASPAR

No, no, no. Stop making demands on people that they live by your rules, there needs to be some compromise-

MAGGIE

I'm saying, when I was ten-

CASPAR

No, don't use the story from when you were ten, you always use that as your trump card, you need to listen more, not everybody has to live their life the way you do just because your dad was an asshole about the softball team when you were ten, okay?... Who needs coffee? More coffee? Be right back.

ZEBULON

Holy heck y'all, the Funkslinger is having a dickens of a time making the airwaves work for me today... I wonder if something's not right out there? Could it be there's something not so funky in the airwaves? How about y'all give us a call at 555-5555 and let us know you can hear us.

CASPAR

Better write that number down, don't want to forget.

BILLIE

Look, I don't know what to tell you, I've been trying to get a hold of him all day but guess what? Barbara fucking Mandrell is in town and when these big acts come through town they have a tendency to fuck up my life because they soak up all the local talent and now I'm sitting here at a club I've never heard of without my piano player. So I'm doing what I can but it's getting harder and harder for me to perform here tonight.

GLORIA

I'm sorry you're what?

BILLIE

I'm Billie Maddox, I'm performing here. Tonight. You've got to be kidding me.

GLORIA

Oh. Piano. Right. We have a piano now and you're performing here tonight.

BILLIE

Why do I know more about this than you do? You're the manager, right?

GLORIA

Yes, I am. Okay-

BILLIE

Also, where is your PA system?

GLORIA

PA system.

BILLIE

A microphone. Some speakers. What is happening?

GLORIA

Uhhh.

BILLIE

Who is your sound man?

GLORIA

Sound man. Hey. We have a sound man, holy shit do we have a sound man.

BILLIE

Great, where is he?

GLORIA

He'll be right with you, I promise. Why don't you have a seat and Caspar will bring you some coffee and we'll have the sound man come and talk to you.

BILLIE

Okay. Do you have a phone I can use?

GLORIA

It's under the counter.

BILLIE

Great.

GLORIA

... Someone's performing here tonight, isn't that cool?

CASPAR

Yeah, listen-

GLORIA

We're a nightclub. Maybe someone will get gunned down with a tommy gun or something.

CASPAR

Gloria, listen, that's Ava's mom.

GLORIA

... Get the fuck out of here.

CASPAR

It is. This is why Ava is standing in a pile of cigarette butts in the parking lot. She haaaaAAAAAaaates her mom.

GLORIA

Wow.

CASPAR

And now her mom is here and well...

GLORIA

This is fantastic news.

CASPAR

I know what you're thinking. The schadenfreude is strong but let's try and be kind in this moment.

GLORIA

I'm going to try very hard to be sensitive toward Ava in this difficult time.

CASPAR

Great.

GLORIA

And I am going to fail.

CASPAR

Great.

GLORIA

Food's up for your moms.

CASPAR

Okay. Oh, can you make a club sandwich for Ava?

GLORIA

You're bringing her a sandwich out there?

CASPAR

Yeah. What?

GLORIA

Nothing.

BACK DOOR OPENS.

LEIF

Gloria, real quick, how would you feel about a very controlled nuclear explosion 500 feet above the diner?

GLORIA

Sure whatever, listen, Ava's mom is here and she's performing here tonight.

LEIF

Seriously?

GLORIA

That must be why we have a piano.

LEIF

Like, Ava's mom pre-Ava?

GLORIA

Yes.

LEIF

That's crazy.

CASPAR

Also my moms are here pre-me. They are not performing here though, they do a karaoke rendition of Islands in the Stream that is just impossible to endure.

LEIF

Shit, the moms are here?

GLORIA

You knew about the moms?

LEIF

Yeah I knew about the moms, you didn't know about the moms?

GLORIA

How do we work together and not know each other?

LEIF

We all have problems sharing.

CASPAR

That's true, we do, it's not just me!

LEIF

Also it's hard to fight for your life against an intergalactic empire and then have some nice chit chat.

CASPAR

Also that.

GLORIA

Fine. So can you build a PA system real quick for Ava's mom?

LEIF

Sure.

GLORIA

Okay, she's over there, go talk to her. Also, bonus points if you can try and become Ava's father tonight, know what I mean?

CASPAR

That is not at ALL being sensitive.

GLORIA

Oh shut up Mr. I'll-Bring-You-a-Sandwich. Go feed your moms.

BILLIE

Robbie you told me you were available tonight you little shit, you're really going to screw me for that fur-lined Stepford Wife?... Don't-... Oh don't give me that crap, there are a million piano players in town and the only thing any of them have are their word, Robbie. And you don't have that anymore because you're supposed to be here tonight but instead you're over there. So, do me a favor, the next time you need to be bailed out of jail, and trust me there will be many many more times, go ahead and give Barbara Mandrell a call and see how that works out for you.

SHE SLAMS THE PHONE DOWN.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Shit head.

LEIF

Really seeing the resemblance.

BILLIE

Who are you?

LEIF

I'm Leif, I'm the sound man.

BILLIE

Great. Where's the sound, sound man?

LEIF

What are you looking for?

