

**HOME UNIVERSE**

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## DARK MATTER

*We're in a studio in Brooklyn where Vicki works with Zach.*

*Vicki is a young woman in her late 20's and Zach is a few years older.*

*A cubicle. There's one shitty table and one desk that's sort of okay. A really nice office chair and a squeaky office chair that sucks. A potted plant on the nice desk. A metal Mexican heart hung up overhead. A piece of shit laptop and a new laptop. Tons of hard drives next to the shitty laptop, all blinking and overflowing onto a power strip on the floor. There's a bulletin board on one wall, and Post-It notes all over the place.*

*The sound of a radio show coming from the studio space which exists beyond the cubicle. Just a murmur. A faint gibbering percolation.*

*Lights come up on Vicki, who is at her desk, facing Zach, who is sitting at his shitty table, despondent.*

*It's eleven in the morning, Monday.*

*Long pause.*

VICKI  
I'm sorry.

*Long pause.*

ZACH  
You're sorry.  
Oh, you're sorry.  
You're sorry.  
Okay.  
Well, that's good.

VICKI  
Zach.

COMMENTATOR

Law currently works at the university of California, Los angeles. He wondered: if you could see the cloud of dark matter enveloping the Milky Way, what would it look like? what shape would it be? he knew he could get clues from how the dark matter alters the paths of dwarf galaxies and clusters of stars as they orbit the Milky Way.

DOCTOR LAW

...And based on the shape of those paths we can say what the shape of the dark matter itself has to be.

COMMENTATOR

Now, you can't actually watch a dwarf galaxy go all the Way around our Milky Way. That would take about a billion years but Law and his colleagues used a kind of trick to reconstruct the path of one orbiting galaxy

DOCTOR LAW

As it flies around the Milky Way, tidal forces from the Milky Way are shredding stars out of it into streams that trail behind it and even go ahead of

*Long pause.*

it along it's orbit.

COMMENTATOR

Law says these streams of stars  
are like a trail of breadcrumbs  
showing the orbiting galaxy's path  
around the Milky Way. From that  
they could figure out the shape of the big  
cloud or halo of dark matter that surrounds  
our galaxy.

He says you can picture the bright visible  
part of our Milky Way as a flat, round  
dinner plate.

ZACH

So when is our last day?

VICKI

The Twentieth

*Long pause.*

DOCTOR LAW

And if you picture that sitting  
inside a large beach ball  
that represents the dark matter halo  
and if you then came along  
to that beach ball and put one hand  
on one side and one hand on the other  
and squeeEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEZED it  
that's something like we think the dark  
matter is. It's squeezed along that  
direction and the dinner plate of the disc  
of the Milky Way is sitting inside of it.

VICKI

Say.

ZACH

Um.

VICKI

If you're—

ZACH

No, I... Just...

*(Heavy sigh.)*

Where are we gonna put Veronica?

COMMENTATOR

Law presented this new "dark matter map"  
at a major conference  
at the American Astronomical Society.  
He says it should help scientists  
as they try to understand  
the nature of dark matter.  
because whatever it is  
it's got to be able to form  
this kind of squashed beach ball.

DOCTOR LAW

you have to have some kind of a dark matter  
particle which can build a halo

*They both glance slightly toward the plant.*

VICKI

Ah. Yeah.

like this 'cause this is generally  
what we see surrounding the Milky Way.

This probably means I'm gonna  
have to give up this space.

*Vicki's cell phone starts to ring. She looks at her phone.*

VICKI  
Shit that's Mary. She wants  
to make the announcement right now.  
About them cutting the videos.

COMMENTATOR  
He says at the moment, there's lots of  
theories about what dark matter might be  
but, nobody knows.

*She goes out into the studio. Turns off the radio.*

ZACH  
Should I—?

VICKI  
Yeah um the Bobby Kennedy moment. Where he bails the boat? He just throws the water  
out?

ZACH  
Yeah.

VICKI  
That would be funny to add that on. To the end. And maybe the “Sprout T.V.” watermark  
on it?

ZACH  
Okay

VICKI  
*(To phone)* Hello?

*Zach does work on his computer. Vicki grabs her keys and starts to leave.*

VICKI  
*(To phone. Turning away from Zach, as she tries to hold it together.)*  
Hi how are ya? ...Um. Yeah... So—so—Ten—Ten your time?

*Zach plays a clip on the computer. The sound of water being dumped out of a  
boat, accompanied by waves lapping.*

VICKI  
*(To phone.)* When you're making the announcement, should I be on the call?

*She listens.*

VICKI

Sure. Sure...OK, I guess...Well, I'm... No...No...I mean, whatever makes sense.

*Long pause. Sound of water being dumped continues, with waves lapping.  
Blackout.*

### THREE DIMENSIONS

*Zach and Bob, a young man in his early 20's, sit down on grass. We hear sounds of a softball game in the distance.*

BOB

*(iPhone in hand holding it out toward Zach, fussing with pictures on screen.)*

That's her playing the ukulele. You should hear some of her music.

ZACH

This is her too?

BOB

Yeah. In her car. Oh, this is a little painting she made. After we met. The glass is green. It says "love" in red. She's like just such an artist, man. She's really creative and talented and—

ZACH

Is that her ass?

BOB

Yeah.

*Short pause. Sound of ball striking leather. An umpire shouting "Out!"*

BOB

She's a cashier at Whole Foods.

ZACH

Whole Foods. Great place.

BOB

The skeletal structure of carboxyl. Which I have to memorize everything about for Thursday, That's her. About to go to sleep. Staring at the phone. Her cat. She has like one blue eye and one brown eye. The sky. Don't the clouds look amazing?

ZACH

Well. Where did you meet?

BOB  
Yesterday.

ZACH  
No. Where.

BOB  
Well I haven't actually met her. *(Takes tobacco out. Rolls cigarette. )*

ZACH  
You met her on what?

BOB  
Uh. Cupid.

ZACH  
Where's she live?

BOB  
*(Rolling cigarette)* North Carolina.

ZACH  
Man, when are you gonna quit?

*Silence. As Bob rolls his cigarette, his hand trembles noticeably.*

BOB  
So. Yeah. I'm kind of... I mean, like she makes Lego jewelry, you know? Like jewelry out of Legos.

ZACH  
She's in North Carolina, man.

BOB  
I know.

*Silence.*

ZACH  
You know what I hear? Soho Synagogue. It's the place in town.

*Bob looks to Zach.*

BOB  
Soho Synagogue?

ZACH

Well you gotta get out there. Meet some real people. You know what I mean? Who you can physically sit down with. Face to face. In three dimensions.

*Pause. Bob rolling cigarette.*

BOB

Yeah. I dunno. I think you can get a good vibe from someone on a screen.

ZACH

Whatever makes you happy.

BOB

Yeah. ... Yeah.

*Short pause. Another pitch. Umpire: "Out!"*

## **IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S THE CHIP**

*Studio. Tuesday. Zach is working. Vicki comes in, mid-making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.*

VICKI

Like a cow maybe. And like throw in some mooing. Kind of show like a really great glory shot of—

ZACH

*(Hits space bar.)*

*They watch something on the screen. Sound effect: "Mooooooooo!"*

VICKI

Yeah good. And one of those pig in the mud shots. Getting fed by the fence.

ZACH

*(Hits space bar.)*

*They watch the screen. Sound effect: "Oink Oink Oink"*

VICKI

Then as the black-and-white goat that's like eating lettuce looks joyous, like maybe throw in some ducks.

*He does some rattling on his keyboard like a drummer, movement with his mouse,*

*then bang on space.*

*They watch. We hear an audio montage: “Swoosh! Boink! Oink! Oink! Mooooooooo!”*

VIKI

*(as the montage plays) yeah oh my god. (laughter as the clip concludes) Aww. That’s cute. That’s really cute.*

*They both laugh a little. After a moment, he sighs. A short pause.*

VICKI

Can I give you a hug? A teeny one?

*She kneels down by his chair and puts her arms around him, still awkwardly holding her P.B.J. After a moment, they separate.*

VICKI

I wish we weren’t going by the way side.

ZACH

Yeah.

VICKI

I mean, I get it. I was just like so pumped that like we’d get through the spring. And like I was really excited to make a Pop Tarts video next month. About Pop Tarts. And how Pop Tarts negatively impact the climate and like. I – I... I just like... I dunno.

*Short pause.*

ZACH

I was thinking about it last night. I think this is going to open up doors. For both of us.

VICKI

I really loved this though.

*Long silence.*

VICKI

I feel like groundhogs playing the banjo.

ZACH

Alright.

*He starts to work on his computer. Vicki opens her desk drawer, fishes out her check book. Writes a check. This should take around fifteen seconds, at least.*



VICKI

Hey, is there anything else I owe you besides this umm fifty-nine?

ZACH

I don't think so.

VICKI

i'm really sorry that i

ZACH

oh no

VICKI

i was really dumb in that i got notice after notice and like

ZACH

well its gonna get pretty hot pretty soon. If the AC doesn't work you are not going to be happy.

VICKI

Yeah.

*She rips out the check. Hands it to him.*

VICKI

Here you go. Thanks a lot.

ZACH

Thank you.

*A truck goes by outside. Rumbling. She sits down. Broods.*

VICKI

*(After a long pause)*

Do you think I look middle-aged?

ZACH

Middle-aged? The fuck?

VICKI

Look. The proof... *(Pulling out a framed photograph from her desk drawer.)* ...is in this picture of me and Ted Danson.

ZACH

Oh no now you're pulling out Ted Danson

VICKI

Look at my chin. *(Takes her glasses off and holds the picture away.)*

ZACH

You in that picture don't look like you in real life. *(Grabs the picture.)* What was this even taken on?

VICKI

iPhone

ZACH

Exactly. iPhones have basically like one chip.

VICKI

I look terrible

ZACH

It's the chip. It's not you, it's the chip.

VICKI

He looks good though.

ZACH

Uhh. He's got like crust for a face. What was that show he was on?

VICKI

Bored to Death.

ZACH

That says it all. I mean, he could basically be playing the Grim Reaper in Ingmar Bergman's Seventh Seal if like they were remaking that.

VICKI

*(Laughter)* You're really good at death insults today. *(More laughter. Then even more laughter. Then...)* I feel better.

ZACH

Like these kind of groundhog shots? *(Hits space bar.)*

*We hear GROUNDHOG BANJO MUSIC come up. They watch. A beat. Then...  
Blackout. Banjo music up...*

## OH, IS THIS REAL?

*Bob comes in to a dim space, with a candle, and a remote control. He is looking at a screen that we can't see. It is bathing him in a kind of magic blue.*

*Banjos fade down while Bob takes a seat, puts candle on a little table in front of him like he's going out to dinner at a romantic restaurant.*

*The voice of A GIRL FROM NORTH CAROLINA comes booming out of speakers.*

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

can you hear me?

BOB

crystal clear

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

let me go get a lighter hold on

BOB

what kinda candle you got?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

mag n ia bl ssom

BOB

wait you're breaking up

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

magnolia blossom. We're in the south here!

BOB

so how you doin'

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

i'm okay. how was your day

BOB

no complaints

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

i don't see you

BOB

i'm right here!

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

no you're gone

BOB  
i'll come back

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
oh hi

BOB  
how are you?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
okay. damn, are we on a date? this is like a date. we're on like a Skype date.

BOB  
i told my best friend that i met someone online and he was like "oh thats cool"

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
Well we haven't met.

BOB  
Quasi met. You know what i mean. But my friend was like "thats really cool"

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
That's cool

*Pause.*

BOB  
Do people call you Jen or just Jennifer?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
umm...uhh... Jen

BOB  
so I should just call you Jen. I like saying "Jennifer" though (*Brief silence.*) Jennifer  
(*Brief silence.*) Jen (*Brief silence.*) Jen (*Brief silence.*) That's nice. (*Brief silence.*)  
Jen.

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)  
(*Heavy sigh*) So.... I gotta tell you something real quick

*Brief doomed silence.*

BOB  
whats goin on?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

i did something really stupid. like i didnt tell you something. i wasnt honest to you. With you. Now its like bothering me? 'Cause i have like a conscience? Umm... i'm just scared. (*Sigh*) Ummm... So, out with it. I...I'm kind of seeing someone right now. And I'm all mixed up and fucked up about my whole life and... (*Short pause*) I'm telling you this now. If you don't want to talk to me again i understand. I dont like liars.

BOB

you're seeing somebody?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

i'm really really sorry, Bob. Really really sorry. I... I CARE about you, Bob  
(*Sigh*) This is so weird! I've never met you but you exist! but at the end of the day it's like its starting to dawn on me like oh, this is real? (*short pause*) I'm really really sorry. (*Brief silence. Sniffle. Long silence.*) Do you need to go like process this or something? (*Sniffle.*) Fuck. (*Sniffle.*) This is weird! This is like crazy! (*Long silence.*) i'm really sorry (*Long silence.*) what can i do? (*Long silence.*) Bob? (*Sniffle.*) I'm really... I don't know why I...It was when we were first talking. Like we were on I.M. I don't know! I wish i didnt have to look at this camera (*short pause*) this isn't me (*Sob. brief silence. Sigh*) I gotta blow my nose (*Blows her nose. Loudly. It distorts the speakers. Sigh. Sniffle*) Bob? Are you gonna say something?

BOB

what do you—

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

Wait you're frozen.

BOB

i'm not frozen

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

but you're not moving on my screen

BOB

i'm right here.

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

(*Sniffle.*)

yo re zen n my creen  
will you push your video off and on again?  
(*brief silence*)  
i want to see you.

BOB

(*To himself*)

i'm right here

*Long Silence.*

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

okay. before you go. i want to say that i think you're really cool.

(*Sniffle.*)

Bob?

BOB

Yeah?

NORTH CAROLINA (*Off.*)

will i talk to you again?

*Hold... Then, he turns off the screen with the remote control.*

*For a little while he sits in the dark with his candle.*

*Then he blows his candle out.*

## RENDER TIME

*Wednesday. Work. Zach's editing, he has ear-buds in. Not aware of anything around him, like in a trance. Vicki enters, cell phone to her ear.*

VICKI

(*To phone*)

I'm—I'm... I'm really not—

(*Listening*)

I just i don't—

(*Listening*)

Alright. Okay well is there—

(*Listening*)

No... Just I mean, I can't really wait til the end of the week for that.