BILLIE

A microphone, to start with.

LEIF

Sure, I can do that. I'm thinking 15 to 80 kilohertz response range. A thousand watts of class D power. 120 horizontal coverage, 40 degrees vertical.

BILLIE

Well, be still my heart. You can just whip that up?

LEIF

You'd be surprised at the amount of things I can whip up.

BILLIE

Well how about I unfurl my golden locks down to the ground so you can climb up the tower prince charming?

LEIF

You're very mean. It's making me uncomfortable.

BILLIE

Now all I need is a piano player.

LEIF

Good luck with that.

BILLIE

I'm going to go bum another cigarette off that weird girl in the parking lot.

LEIF

She'd love that.

CASPAR

Look this is hard stuff. She's a single mom, you're a workaholic, not to mention the fact that it's the mid 70s and there's very few places you two can go and feel comfortable. Jimmy Swaggart's out there right now on television, calling people sexual deviants, but trust me in a few years that's going to play out in a very hilarious way.

MAGGIE

So, you just sit down at people's booths and start poking into their lives?

CASPAR

Not all the time.

MAGGIE

Look, I appreciate you all being cool with us and not looking at us funny but it's not about what happens in safe places. I have the right to hold your hand in public, I have the right to kiss you in public, and I'm ready to fight anybody who's got problems. You're not.

MILLY

Just because I don't want to pick a fight with someone doesn't mean I'm ashamed of you.

MAGGIE

I don't know what you are, though. Are you out here with me or am I secret?

MILLY

A secret from who? My two-year-old?

MAGGIE

I need a cigarette.

DOOR CHIME.

MILLY

I hate that she smokes.

CASPAR

We both do. Trust me you don't want to see the alternative.

MILLY

... This is hard.

CASPAR

I know.

MILLY

I hate how hard this is.

CASPAR

I know. Relationships are hard. There's nothing more complicated than two people who love each other in a relationship. Two people in a relationship who hate each other is actually super simple. You wake up in the morning "Hey, we hate each other. Cool, I'm off to work."

MILLY

... I really love her.



CASPAR

I know.

MILLY

And I tell her all the time and it doesn't sink in.

CASPAR

I know, all the time.

MILLY

... I was such an idiot when I met her... I would push my stroller past her house all the time. There was this one house with a huge garden in the front yard, which was already weird, but there was a sign in the yard that said "Maggie's Yarm." And I would always wonder what the hell it meant. Then one day I saw her in the yard and we started talking.

CASPAR

"Yard Farm."

MILLY

Yes. Because she really wanted a farm but could only afford a yard... I remember rolling the stroller away after the first time we talked and just thinking... "God damn I want to buy you that farm so bad." Took me months to realize why I was feeling that way.

CASPAR

Do you ever tell her that?

MILLY

It's like trying to break down a brick wall with her.

CASPAR

Yeah, I know. Let me go talk to her.

MILLY

Um, who are you?

CASPAR

I'm your waiter.

DOOR CHIME. RADIO BUZZES.

EFFIE

Y'all we are back again but this time I am ready. There are bad vibes out there and Saren is here with you to shoo those vibes away. I have been doing some homework while we were gone, here it is.

LEIF

Oh Man, Effie what are you guys on this time?

EFFIE

Does anyone remember the northeast blackout of 1965? I was just a kid here in Saint Louis so I don't remember it but these outages we keep having got me thinking about when the things we depend on fail us. It was 1965 and around 30 million people in the northeast lost power for 13 hours. From New York all the way up to Toronto. How about those numbers? I wonder how many people had to stay trapped in an elevator for 13 hours, can you imagine? You know what's funny about this, is the whole northeast lost power but somehow in Maine, the lights stayed on the whole time. Now, I'm not up for conspiracies because I'm a grown woman, but I was thinking. Wouldn't it be funny if Maine was behind the whole thing... what if something that seems like an interesting little glitch was actually the plan of someone or something you would never expect... Just a thought.

LEIF

Uh oh.

EFFIE

We would love for you to give us a call here at the station and tell us what you think is causing all the these outages.

LEIF

Okay.

EFFIE

555-5555, give us a call. Until then, Here is Shiver Disk with "By the Way."

LEIF

Who?

SONG: SHIVER DISK, "BY THE WAY".

LEIF DIALS THE PHONE.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Five, five, five, Jesus Christ, rotary phones...

EFFIE

(In the phone.)  
Leif!

LEIF

Effie?

EFFIE

Thank the lord.

LEIF

What's happening?

EFFIE

Leif, chicanery is about!

LEIF

What do you mean?

EFFIE

Suddenly Zebulon and I could only speak through the radio in other voices. I sound like some bohemian lady and Zebulon sounds like some sort of drunkard from the city.

LEIF

You speak in different voices all the time.

EFFIE

This is different, Leif. Something is being placed upon us. Luckily I found this here back door in getting you to call me.

LEIF

What do you think is happening?

EFFIE

I'm sure I don't know Leif, I've been too busy trying to get somebody's attention. What goes on?

LEIF

Well, there was suddenly a piano.

EFFIE

Yes, but what else?