(*Listening for a long while, enraged.*)

So... Okay. So...

(*Continuing to listen for a long while, enraged.*)

Well uh I appreciate you doing everything that you can.

*A moment. Then she hangs up.*

*Another moment. Then she goes to the bathroom. We hear the sound of water running. Zach's still working, rattling like a drummer on his computer.*

*Eventually, Vicki comes out. Dries her face. Hangs up her coat. Spends some time looking through the rack. Picking out two dresses, one of which is red and polka-dotted.*

*She enters the cubicle with the dresses.*

VICKI

Zach Zizzle.

*(No response. Louder.)*

Zach Zazao

*(Still no response. Even louder.)*

Zach.

*Zach sees her. Removes his earplugs.*

VICKI

Loop one? Or this one?

ZACH

Um. Wait what is this for? The shoot?

VICKI

Yeah.

*She holds up the loop dress.*

ZACH

Uhhh. It's got no

VICKI

Yeah it just comes up to here. I want to make an impression. This is the last video, you know?

*She throws the dress on the back of her chair, then goes into the studio.*

ZACH

Um. I don't think I've ever seen that dress.

VICKI

It's not mine. Found it in the apartment. *(Comes back in with water. Tends to the plant.)*

ZACH

That's funny. *(Short pause.)* So whose do you think it is?

VICKI

Um. I don't know.

*Zach resumes working. Short pause.*

ZACH

By the way. Um. Somebody contacted me about a job tomorrow, so tomorrow I'm gonna bail at three. Cool?

*Short pause.*

VICKI  
Sure.

ZACH  
After this ends I have to find work. So.

VICKI  
*(trying really hard to sound casual.)* Yeah, definitely.

ZACH  
*(Turning away from his screen.)* It's just a shoot. It's pretty lame.

VICKI  
Great well. Maybe we shouldn't shoot the intro until Friday then.

ZACH  
*(Bewildered.)* Why?

VICKI  
It's late. And now I guess like we won't have time tomorrow.

ZACH  
*(Beat.)* If you want I can just tighten this stuff up and then

VICKI  
No, no. It's okay.

*She picks the dress up off the chair. Rearranges clothes rack. Car alarm goes off suddenly outside.*

*Zach returns to staring at his screen. Hold... Vicki lets out a heavy sigh.*

## **BE PRODUCTIVE**

*Studio. Thursday. Zach places a cardboard box on the floor. Starts to rummage, pulling out archaic cables and discarding them. Vicki sips a hot cup of takeout coffee.*

VICKI  
So, I think he's a dick. But he's, um funny. Awkward. He reminds me a little of Jesse Eisenberg.



ZACH  
Exciting. Have you kissed?

VICKI  
No.

ZACH  
No? Have you blown him?

VICKI  
No.

*They both laugh. This is what they love.*

VICKI  
It's just weird. Like for all the ways Josh was the wrong guy I still feel like I miss him a lot.

ZACH  
Yeah but Josh was like constitutionally incapable of having a

VICKI  
No I know. It's just I'm not even sure I'm ready. Like as soon as I signed on to my old profile like it just gave me the heebie-jeebies. But—But... *(She sighs.)* I found your messages.

ZACH  
You were checking leftovers?

VICKI  
I wasn't. / but I was like, "oh my..."

ZACH  
I thought you would have permanently deleted

VICKI  
I like flashbacked to the time when like we were making out. do you remember that?

ZACH  
i keep it buried. *(He flings a large cable out of the box onto the floor.)*

VICKI  
so funny. i just remember we stayed up like drinking red bull and your dog's fur everywhere. *(Laughter.)*

*Uncomfortable silence.*

VICKI

You want me to not talk about it.

ZACH

No, we can talk about it. We can talk about that unforgettable evening back in oh eight.

VICKI

*(Laughter.)* I'm really sorry I don't know why i

ZACH

you know what? it was great i jerk off to it like ten times a week.

VICKI

ohh gross. Never again.

ZACH

World Trade Center. Never again.

*Short pause.*

VICKI

but i'm really glad that like i just became like uh

ZACH

my little sister

VICKI

yeah your little sister. that you made out with. *(Laughter.)*

ZACH

Yeah.

*Short pause.*

VICKI

But... *(Long silence.)* Anyway. *(Sigh.)*

ZACH

*(Yanks out a small Firewire cable.)* Found it!

VICKI

*(Sarcastically)* Oh thank god.

*Zach collects the cables.*

VICKI

Can I just say for the record, this coffee is by far superior to any coffee we've ever had from Nicky's?

*Zach continues coiling the cables and placing them back in the box.*

VICKI

We haven't gone there in so long. Last time was with Bob. Remember?

*Zach puts away the box. Vicki after a moment pulls the camera bag out from under her desk. He comes back into the cubicle, with the Firewire cable.*

ZACH

Well. You wanna look for more b-roll?

VICKI

*(Zipping open bag, pulling out camera.)* I thought you were going through cables.

ZACH

I had to find the FireWire.

VICKI

Okay.

*She shoves a tape in the camera. With her back to him, she rewinds.*

ZACH

I'm just here 'til—

VICKI

*(Snapping.)* Okay, we can do the b-roll.

*Tape continues screeching in reverse. Neither of them say anything.*

ZACH

*(After a long pause.)* I'm just trying to help. Be productive.

*He stands there for a moment. The tape continues rewinding loudly. Hold...*

## **OVERKILL**

*Studio. Early in the morning. Friday. Empty. Lights up on Zach slowly rolling a tall light on wheels out of its corner. Then he plugs it in.*

*Vicki unlocks the door. Enters. She's got a pile of mail.*

VICKI  
Good morning!

*Zach, ignoring her, sets up another light then goes to the closet and finds a green tablecloth and some clothespins.*

VICKI  
You're here early.

ZACH  
'Cause I have a thing at two today now.

VICKI  
Ah.

*Vicki hangs up her coat. Zach starts to attach the green tablecloth to the bulletin board on the back wall with clothespins.*

*She takes the mail into the cubicle. Goes through it. Opens one envelope. Considers the contents. Tucks the letter away inside of her bag, hiding it. Pause. After a moment, Vicki walks into the studio. Considers him for a little while. Zach is continuing to pin up the makeshift green screen. He sighs heavily.*

VICKI  
Trying to do too many things?

ZACH  
Sure.

*He finishes green screen. Long silence.*

VICKI  
What's up with you, dude?

ZACH  
Nothing.

VICKI  
*(Cute cartoon character, approaching)* Are you sure? Are you suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuure?

ZACH  
Get off. Vicki, get off. Seriously.

VICKI  
Okay.

*She goes. Takes her red polka dot dress, with her into the bathroom. She changes, talking to him with the door part way open.*

VICKI

I think you should get the camera out. So we can shoot

*Zach approaches the door. Silence.*

ZACH [ \* Sounds like "Fallon-osophist". Think of Jimmy Fallon. ]  
I went to um... I went to uh... The Church of Phalunosophy \* last night?

*Short pause.*

VICKI

Oh?

ZACH

They're... They were having this like uh special gala and I... I had to go there 'cause I was like shooting this piece for this online magazine that's covering like religious news.

VICKI

uh-huh?

ZACH

so i saw

VICKI

What?

ZACH

Your uhh... Your umm... You know – testimonial.