LEIF

Uh, Caspar's moms are here *and* Ava's mom is here.

EFFIE

Hmmm.

LEIF

I mean, it's weird but it doesn't seem *that* weird.

THE RADIO BUZZES.

EFFIE

Oh, Lord, here comes Zebulon. Keep working on it Leif!

LEIF

Okay.

ZEBULON

That's right, Saint Louis, party central can't be stopped, the Funkslinger is back! Ain't no blackout gonna hold us down, not on a Friday night! Hey, if these blackouts have got you down why don't you give us a call?

LEIF

Let me guess.

ZEBULON

555-5555, let us know all about it. We're confused! Now here's Glove Box with "Boogie Down."

LEIF DIALS THE PHONE.

LEIF

What is this music?... Zebulon?

ZEBULON

Leif?

LEIF

What's happening?

ZEBULON

I seem to speak but something else comes out, it isn't like the other times. We are being mistranslated somehow.

LEIF

That's disturbing.

ZEBULON

Do you sense anything nefarious?

LEIF

Not really. Honestly it seems like a pretty chill day.

ZEBULON

There is disturbance in the air, Leif. Keep your wits about you and tell the others.

LEIF

Okay, I'll spread the word.

LEIF HANGS UP THE PHONE.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Hey, Caspar's mom.

MILLY

What?

DOOR CHIME, WE MOVE INTO THE PARKING LOT.

CASPAR

How's it going out here?

MAGGIE

You're kind of creeping me out, man.

CASPAR

I know. I just don't want your eggs to get cold.

MAGGIE

Look it's our business. We'll handle it, okay?

CASPAR

Okay... Okay... How about the kid?

MAGGIE

What do you mean?

CASPAR

Milly's kid. Is it his business?

MAGGIE

Uh... I mean, I guess?

CASPAR

Okay. Then I'm representing him in this conversation.

MAGGIE

You can't just represent him.

CASPAR

Why are you denying Caspar his due process, Maggie, doesn't he deserve a say?

MAGGIE

Man, what the fuck?

CASPAR

Look, I was raised by two women. Just like you two.

MAGGIE

Seriously?

CASPAR

Yeah.

MAGGIE

How long ago was that?

CASPAR

A long time ago... The boys... had just come home from the war... It was back then.

MAGGIE

That must've been impossible.

CASPAR

Does it feel all that possible right now?

MAGGIE

No.

CASPAR

It was difficult. It took a lot of work... So I saw you two today and I was suddenly very invested, okay?

MAGGIE

Okay, fine.

CASPAR

I think you should get back in there and work things out, I think you owe it to yourself.

MAGGIE

Why?

CASPAR

Because, shot in the dark here, you are so proud of your self sufficiency that it's hard for you to factor anyone else into the equation.

MAGGIE

... Maybe.

CASPAR

And that's admirable. Maybe it makes you a little hard to be around.

MAGGIE

She's not exactly easy to be around either.

CASPAR

Oh, I know.

MAGGIE

She was so closeted when I met her. She wasn't even out to herself. She was just REALLY interested in my life and REALLY wanted to hang out. The first time I came over to her house she invited me for dinner and forgot to buy food. There was a moldy loaf of bread in the pantry, that's it. I called her Moldy Bread Milly for months after that.

CASPAR

God, *that's* where it came from.

MAGGIE

What?

CASPAR

Nothing. Look, I know. She can be a big mess sometimes. She's got a two year-old kid, she's a single mom, she works at a gas station.

MAGGIE

... The kid thing kind of freaks me out.

CASPAR

I knew it!

MAGGIE

What?

CASPAR

"Loved you from day one" my ass.

MAGGIE

What?

CASPAR

Nothing. I know. Kids are scary. But he'll be fine.

MAGGIE

Were you fine?

CASPAR

Absolutely not, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Great.

CASPAR

It was hard, okay? I was a little kid, in the midwest, with two moms, in the 80-... a long time ago. Kids made fun of me sometimes. The cruelty of children to other children is its own category of evil. They tried to go to a PTA meeting and people protested and wrote letters. They were asked to not come back. Then one time, one of them had something wrong with their gallbladder or some shit and she had to go to the emergency room, but Mom number two wasn't allowed in the emergency room because she wasn't a member of the family, so I had to constantly run back and forth from the emergency room to the waiting room trying to keep both of them calm and I was eight?!

MAGGIE

I'm sorry about all that.

CASPAR

It's okay. I'm fine.

MAGGIE

What if he has to go through all of that stuff you went through and he doesn't even like me?

CASPAR

... He's going to love you so much.

MAGGIE

You think?

CASPAR

You're grumpy, you chain smoke, you're emotionally withholding, what's not to like?

MAGGIE

Very funny.

CASPAR

Maggie, get in there. Change your life.

MAGGIE

... Fuck it.

CASPAR

There we go!

DOOR CHIME.

LEIF

Caspar.

CASPAR

What's up?

LEIF

Are you playing marriage counselor to your parents?

CASPAR

I know it sounds fucked up but I'm having a blast.

LEIF

Well, sorry to rain on your parade.