*Short pause.*

ZACH

How—how long... Uh... I mean like Phalunosophy... when did that start?

*Brutal silence.*

ZACH

I'm totally not trying to come from like a standpoint of like... you know—any anything—but... the fact that i've known you for like how long? And you never told me about this. It's a little bit.

VICKI

Listen, Zach.

ZACH

I'm just trying to wrap my mind around it.

VICKI

First of all, that event, it isn't like, you know... There's a ton of concepts that an outsider definitely can't understand.

ZACH

Right. Yeah it wasn't the gibberish that threw me off. I'm not stupid. I understand when something's total bullshit.

VICKI

Maybe you aren't aware of the effects misunderstood words have. On a person.

ZACH

Uhh sorry?

VICKI

I said the effects that misunderstood words have—

ZACH

C'mon, I've known you for five years, Vicki! Five years!

VICKI

Fine!

*Pause.*

ZACH

How could you keep something like that from me? All this time?

VICKI

i'm not keeping it from you. you just found out!

*She comes out of the bathroom.*

ZACH

The red polka dot dress? Again?

VICKI

I could wear the loop one but you said

ZACH

No, no, red is over-kill.

VICKI

Why? Just 'cause I wore it in the kale chips video?

*Short pause.*

ZACH

I want to go back.

VICKI

Look Zach—I would have told you. It just never came up. You know? It's not like if it came up I wouldn't have said it. Just there'd have to be a reason. And I mean whatever, it's not the only thing.

ZACH

Just a pretty big thing

VICKI

I'm happy for you to know, Zach. Now. The thing is... Like I'm getting the sense that you're like a little bit like

ZACH

Disturbed

VICKI

Oh so you're disturbed.

ZACH

About you.

*She goes back into bathroom, starts to put on make-up.*

VICKI

Well, what is it that's disturbing you?

ZACH

I mean why keep a thing like that

VICKI

I just / told you.

ZACH

Was it because you're not supposed to tell me?

VICKI

Are you serious?

ZACH

I don't know. I don't know. I feel like I don't know you.

VICKI

You know me. Don't bullshit me.

ZACH

What other things have you been hiding from me?

VICKI

*(Coming back out.)* What other things. ...Zach, look— *(Beat. He stares at her.)* You're really not feeling this dress.

*Zach gets wireless lavalier microphone equipment out. Stand-offish silence.*

ZACH

What about the bicycle dress.

*Short pause. She hunts on the rack for the bicycle dress. More stand-offish silence. She finds the bicycle dress, then goes into the bathroom taking the bicycle dress.*

ZACH

Has anyone ever suggested that you might be in a cult?

VICKI

Is that what you want to do?

ZACH

Seriously no one has ever sat you down and said “Vicki”

VICKI

I mean my mom who was basically a raving bitch sure

ZACH

Well that sucks I'm sorry she was a bitch

VICKI

Would you just tell me what your problem is?

ZACH

I just - I think that you're... that you're—

VICKI

that i'm brainwashed?

ZACH



No! / No

VICKI  
Okay. Zach—

ZACH  
That's NOT what i was going to say. And that's not what i think.

VICKI  
that is like. so fucking demeaning.

ZACH  
well, obviously you can't even like have a conversation about this

VICKI  
YES! I CAN! But I don't like being questioned!

ZACH  
Hey, Vick, you're getting way too defensive about this.

VICKI  
You don't realize / how you sound! How fucking—

ZACH  
Let's calm down.

VICKI  
NO, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN! YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN!

*Long pause.*

VICKI  
You don't know Phalunosophy. Okay? You have spent zero time at the church.

ZACH  
So?

VICKI  
So, Phalunosophy is what is written. And I know what I know and having a debate about it with someone who...who... Who's not spent time studying the Knowledge... Like it - it just doesn't interest me.

ZACH  
Well, maybe if you could have talked about it with me.

VICKI

I would have talked about it with you if i felt like you were interested. But that's not what I've ever felt.

*Pause.*

ZACH  
What does that mean?

*Silence.*

ZACH  
"If you were interested." What does that mean?

VICKI  
It doesn't mean anything.

ZACH  
I think it means something

*Beat.*

VICKI  
I told you, I don't want to debate this.

*A really long silence. Eventually she comes out, in the bicycle dress. Then Zach turns on the lights. A minute or two minutes of yet more stand-off-ish silence.*

*Zach busies himself with the wireless receiver, turning it on, plugging it into the camera. After a while, he hands her the wireless microphone transmitter. She snakes the wire up the inside of her dress and clips the mic to the front of the dress.*

VICKI  
I would fire you but

ZACH  
We're already fired

VICKI  
Yeah

*He gets behind his camera and fixes focus.*

ZACH  
(*As he puts on his headphones.*) Can you just count to thirty.

VICKI  
One... Two... Three... Four

ZACH  
that's fine.

*Silence.*

ZACH  
Rolling.

*Silence. Vicki struggles to get into Commentator mode.*

VICKI  
It's hard to think of what to do. *(Pause. Sigh.)* It's hard to think of what to... Just give me a—give me a second. *(Pause.)* It's hard to think of what to do about the climate crisis. People all over the world are—

ZACH  
*(Has been detecting a slight audio problem in his headphones.)* Okay, hold on.

*He goes over. Fixes the mic on her collar. They stand very close to one another saying nothing for a long time as he carefully adjusts the mic .*

VICKI  
I mean, I haven't changed.

*Hold, hold... Then Zach goes to the camera. Puts on headphones. Flips around L.C.D. screen with a snap. She looks at her reflection in the screen. Pause. Deep breath.*

VICKI  
From the beginning again. Alright?

## **JAZZ**

*Studio. Monday. We hear a JAZZY beat. A clip is playing. Vicki is taking down the green tablecloth. Zach is sitting in front of the computer. Long pause.*

ZACH  
You seriously want to use this drumbeat?

VICKI  
It's the same exact music we've been using like for every

ZACH  
No. We don't ALWAYS use that music

*Vicki, enters cubicle, folding up the green cloth. Short pause.*

ZACH  
why don't we just go back to that Christmas one.

VICKI  
Which?

ZACH  
This one.

*He smashes the space bar. CHRISTMAS MUSIC blasts on.*

ZACH  
Just some less jazzy shit. I'm sick of jazz.

*Long pause.*

VICKI  
Look. I'm sorry about our conversation on Friday.

*CHRISTMAS MUSIC continuing to blast. Pause.*

VICKI  
Really, really sorry.

*CHRISTMAS MUSIC continuing to blast. Pause.*

VICKI  
I don't know why I never told you.

ZACH  
It's fine. I just sort of thought you were like my friend.

VICKI  
I am your friend, Zach.

**ZACH**  
***(Stopping music.)* Cool well it isn't really looking like you are right now. I mean, I just feel like "fuck." ...Would you have treated someone who's a Phalunosophist this way?**

VICKI  
Okay, first of all it was never my intention to like cause this. And the truth is like—I mean, our friendship has never touched on Phalunosophy, in any way. You know? So, I'm sorry for making you feel like excluded, **and y'know you're allowed to have**

**your opinion. But—**

ZACH  
I know. No—

VICKI  
I mean, I totally apologize, I mean

ZACH  
I know. You're right. I – I dunno. I didn't come to work today to like have a big fight again.

VICKI  
So. Let's just like forget about it then. *(Short pause.)* I mean, unless there's something else? Is there...?

ZACH  
No. *(Beat.)* No.

VICKI  
Then, apologies?

ZACH  
It's okay. Everything's cool.

VICKI  
Shake on it?

ZACH  
Alright.

*They shake hands.*

ZACH  
I'm sorry. I'm just like wicked out of it. I had the weirdest weekend. You remember my aunt?

VICKI  
Which one?

ZACH  
my ninety-three-year-old aunt who

VICKI  
Aunt Roz?

ZACH

Yeah. *(As he picks up a roll of packing tape and starts to fold up a loose cardboard box and tape its flaps. Referring to the music file.)* That's converting.

VICKI

Okay.

ZACH

So like, Saturday afternoon she was having a birthday and like I just knew that I did not want to go.

VICKI

So you went.

ZACH

So I find myself in some town called Woodmere. It's like Jewish Appalachia only in the suburbs. This guy Eli whose like house it is he's like um... His wife's grandmother was married to the brother of my mother's father. So like totally makes perfect sense for me to be there. I try to talk to Eli over the deviled eggs. He's like, "Who are you again?" I'm like "Oh I'm your wife's grandmother's husband's brother's ..."

VICKI

Yeah.

ZACH

*(Continuing to fold and tape)* It's just—there's babies puking all over the place and some uncle fucker starts ranting to me about his brief venture into network T.V. He tried to produce a show – get this – called "GILLbert and FINley" about two delightful fish broadcasting from the hull of a ship. Never took off, for some crazy reason. Apparently the success of Robert Rabbit completely eclipsed... *(Beat.)* Roger Rabbit. Jesus. *(Scolding himself.)* "Robert Rabbit." I'm sorry.

VICKI

It's totally okay.

ZACH

*(Short pause.)* And Roz just sits there enthralling everyone with tales of abortive sea journeys to Ellis Island by her grandparents but the problem is she keeps contradicting herself. One second it's June Tenth Nineteen Twenty-Three, the next it's June Tenth, Nineteen Forty-Three. It's all very touching, though. The elated faces of my uncles and aunts gathered around her. They all look like children. But you know what the worst part was? After everything, I then say goodbye to my aunt. I lean down. Say, "It's great to see you, Roz. Happy Birthday." Give her a gentle hug. And she says, "So glad you could come, Moishe." Who is of course the cousin that lives in Michigan and hasn't been in New York in ten years. So all that time, she thinks I'm Moishe. Yeah. And then Eli whisks me away in his S.U.V. Trying to get me to the train station in two minutes flat.

And he's speeding through the streets of Woodmere blasting "Girls Girls Girls" by Motley Crue and he tells me he's been doing Karate all week and his foot really hurts 'cause he's been doing Karate four times a week and we're ramming into the backs of people's fenders and it's the most awkward moment but I decide to ask him about his religion, 'cause I'd heard he was descended from some very holy tribe, and so I say, "I hear you're in a tribe or something." Clearly those weren't the right words. He suddenly contracts terminal silence. Cross the train tracks. Drops me off. And then he says, "Well, good to see you, Moishe. Come again." The whole train back to New York, I just felt like... Like – I mean my aunt's in her nineties and she's allowed to mistake me for somebody else, but for all I know all of them thought I was my cousin. And none of them even knew I was me. But you know, it made me remember the very first day when I got back from shooting in Port-au-Prince. After having to be like way-laid in Jackson Memorial 'cause they thought there was something like direly wrong with me, but really I had just had like a freak-out breakdown 'cause I was like... Whatever. I remember distinctly standing in J.F.K. at baggage claim and like waiting for my backpack to come. And it was like, "Okay: All I Need To Do Is Get My Backpack. And like Once I Get My Backpack, I can just Put All of This Bullshit Behind Me." Like all of the years doing this like pseudo-noble going-to-disaster zones and shooting like victims of like horrible catastrophes thinking like... that was what I was supposed to do, but all I wanted to do was like get my backpack and just like not hide behind like a fucking viewfinder anymore, and like it wouldn't matter what I worked on, I could just work on stupid YouTube videos with like whoever. Because it didn't matter. Like – it took all that shit in Haiti for me to see that there's really only one thing that you have to do before the hatch shuts, 'cause once the hatch shuts, the hatch shuts, and no matter how many like...you know, like sensational horrible situations about like veterans or like tsunamis that I would like capture on fucking mini-DV, it just didn't matter. I had to like go and look for like The Thing. (*Short pause.*) I'm really failing at this here. But I had perspective. The first thing that I did when I was finally back in America was buy a membership at Blockbuster Video. And I sat on the fucking bench outside of Ben and Jerry's and looked at like families getting waffle cones with shit on them. And like I was like, "Oh, this is it." And then I get like mad at myself, like here I am like years later getting upset because I go to like a ninety-three-year-old woman's birthday and like a couple of people like forget my name. It's like I have like relapsed into pettiness. Like I'm becoming like more and more petty. And that's my problem. And so... it's my fault.

VICKI

*(Has barely been listening this whole time.)* Your fault?

ZACH

For... you know... losing perspective. I have to find my perspective again.

VICKI

Can I ask you something?

ZACH

What? *(Stops making boxes.)*

VICKI

Uh... So I'm having a financial problem. Sprout, I guess they do direct deposit for employees but I was considered a contract freelancer so the last invoice I assumed I'd get before, and I still don't know why I haven't got it...and I've like totally been looking at jobs online but I don't really understand what's happening there's like hardly anything out there and fucking Mary owes me / around like –

ZACH

What happened after I gave you the money before? What have / you been spend

VICKI

Nothing. Just I have eighty-nine cents in my bank account now. And they turned off the electricity again. Con Edison.

*Long pause.*

ZACH

I want very much to help you, Vicki.

VICKI

Woah. Okay. If you don't want to help me, that's totally fine.

ZACH

i just said—

VICKI

If it's better for you to not, it's okay, like seriously. it just means i've gotta find somebody else. *(short pause.)* i'm really, really, really not happy. Borrowing money. So like don't think that I am. *(She gives him a long look.)*

*Pause.*

ZACH

How much do you need? *(Short pause.)* Give me a number.

VICKI

How about... Four?

*Beat.*

ZACH

Four hundred.

VICKI

Is that too much? *(Short pause.)* I promise as soon as Mary comes through and I—



ZACH  
Just give me a second here.

*Silence.*

VICKI  
Zach, I have no money. I don't have enough for my Metrocard uptown.

*Silence.*

VICKI  
Please. I just got a call, today. An offer. For a teaching job. In another two weeks—

ZACH  
It's not a problem, Vicki. Not that "it's not a problem" but I mean... Um....Alright. So. Okay. I can give you a check. You can deposit today. *(Goes, gets checkbook.)*

VIKI  
But I mean... Do you feel okay about it?

ZACH  
I... I mean, I'm not gonna say no to you.

VICKI  
But I mean...

*He writes her a check. This should feel like it takes a painfully long amount of time as Vicki stands there, tensely, waiting. Finally, Zach rips out the check.*

VICKI  
Thank you. *(quickly starting to go)* I'll get everything resolved / and—

ZACH  
Yeah.