CASPAR

Aw snails.

LEIF

The Mucklewains are freaking out.



CASPAR

They're 70s DJs right now.

LEIF

Not if you call the phone number. If you call the phone number it's them and they don't know what's happening.

CASPAR

Huh.

LEIF

They think something fucked up is going on but I mean...

CASPAR

It seems like a good day.

LEIF

That's what I said. Where's the doom?

CASPAR

I don't see any doom.

LEIF

They're probably just freaking out for no reason, right?

CASPAR

Yeah, It's a nice day, there's going to be music tonight, my moms are here, Ava's miserable, it's a good day.

LEIF

Agreed.

CASPAR

... Hang on.

LEIF

What?

CASPAR

Goddamnit.

LEIF

What?

CASPAR

... My moms. Ava's mom. All living in Saint Louis in the mid 70s and then we show up?

LEIF

Yeah.

CASPAR

Do you want to calculate those odds for me?

LEIF

... I mean, it's possible.

CASPAR

Yeah, but I've got this friend Occam and he has this razor.

LEIF

You think someone's fucking with us?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

How, though?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

Clementine?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

She can control where we go?

CASPAR

I don't know.

LEIF

That's impossible.

CASPAR

I know.

LEIF

Hmm...

CASPAR

Okay look. Let's just keep our antennas out okay?

LEIF

Go tandem? Look for traps?

CASPAR

Yeah... Probably fine.

LEIF

Probably fine.

CASPAR

I'm going to go tell Gloria, you go tell Ava.

LEIF

Okay.

DOOR CHIME. WE MOVE BACK INTO THE DINER.

MILLY

... I don't know, I was thinking, maybe we should move north, maybe to Cleveland?

CASPAR

No no no no no no no no no. Nope... More coffee? How are we doing for coffee?

MILLY

Sure.

CASPAR

Okay... Hey Gloria.

GLORIA

It's been several minutes and Leif has still not put the moves on Ava's mom, I thought I was the boss around here.

CASPAR

We may have a problem.

GLORIA

... But I don't want us to have a problem.

CASPAR

I know, I know. Though it's entirely possible we don't know how to function anymore *without* having a problem, so there's that.

GLORIA

What is it?

CASPAR

The Mucklewains are having a freakout.

GLORIA

I thought they were playing the hits.

CASPAR

Apparently if you call the hotline you can talk to them and they think... I don't know, they think that there's some sort of plot happening. My moms, Ava's mom, instant piano, then we show up. Too much of a coincidence.

GLORIA  
Clementine?

CASPAR  
I don't know.

GLORIA  
She's fucking with us?

CASPAR  
I don't know.

GLORIA  
How?

CASPAR  
I don't know.

GLORIA  
Why?

CASPAR  
I don't know.

GLORIA  
I don't like it.

CASPAR  
I know.

GLORIA  
I don't understand what she has to gain by a bunch  
of moms showing up.

CASPAR  
It's early in the shift though, who else is showing  
up?

GLORIA  
... Okay.

CASPAR  
Look, there's nothing to do at this point except  
keep an eye out so... we'll do that.

GLORIA  
Good.

RADIO BUZZES.

CASPAR  
Shit, hang on.

EFFIE

Well, folks here we are, back again, I am getting sick of this, how about you? The chakras are not aligned. Thanks for sticking with me though, if you are still with me. I promise you right now we are going to get to the bottom of whatever's going on. Until then, let's get some more music out there to heal whatever is ailing these airwaves, shall we? Here's Roots and Recognition with "The Limelight."

CASPAR DIALS THE PHONE.

EFFIE (CONT'D)

Caspar!

CASPAR

Hey, Effie, long time first time, just wanted to call in to say: turns out soft rock sucks in every timeline.

EFFIE

Do I sound like I am in the mood for your alleged witticisms, there, Samuel Clemens?

CASPAR

Effie, can you be a little more specific about whatever this threat is?

EFFIE

Caspar, I am a Baptist minister, specifics are not my bread and butter.

CASPAR

That's true, Jesus always was a "big picture" guy, wasn't he?

EFFIE

I'm assuming there is some sort of plan to free us from this strange prison we find ourselves in.

CASPAR

We don't understand how this prison works and we also don't understand how you work, how are we going to make progress on this exactly?

EFFIE

Why do I feel like I am not being given the appropriate attention this moment requires, Caspar?

CASPAR

Effie, there's something weird going on with you two, sure, but there's no danger out here. We're having kind of an... I don't know, a nice day.

EFFIE

The best place to hide the poison is in the sweet stuff, Caspar.

CASPAR

Effie, c'mon.

EFFIE

You are a dog eating peanut butter with no clue as to the de-worming pill within.

CASPAR

What kind of cockamamie reference... okay fine. We'll put our heads together and see what we can come up with, until then, you might be stuck in 70s DJ-mode for the rest of the shift. Just try and enjoy it. I'll be back.

CASPAR HANGS UP. RADIO BUZZES.

ZEBULON

Don't walk away just yet folks! The Funkslinger wants to hear from you.

CASPAR

Goddamnit.