VICKI  
Thanks—

ZACH  
*(Heavy sigh.)* Of course.

VICKI  
*(Short, uncomfortable pause. She puts on her coat.)* So, I'm gonna go to the bank alright?

ZACH

I think that's a—

VICKI

We still need to go through and change a bit of the uh you know. The timing. In the uh...  
*(Trails off; going out the door.)*

ZACH

Don't forget to call Con Ed, alright?

VICKI

Soon as I get back...*(Trails off; letting the door swing shut behind her with a bang.)*

*Brief silence.*

ZACH

No problem.

## ETERNAL THINGS

*Studio. Tuesday night. Vicki brings out a Phalunosophy book, places it in Bob's hands and points to a passage.*

BOB

*(Reading aloud.)* "Two rules for happy living. One. Be able to experience anything. Two. Cause only those things which others are able to experience easily."

*Short pause.*

VICKI

You should borrow this.

BOB

Are you sure?

VICKI

Uh yeah. Wait let me see... *(Starting to look through some other books)* I've been scanning through some of my favorite stuff for you ...Okay. This is just something I want to show you, 'cause I love it.

BOB

I like the title. "Your Mission To Earth." *(Reading aloud passage she points to.)* "What is true for you is what is true for you and when you have lost that you have lost all."

VICKI

(As in, 'does that make sense?') Right?

BOB

"People are not bodies, people are living units. A living unit attached to A.U. "

VICKI

Away Universe.

BOB

Away Universe?

VICKI

So let's look that up. 'Cause you'll see that term a lot. (*Flipping through the glossary in the back of a large Basic Text, "The Criterius". Finding the definition.*) Ah-ha. (*Reading aloud.*) "Away Universe is simply a point of view. That upon which one agrees, in order to continue in association with other points of view. Uncertainty is Apparent A.U. Hence your A.U. body is your own construction, whilst the real individual, or actual identity exists elsewhere." You get it so far?

BOB

Yeah... I mean—?

VICKI

So, I am not this. Meaning I am not A.U. I inhabit A.U., I move A.U., and I use A.U. to survive in this galaxy, but, if I can separate myself from A.U then I have the freedom to choose. You following? So what E.L.P. – Emma La Paix – is getting at in this book is... you know – She's talking about what's really happening. The truth is that you'll run Past Lives in Processing. Before you go Free. And like it'll explain a ton. (*Consulting notes on a legal pad; opening "Your Mission To Earth; handing him the book.*) Okay. Read this.

BOB

"The Purpose of Phalunosopy?"

VICKI

Mm-hm.

BOB

(*Beat.*) "The individual is installed into a broad state of unknowingness incapable of comprehending its own condition. The mission of Phalunosopy then, is to raise the knowingness of the identity unit, to such a degree that it again knows what it is and what it is doing and in this operating capability then return directly to his or her Home Universe." (*Short pause.*) So Earth is our own construction?

VICKI

Sort of. It's like our collectively agreed-upon construction. It's been purchased.

BOB  
Heavy.

VICKI  
Um. Well. Yeah. ... You should borrow all of these, and you should read all of these.

BOB  
You're just like pulling books out left and right.

VICKI  
I mean you said you wanted me to show you things, Bob. So I was like, "Alright, I better have some shit to show him." But this is only like the smallest chip. Like I don't even know where to begin to—I mean, the things that have happened to me. *(Silence.)* You know, if you want. We could like... Go together.

*Brief silence.*

BOB  
To the church?

VICKI  
Yeah. I'm there a lot. So. I can show you around and

BOB  
Yeah. I think I might like that actually.

VICKI  
And you can meet my friends. I have so many friends there!

BOB  
Um. Let's do that. That'd be fun.

VICKI  
Yeah.

*Long pause. Bob is getting engrossed in the Emma La Paix text in his hands.*

BOB  
So when she says freedom... what does – what does she mean?

VICKI  
Well, we are eternal things, Bob. We've had many bodies. And freedom is the ability to control that. Does that make sense?

BOB

I think so. Yeah.

VICKI

*(Beat. Sighs.)* It's always been my intention to like SHOW this to you. Just so you know.... Like when I first met you, I had a feeling. Like a sensation that we would have some kind of like really intense, like... like connection. And I know we haven't been like... you know—as good friends as we could have been? But I've definitely felt it. Like it's palpable. So yeah, it's pretty funny you wanted to come over. I could kind of already, like, perceive it. People tell me I perceive things that I shouldn't be able to perceive? But. Whatever. *(Sighs.)* I just want to say that like... you know, I can see you're having trouble. You're doing the right thing by talking to me about it. So, I'm happy for that.

BOB

Alright.

VICKI

Don't worry. I'm here.

*Pause.*

### PICTURE A CAT

*The park. Thursday. Zach and Bob.*

BOB

Then she goes "Yeah. I had a feeling you would come to me. I perceived it."

ZACH

What?

BOB

She's like, "I'm gonna help you. I've always perceived you need my help." I kid you not.

ZACH

*(Beat)* So you go there and she like

BOB

I don't let on. We talk about all other things. I do, like—you know—what you said. I like totally act low. Low spirits. Like kinda depressed. And I'm a pretty good actor, I mean she saw I was like / you know—

ZACH

Miserable.

BOB

Yeah. Anyway it turns out she has all these crazy ass books. Big hardcover... *(Taking out "Is My Life A Game?"*) All these titles. Have your heard of this?

ZACH

Oh God. *(Considering a page in the book.)* Ugh.

BOB

What?

ZACH

"This is a cold-blooded, factual account of the last seventy-six trillion years."

BOB

I know, I just can't believe

ZACH

That somebody buys into this bullshit?

BOB

No. How COMPREHENSIVE it all is

ZACH

Oh, so you like this crap too?

BOB

Look. Remember I told you I was having this shaking problem? My hands were trembling? Uncontrollably? Well, the weird thing is, since I started reading "Criterius" my shaking problem went away. Like i haven't had the problem for over a day and a half.

ZACH

Man. I think maybe there were a few other factors at play.

BOB

like what?

ZACH

like being under a lot of / pressure at school

BOB

Well, Vicki and I start discussing Phalunosophy. Next thing I know it's gone away.

ZACH

Dude. Just look at this cover. It's a giant exploding mountain like oozing lava.

BOB

I think it's supposed to represent something. *(Begins rolling cigarette.)*

ZACH

How can anyone even entertain this? *(Mocking)* "Bob, Bob, this is factual! Read this and be all you can be! Achieve your dreams, Bob! Find out who you really are, Bob!"

BOB

I'm trying to be serious, if you don't want to have a serious / conversation—

ZACH

No, I want to hear what she told you, I do. I'm just saying – Friends don't let friends be Phalunosophists. *(Beat.)* Hey, what kind are those?

BOB

American Spirits.

ZACH

Feel like rolling one for me?

BOB

Oh?

ZACH

Just roll me one.