CASPAR DIALS THE PHONE.

ZEBULON

Give us a call! Here's Wanda Shakes with "Ten Toes Deep!"

CASPAR

Five, five, five, five...

ZEBULON

Caspar!

CASPAR

Zebulon, what is it?

ZEBULON

It's the serpent of the Pharaoh, Caspar!

CASPAR

Okay.

ZEBULON

It was proof that he drew his power not just from his throne but from darker magics, Caspar!

CASPAR

Zeb, are we going a little nutty right now?

ZEBULON

We must leave this place, Caspar!

CASPAR

Okay, I'll just put some coins in the slot and I'm sure we'll zip away.

ZEBULON

It is an accursed quagmire!

CASPAR

We're working on it, Zebulon. We're working on it and we're doing what we can. Hang tight.

CASPAR HANGS UP THE PHONE. WE MOVE TO THE PARKING LOT.

LEIF

... So all we have right now are the Mucklewains freaking out but I agree with Caspar, it's a little too much for a coincidence.

AVA

It's not a coincidence.

LEIF

What do you think it is?

AVA

PUNISHMENT FROM JESUS.

LEIF

Ava-

AVA

I'm serious. I made one too many Jesus jokes and now here we are.

LEIF

What is the big deal? Your mom wasn't great, a lot of moms out there are not great moms.

AVA

Yes, but you're forgetting I don't care about other people.

LEIF

I have to say, I can see the resemblance.

AVA

PLEASE EXPLODE.

BILLIE

Hey.

LEIF  
It's a hard thing to hear but it's true.

BILLIE  
Guys.

AVA  
That is ridiculous, I am nothing like that woman.

BILLIE  
Excuse me, Idiots?

AVA  
...

LEIF  
Nothing?

BILLIE  
Hey Sound Man. Where's my sound, man?

LEIF  
It'll only take a minute to set up. How's it coming with the piano player?

BILLIE  
I'm still working on it. There's always a piano player somewhere.

LEIF  
Hmm.

AVA  
... I will murder you in every timeline.

LEIF  
You know, Ava plays the piano.

AVA  
Say your goodbyes.

BILLIE  
Really?

LEIF  
She does.

BILLIE  
A lot of people play the piano, I need someone who Plays the Piano, you know?

LEIF  
She's pretty good. What were you playing earlier? Was it Beethoven?



AVA

It was Mozart, you rube.

BILLIE

Yeah, that's not what I'm looking for, I need someone who can handle my stuff.

AVA

Oh really? "Your stuff"? Yes, the complexity of Mozart is nothing compared to Honky Tonk.

BILLIE

I don't sing Honky Tonk, weirdo. I need someone who doesn't play with stick up their ass.

LEIF

She doesn't play that way, I'm sure she'd be great.

AVA

You're about to be doing everything with a stick up your ass.

BILLIE

You can play Jazz? Blues?

AVA

Yes, I can also spell small words with alphabet blocks.

BILLIE

What is your problem with me?

AVA

I don't have a problem, you have a problem.

BILLIE

I'm trying to make this gig happen, do you mind?

AVA

I really do mind.

BILLIE

Can you handle the music, or not?

AVA

Of course I can, don't be ridiculous.

LEIF

Great! Looks like it's all figured out, Ava come inside in a few minutes for a sound check okay? Have a great time working out the set list, you two.

DOOR CHIME.

BILLIE

Did a piano fall on your parents when you were a kid?

AVA

GOD, if only.

BILLIE

Give me a cigarette.

AVA

No.

BILLIE

Don't be ridiculous.

AVA

Get your own cigarettes.

BILLIE

There's no cigarette machine inside!

AVA

I know and it's been very difficult for me!!

BILLIE

... We just met today right? I didn't run over your dog or something?

AVA

... Here. Maybe this is the one that will kill you.

BILLIE

Thank you.

BILLIE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

... So where'd you learn play?

AVA

... My mom forced me to take lessons when I was a kid.

BILLIE

You hated it that much, huh?

AVA

I... hated anything that had to do with my mother.

BILLIE

Jeez. What'd she do?

AVA

Not much. I guess that was the problem.

BILLIE

I get it. My mom was no picnic, either.

AVA

Yeah, I know, grandma shot a guy.

BILLIE

What?

AVA

Look, I'm a physicist.

BILLIE

Okay.

AVA

And she... Fucking hell... Music is math. It all fits together like math. When she forced me to learn the piano I suddenly realized that numbers for me, math, it's... It speaks to me. It stretches out in front of me, it all fits together, I can visualize all of it. It's like magic... So I was good at music, but it wasn't enough for me, and she hated that. She wouldn't put me in any advanced programs, she wouldn't let me do the Mathlympics at school, which I would've crushed at... I'd have to go with her to her gigs and she'd find me at the end of the night doing the manager's books.

BILLIE

So your mom didn't appreciate you for what you were.

AVA

No.

BILLIE

But also you discovered something important about yourself because of what she forced you to do?

AVA

... Yeah, I guess.

BILLIE

And you're being shitty to me because I remind you of her.

AVA

Just a bit, yes.

BILLIE

Well... can you get the fuck over it, please?

AVA

Fine.

BILLIE

Thank you... You're sure you can do this?

AVA

Yeah, it's fine.

BILLIE

... You really hated playing music?

AVA

There was one song that I really liked. She always yelled at me when I played it.

BILLIE

Which one?

AVA

Never mind. Let's go over the set list.

BILLIE

Okay.

THE KITCHEN. GLORIA IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

CASPAR

Gloria?

CASPAR GOES OUT THE BACK DOOR.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Gloria?

GLORIA

(Up on the roof.)  
Hey.

CASPAR

Hey. What's going on?

GLORIA

I just needed a minute.

CASPAR

Okay... Leif has somehow done a reverse psychology on Ava and she is now the piano player for tonight.

GLORIA

Wow. Okay.

CASPAR

Effie and Zebulon are still freaking out but I have no idea what to do about it.

GLORIA

Me neither.

CASPAR

My moms were going to move to Cleveland for a minute there. I think I waved them off.

GLORIA

Good.

CASPAR

... What's going on, Gloria?

GLORIA

... Who else is coming through the door, Caspar?

CASPAR

... I don't know.

GLORIA

... My parents died in a car crash... I was 18...

CASPAR

... You're afraid they're going to walk through the door.

GLORIA

...

CASPAR

... Gloria, nobody knows what's happening right now. Effie and Zebulon are saying it's a conspiracy but nothing is making any sense right now.

GLORIA

I know... People should not be presented with this dilemma.

CASPAR

They should not... When I left, my moms had retired to Reno.

GLORIA

Reno?

CASPAR

Yeah, Maggie became a semi-pro gambler in her later years, it was pretty hilarious... I never said goodbye to them. But I sort of felt like they were out here somewhere, so I'd always get the chance.

(MORE)

CASPAR (CONT'D)

Jesus, that was, like, a hundred and thirty years ago... It's okay. To not know how to feel.

GLORIA

It wouldn't be seeing them again, it would be leaving them again in a few hours.

CASPAR

I understand.

GLORIA

I worked really hard to get past it. I worked really hard to say goodbye.

CASPAR

I'm sure.

GLORIA

I can't start that over again. I'm scared of hearing the door chime again.

CASPAR

... It's weird, what can become bad news out here.

GLORIA

It really is... I guess I can't stay up on the roof for the rest of the shift, can I?

CASPAR

No, because then I would be cooking. Speaking of bad news.

GLORIA

... I'm glad you got to see your moms again.

CASPAR

Me too.

GLORIA

I bet you were a cute kid.

CASPAR

No, I was pretty much like this. Bitter... Look, we're putting on a show tonight.

GLORIA

We are.

CASPAR

Let's get in there and enjoy it while we can okay? Isn't that the gig? Enjoying it as much as we can until the next horror walks through the door?

GLORIA

Yeah, okay. I'm coming down.

CASPAR

It'll be fun. This could be a whole new door for us. Maybe we get a karaoke machine.

GLORIA

Okay, I'm not coming down.

CASPAR

Kidding!

LATER THAT NIGHT. THE DINER IS PACKED, WAITING FOR BILLIE.

ZEBULON

Saint Louis, I don't know if you've heard but we've got a local favorite performing tonight. That's right, Billie Maddox herself is playing at a brand new club called Midnight Diner! This gig is officially Funkslinger certified, come check it out!

MIC FEEDBACK.

CASPAR

(Into the mic.)

Hello hello everyone! Welcome to Midnight Burger, it is show time! This is a rarity for us. We haven't had a musician in here since Richey Edwards of the Manic Street Preachers swung by. Heady days!

GLORIA

Get off the stage!

AVA

You suck!

CASPAR

Those would be my co-workers, they're very mean. But they do make a good point! You didn't come here to see me tonight. You came here to see the incomparable Billie Maddox!

APPLAUSE.

CASPAR (CONT'D)

So let's just get right to it, shall we? Cats and kittens, put your hands together for Billie Maddox!

APPLAUSE AND CHEERS.

BILLIE

(Into the mic.)

Well hello there, Midnight Burger. Welcome everyone to the weirdest fucking gig I've ever played.

LAUGHTER.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

You know this show almost didn't happen tonight. If it were not for the incredibly grumpy weirdo at the piano we'd all be sitting in silence right now. Let's hear it for Ava!

APPLAUSE.

AVA

Please stop clapping.

BILLIE

So... my mom sucked. How about y'all? Make some noise if your mom sucked.

APPLAUSE.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

There you are. There's my people. Ava's mom sucked pretty hard as well, isn't that right, Ava?

AVA

What are you doing?

BILLIE

Did you know that Ava's mom wouldn't let her play her favorite song?

AVA

Please stop doing what you're doing.

BILLIE

Atrocious, isn't it? What do you think it was? What was Ava's favorite song?

GLORIA

Tequila!

LEIF

Master of Puppets!

CASPAR

The Thong Song!

BILLIE

You know, we have the opportunity to right a great wrong here tonight, don't we?