*Short pause. Bob starts to roll one for Zach.*

ZACH

I don't know. Frankly I must just be a Realist. Because at this point, I don't believe in anything. I am who I am, I am no more, I have no extraordinary part to play. If I disappear today, everything will keep going, the way it's been going. And I'm sorry but. I think it's disgusting... to subscribe to something that's so blatantly untrue. Phalunosophy is just a disease. All their "help" is just a big fucking trap. And it's really sick. It's sick, man. To be gobbled up and squashed into a little homogenous glob like every other fucking idiot so that what? you can become "perfect"? you can become like some sort of like "basic" personality? I mean, this is obviously what the fucking Church is trying to sell. And Vicki's... Vicki's dissipating. *(Beat.)* These people are mindless, soulless machines. As if all this fucking science-fiction were the fucking like Word or whatever. But you know I guess this is what happens when you go to fucking College of the Atlantic in Maine. You just eat shrooms and read fucking Emma La Paix, and—and—and suddenly like you believe that you're an alien that's seventy-six trillion years old that was beamed down to earth to save the world.

BOB

Oh, do go on.

ZACH

It just seems to me highly unlikely, Bob, that in real life any of us happen to be aliens who were beamed down to earth seventy-six trillion years ago to save the world.

BOB

Well how do you know?

ZACH

I don't know, Bob. I don't know. But I have my doubts.

BOB

This is just a contest of wills between you and her.

ZACH

It's not a—

BOB

Yes! Yes it is! You just don't want to admit it.

ZACH

It's not a contest, Bob.

BOB

Uh-huh.

ZACH

She's the one going around secretly harboring her Phalunosophy philosophy all the time.

BOB

Listen, why don't you go to the church?

ZACH

I don't think I'll be going to that church again.

BOB

Why? Afraid of actually seeing something with your own eyes?

ZACH

This is not about me.

BOB

You're just stubborn. I'll take you anytime.

ZACH

Wait... You're going to the church now? When did you go to the church?



BOB

I went. Last night. I got Co-Processed.

ZACH

You jackass.

BOB

It was really cool.

ZACH

I never said go to the church, Bob.

BOB

I did it for you. And it just so happens that the church is very—

ZACH

Creepy?

BOB

No – it's very nice. I met this really nice Muslim chick. They had all these nice Muslim chicks there, man. Apparently Farrakhan, you know, like the leader of Islam, like made a speech

ZACH

Nation of Islam

BOB

All I know is this girl was really cute. She seemed to pick up all these things about me. It was almost like she was like...reading my mind.

ZACH

She was briefed.

BOB

Briefed? By who?

ZACH

Who do you think?

BOB

Come on.

ZACH

Of course!

BOB

You think?

ZACH

You are one of a kind retarded. These people sit around – They have subcommittees, okay? And they have—they have meetings and they discuss a target. Which is what you're becoming now.

BOB

Yeah. Well I don't know. How do you get a Muslim girl to take off the scarf, man?

ZACH

Come on, Bob.

BOB

I'm just kidding.

ZACH

People are not fucking psychic, Bob. The Muslim girl was prepped.

*Short pause.*

BOB

Okay, Zach. Close your eyes.

ZACH

Don't even.

BOB

Just close your eyes.

ZACH

Why?

BOB

Just close your eyes.

ZACH

WHY?

BOB

Just close your eyes.

*Short pause.*

ZACH

No.

BOB

Come on, just close your eyes. Just for a second, just close them. Please.

ZACH

You're freaking me out.

BOB

Okay, just close your eyes

ZACH

No.

*Pause.*

BOB

Just for a second.

*Begrudgingly, Zach closes his eyes.*

BOB

Okay. Now picture a cat.

*Silence*

BOB

Do you have a cat?

ZACH

*(Annoyed.)* What?

BOB

You got a cat?

ZACH

*(Opens his eyes.)* Alright.

BOB

Okay. Now who was looking at the cat?

*Brief silence.*

ZACH

Okay, buddy.

BOB

Who was looking at the cat? (*Brief silence.*) YOU were looking at the CAT.

ZACH

I was looking at the cat.

BOB

You were looking at the cat.

ZACH

I think that you should stay away—

BOB

Something ELSE is seeing that CAT. That something else is US.

ZACH

I think that you should stay away from this, man. It's a dumb-ass pyramid scheme.

BOB

It's not dumb at all. It's science, it works.

ZACH

And you pay how much?

BOB

Look, I always feel like I'm walking up hill in my life, if you want to consider me for maybe thirty seconds. One session of Phalunosophy Processing and I'm like—I'm like suddenly picking up girls. Like dude. I just got on the train today and like I got this girl's e-mail. We spent a whole subway ride talking about Christopher Marclay's "Clock". I mean like... that just doesn't happen by accident, you see what I'm saying?

ZACH

Yeah, yeah, I see exactly what you're saying.

BOB

And for the first time in a fucking LONG time, my hands haven't been trembling. **You can go on your rants and your raves about Phalunosophy, but... You know -- What kind of faith do you have?**

*Short pause.*

ZACH

Well, listen, man. I mean, like keep doing it. Keep doing it if it makes you happy.

BOB

Okay

*Short pause.*

ZACH

Well, listen, man. I mean, like keep doing it. Keep doing it if it makes you happy.

BOB

Okay

ZACH

No, if this is the thing... y'know – stick with it. But I don't want to hear it later. I mean, you can just like—You can just like stop coming to me. Alright? Just stop coming to me.

*Long silence.*

BOB

You know what? You don't want me to come and talk to you anymore? Fine. Then that's it. You know. I won't.

*Silence.*

ZACH

Okay.

BOB

Okay.

ZACH

Well. I'm glad we had this talk.

BOB

Yeah. I mean. Whatever.

ZACH

Yeah, man.

BOB

Yeah.

*Long silence.*

ZACH

Well. So.

*Long silence. Bob's hands start to tremble as he gathers his things, and then goes off. Zach remains. Considers the book in his hands.*

ZACH

"Is My Life A Game?" *(Flips through it. Sighs, heavily. Starts to read.)*

## BEINGNESS

*It's Friday. Vicki makes PBJ. Zach reads from "Is My Life A Game?"*

ZACH

"At death our spirit being leaves the body and goes to the BETWEEN-LIVES area" – This is a very creative name for the area you go to between lives.

VICKI

Okay—

ZACH

The quote un quote "Between-Lives area" could be anyplace in the galaxy—if you're lucky you end up in the Pyrenees where apparently there's one of these Martian stations—and um so I guess you're leaving one life and getting ready to go to a new life but right before you can get beamed back down to earth right? you get an implant. That knocks out your memory of the life that you just lived. *(Closes the book. Beat.)* Who are you really?

VICKI

What?

ZACH

Who are you? I just am asking.

VICKI

I'm me.

ZACH

Who's you

VICKI

The person right here.

ZACH

Do you come from this planet? *(Pause.)* Answer the question.

VICKI

I – I will but you're being very

ZACH

I'm not being anything what I wanna know is whether or not you're from planet earth. *(Short pause.)* It's either one of two options. You're from earth, or you're not from earth. So? Are you from another planet, Vicki? Another universe?

VICKI

I'm not sure why you're so interested what planet I'm from, okay? Tell me that.

*Brief silence.*

ZACH

Because I love you. *(Beat.)* And I think there's a lot going on here that you're blind to.

VICKI

Yeah, yeah. *(Beat.)* Well, I don't think you know where our people come from. The fact is this planet is just Sun Twelve. We are a rim system. In a tiny isolated galaxy. That the other galaxies look at as a landfill. A dumping ground. That they can just toss all of their unwanted waste down on to. We were all... We were all... like intercepted. Four hundred and sixty trillion years ago. And no one knows how we can get brought back up. *(Beat)* And this is not the craziest thing in the world.