SHOUTS FROM THE CROWD.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

It's been a while since I've had an opening act,  
maybe it's time to break the streak, right?

AVA

Please come over here.

BILLIE

Hang on, guys.  
(Off mic.)  
Can I help you?

AVA

What are you doing?

BILLIE

I'm doing you a favor.

AVA

Do you know what favors are?

BILLIE

You're going to sing your song.

AVA

You don't even know if I can sing.

BILLIE

Can you?... Uh huh... Think of it this way: your  
mom would really hate it.  
(Back on the mic.)  
Let's hear it for Ava!

THE CROWD CHEERS AGAIN. AVA AWKWARDLY FUMBLES AROUND WITH THE MIC.

AVA

Hi... My mother hated this song. And I hope you  
hate it too.

SONG: AVA SINGS "POISONING PIGEONS IN THE PARK" BY TOM LEHRER.AVA FINISHES HER SONG AND THE CROWD GOES WILD.

AVA (CONT'D)

And now, ladies and gentlemen, someone destined to  
be a terrible mother herself someday... Billie  
Maddox!

SONG: BILLIE SINGS "YOU'VE GOTTA SEE MOMMA EVERY NIGHT (OR YOU CAN'T SEE MOMMA AT ALL)." BY BILLY ROSE AND CON CONRAD.

LATER ON, THE CROWD IS SLOWLY LEAVING THE DINER AT THE END OF THE SHOW.

BILLIE

Goodnight everybody. If you're driving don't drink and if you drink don't drive... You're good. You should quit all that physics garbage and play piano.

AVA

I'll think about it.

BILLIE

...

AVA

...

BILLIE

I'm pregnant.

AVA

Oh GOD.

BILLIE

Jesus.

AVA

That's TERRIBLE news.

BILLIE

Thanks. Thanks for the sympathy.

AVA

I'm sorry. What's the appropriate response? Congratulations?

BILLIE

I have no goddamn idea... Did you mean what you said at the top of the show? That I was destined to be a bad mother?

AVA

Yes. Of course I meant it.

BILLIE

Thanks.

AVA

I'm sorry... Look, do you strike me as someone who would make a good mother? No. But... Neither would I. Neither would a lot of people. So maybe I shouldn't be jerk about it.

BILLIE

Fair enough... I gotta go... You're a strange person Ava... keep it up.

AVA

Okay, mom.

BILLIE WALKS OFF.

MAGGIE

So. This has been weird.

CASPAR

Yes, it has.

MAGGIE

It was annoying at first, but I'm a little glad you invaded our privacy tonight.

CASPAR

Anytime.

MAGGIE

We've got a lot to talk about, obviously.

MILLY

But I'm looking forward to it.

MAGGIE

Me too. I'm going to go get the car. What was your name again?

CASPAR

... Jeff.

MAGGIE

Nice to meet you, Jeff.

CASPAR

Same here.

MILLY

So, we'll come back some time and update you on how we're doing since you seem so invested.

CASPAR

Okay, but restaurants are hard to keep open, I hope we're still here when you do.

MILLY

She gave me some mandates.

CASPAR

That sounds like her.

MILLY

Caspar isn't ever allowed to call her aunt, or call her my roommate.

CASPAR

Sounds easy enough.

MILLY

Sorry, Caspar's my kid.

CASPAR

Yeah, I know.

MILLY

I didn't name him after the cartoon character.

CASPAR

I know.

MILLY

... Not sure the best way to explain it all to him.

CASPAR

I don't think he needs much. Almost everything is a bigger deal in our heads.

MILLY

Yeah. You're good at this, do you have a kid?

CASPAR

... Yeah.

MILLY

Lucky kid.

MAGGIE HONKS THE HORN.

MILLY (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

CASPAR

I'll see you around, Milly.

EFFIE

Well, folks, despite our technical difficulties tonight, it has not stopped Saint Louis from being Saint Louis. I'm hearing word that local favorite Billie Maddox played a surprise show at a new place in town called "The Midnight Café." Apparently Billie didn't even have a piano player when she got there, she pulled someone right up out of the audience. That's Billie for you. Up next we've got The Flix with "Saturdays."

SONG: "SATURDAYS" BY THE FLIX.

GLORIA

You thought bringing them out into the parking lot  
would do something?

LEIF

I don't even know at this point. I'd try  
electroshock therapy if I thought it would work.

GLORIA

Well I guess we just wait for them to come back but  
this music is driving me crazy.

RADIO BUZZES.

EFFIE

Sweet freedom!

GLORIA

There we go.

ZEBULON

Gloria! It is not unlike the halls of  
Nebuchadnezzar! Are there sorceresses about?

GLORIA

Sorceresses?

EFFIE

Gloria, we are being snared in some sort of a  
deadfall!

GLORIA

What are you talking about?

LEIF

Everything seems to be going okay, y'all.

EFFIE

Well that is the whole point of a trap, isn't it?  
If it felt like a trap, nobody would wander into  
it.

ZEBULON

This is the madness of Queen Jezebel!

GLORIA

Okay, Zeb. Calm down.

CASPAR

What are they talking about?

GLORIA

They think we're in a trap.

AVA

Trust me, I know what it feels like to be trapped in Saint Louis, this isn't a trap.

LEIF

It *is* possible this is all just a coincidence.

CASPAR

If it was all on purpose that would mean... I mean if we're talking about Clementine, that would mean that she can control where we go. She can't control where we go.

GLORIA

And if she could, why would she send us to Saint Louis to have a nice time.

AVA

It doesn't make any sense.

LEIF

Hang on... Thinking like a criminal for a second... It might make a little sense.

AVA

Why?

LEIF

Well... If I was going to threaten someone, first they would need to know that I can follow through with the threat. So... I'd show off a little.

EFFIE

That's it exactly, Leif.

ZEBULON

It is the Staff of the Pharaoh cast upon the ground.

CASPAR

Can we ease up on the severity, everyone?

AVA

We're going to need a little more evidence.

GLORIA

Yeah, let's take it easy, let's talk about a problem when we have a problem.

THE AIR BECOMES DISTURBED AROUND THEM.

LEIF

Gloria... We've got a problem.

CLEMENTINE MATERIALIZES IN THE PARKING LOT.

CLEMENTINE

Hi everyone. How was mother's day?

GLORIA

Everybody stand back.

EFFIE

I got about 12 hours of curses built up for you, Clementine.

ZEBULON

What was the meaning of all this, Clementine?

CLEMENTINE

Everybody relax. I'm not going to rain down hellfire on you. Yet.

GLORIA

So this was you?

CLEMENTINE

Just a little fun. I just needed to show you what I was capable of.

GLORIA

And what are we supposed to do with that?

CLEMENTINE

Just listen.

GLORIA

No, you listen to me. You turned a mall full of people into monsters, you made an asteroid appear out of nowhere. Whatever you're doing, you need to stop it.

CLEMENTINE

There's a lot of strange things out there, Gloria. How can you be sure it was me?

AVA

We're sure it was you.

CLEMENTINE

There are infinite timelines out there and you people are concerned about a mall?

LEIF

A mall and an entire planet, yes.

CASPAR

Not to mention whatever else you've done.

CLEMENTINE

I haven't done anything! ...I have had things done to me.

GLORIA

Which gives you the right to what exactly?

CLEMENTINE

Rights? What are you talking about, Gloria? Are you still talking about your plan? Everyone's got to stick to Gloria's plan, right?

GLORIA

You're hurting people.

CLEMENTINE

You don't know that. How could you even tell? People are getting hurt every second of every hour of every day, how can you tell the difference between the pain that comes from me or the pain that comes from, I don't know, the universe being full of hurt! ...I know you've all seen it. World after world after world of hurt and pain and loss. And you want to stop *me*? Because that'll stop what? People from being hurt?... Oh wait... I get it now... you people have decided that you're a little band of do-gooders, is that it? Zig-zagging around the stars righting wrongs? Ridiculous... I'm sure Zebulon has convinced you all that I'm some sort of lost little lamb, right? An injured little doe in the woods. A misguided little kid... You're the ones who are fooling yourselves. There's no order to things. There are no laws written in the stars... There's only one thing that rings true to me: I have the power to get what I want. So I'm going to get it.

ZEBULON

Despite what that may take from others?

CLEMENTINE

Don't talk to me about what I take! ...I could snap my fingers and kill you all... But I'm not here to do that. I'm not here to take anything... I'm here to give you something.

GLORIA

We're not interested.



CLEMENTINE

Of course you are. I know because you've all told me exactly what you're interested in... And I can give it all to you. I've shown you here today. I put you in a world where Ava's mom and Caspar's moms all live in Saint Louis. I put you here. I can put you anywhere I want, hell I can put a piano in your dining room... So I'm not here with threats... I'm here with what you want. A world where Leif didn't throw everything away, a world where every scientist in the world listens to Dr. Ava Maddox... I can give you your son back, Caspar. You deserve to have him back. You've suffered enough. You should meet him again... I have.

GLORIA

That's enough.

CLEMENTINE

And you, Gloria, well it could go one of two ways for you. Which will it be? A world where a virus from across the sea *didn't* take your dream from you or shall we go deeper? Should we say a world where, one night, your parents cruised right through that intersection and there was no drunk driver to be found?

EFFIE

This is evil, what you're doing, Clementine.

CLEMENTINE

I'd make an offer to Effie and Zebulon but they already have what they want: to be considered human by all of you.

GLORIA

We're not interested-

CLEMENTINE

No no no. No. You're not supposed to answer me right now, Gloria. You have to sit with it a while. You have to let it eat away at you. Like I have. You have to sit there and let a better life look you in the eye while all you have to do is say yes...

THE AIR BEGINS TO CHANGE AROUND THEM.

AVA

What's happening?

LEIF

Fuck.

CLEMENTINE

I'm going to put you somewhere for a while. Give you some time to think. I'll come and get you when I feel like you're ready. I recommend you all figure out how to say yes to me... You don't want to see the alternative.

THE DINER VANISHES. CLEMENTINE WALKS OFF INTO THE CITY OF SAINT LOUIS.

THE END