ZACH

Oh but Vicki! This is what I mean!

VICKI

What?

ZACH

You can't hear how you sound!

VICKI

How do I sound?

*Beat.*

ZACH

Fucking bonkers.

VICKI

Right. And so I grant Beingness to you, Zach.

*Pause.*

VICKI

Listen. The only reason any of this came up was 'cause you showed up at that event. On your own. And otherwise / there would've never been a

ZACH

I know, and what really fucks with me is how ever since I saw you there you've been acting like a completely different person! It's so cracked that you could turn on a dime like that

VICKI

Can you please stop yelling at me?

ZACH

I'm just trying to show you... One day it's gonna run out for you, and you're gonna realize ever since you were twenty-one you've been getting bled dry so you could have somebody else tell you who you are. Which is the greatest luxury in the world. And this fantasy / in this book

VICKI

What fantasy?

ZACH

In this book, and the things I've heard

*Very brief silence.*

VICKI

Okay, Zach. I don't know what I can... Like I just don't know what it is that's suppressing you.

ZACH

Suppressing me.

VICKI

It's fine. Everybody has barriers. I'm not saying it's just you. Like, that is the mental state uncorrected. Man cannot be causative. That's—That's like a natural fact. If a person thinks he knows, then he has no interest in learning.

ZACH

You know what Vicki, it's one thing for you to go into debt with this shit but like when you start trying to extort your friends, and start / asking your friends

VICKI

What?

ZACH (*cont.*)

to pay for all this, that's when you have to be careful. Alright?



VICKI

I really hope you aren't referring to Bob. (*Beat.*) I'm sorry that you are like so suspicious of me, but I am not trying to coerce anyone or spend anyone else's money. And – And – And I just want to say that if I'm not like good enough? Like if I'm just not a good enough person for you? Then like I don't know what to say anymore. Like I just don't know what else to say.

*Long painful silence.*

VICKI

Like we can just stop.

*Long pause.*

VICKI

Like I don't care.

ZACH

Well alright. Great. I'm glad that you don't care. I don't care either.

*Pause.*

VICKI

So what are we doing here?

ZACH

Um. I just want to finish this video and be done.

VICKI

Good. Then why don't you do that.

ZACH

Good.

*Long pause. Zach puts in his earphones. Turns to the screen, raises the volume in his ears, and works. After a while, Vicki walks away.*

**20<sup>th</sup>**

*Monday afternoon. Zach's table is missing. A high stack of boxes stands in its place. Vicki, dressed for the weather (evidently stormy) stands in the middle of the cubicle, writing a check. Then she puts the check in an envelope, and seals it. Zach enters, in a hoodie, soaked.*

ZACH

I know. We were starting at two. *(Shakes off hoodie, stomps boots. Beat.)* Any feedback?  
*(Goes into cubicle, takes out laptop, places it on top of the stack of boxes opens it.)*

VICKI

*(Sigh.)* They want the grizzly bears to be goats, not cows. And one of the pig in the muds to be a dragonfly. If you can find that.

ZACH

Oh so we

VICKI

Yeah.

*Vicki places the envelope beside his computer, then starts moving boxes over by the door. Zach glances at the envelope. Pause, then he opens it. Considers the check inside. Then places the check out of the way. Resumes working. Vicki re-enters cubicle. She begins to remove Post-its from the wall, throwing them in the trash. Silence.*

ZACH

This dude. With the mini-van. He's not very punctual.

VICKI

He's on his way.

*Long silence. She continues taking down Post-its.*

ZACH

This is ready to export. Want to have a final pass?

VICKI

Um. I'm good.

ZACH

Ah. I'll just upload it then.

VICKI

Cool.

*Silence. She starts taking down the cubicle walls. At a certain point, she is trying to fold the pieces, but something is jammed. Zach helps her fold up the pieces.*

ZACH

There. *(Beat.)* What are you gonna do when I'm not around?

VICKI

Can you move.

*He gets out of her way. She walks past him, carrying the pieces to the door. Long silence. He does the last of the work. She comes back over for her office chair, picking up a couple old umbrellas along the way.*

VICKI

You know, I made a sell on this chair. I'm gonna have almost a grand from everything by tonight. *(Holds up an umbrella.)* You want an umbrella? Five bucks.

ZACH

I'm going to the Sudan tomorrow.

*Beat.*

VICKI

Where?

ZACH

The Sudan.

VICKI

Oh. *(Beat.)* Okay.

ZACH

To do some reporting.

VICKI

Are you serious, Zach? To Sudan?

ZACH

Yeah. This producer in the Village has like a total hard on for me. So.

VICKI

Way to drop that bomb.

ZACH

*(Snickering a little.)* What?

VICKI

So, wait. You're actually going to fucking

ZACH

Darfur—I just got like all inoculated, yeah.

VICKI

Why? That's / in sane

ZACH  
I dunno.

VICKI  
I mean isn't it going to be like rough down there?

ZACH  
It's fucked up, Vicki. It's gonna be like exactly as fucked up as you would think, like times fifty. *(Pause.)* Apparently a lot of the country is pretty much – you know. From what I hear.... really... *(Beat.)*

VICKI  
Are you going by yourself?

ZACH  
No. I gotta bring a bodyguard. 'Cause the infrastructure is like fucked. It's basically lawless. So I'm a target. Which means I have to be heavily secured. So, I have my own guards. An interpreter. And then I'll have to meet up with like another security team. It's like super high maintenance.

VICKI  
That's... That's just... *(Beat.)* That's really something.

ZACH  
I just wanted to volunteer to go to a nice apocalyptic zone. You know. *(Beat.)* Yeah. It's gonna be really, really terrible.

*Vicki sighs. Takes out her cell phone. Looks at it. There's nothing there. Pause.*

VICKI  
Well, are you, um... Are you like happy? About going?

ZACH  
Happy?

VICKI  
Yeah.

*Pause.*

ZACH  
You could say that. You could say that. *(He finishes the work.)* Are you sure you don't want to watch this? Just to see if it's okay.

VICKI

I feel like it's gonna be fine. *(Short pause. Looks at her phone. An incoming call.)* Ohh. *(Picks up)* Hey. Are you gonna be here soon? *(Pause. Flirtatiously.)* Well, come over.

*Zach starts to pack up Vicki's hard drive in a small box.*

VICKI

*(to phone.)* Only a couple boxes, we should be done in five minutes. *(Long silence. Laughter.)* ...Awesome. Thanks, babe. *(Short pause)* ...Okay. ...See you. *(Hangs up.)*

*Zach finishes packing the small box with the hard-drive.*

ZACH

*(Giving Vicki the hard drive box.)* Don't, uh... Don't put anything heavy on top of that.

VICKI

Okay.

ZACH

Just – it's kind of fragile inside.

VICKI

Yeah, I got it. Okay.

*She takes the box and goes out, carrying it along with her office chair.*

*Hold on Zach, alone. He takes down a few Post-Its, throws them in trash. After a little while, Vicki comes back in. Goes over to the plant.*

VICKI

*(To the plant)* Commere commere. Oh, commere Oh, commere *(Picks up Veronica's pot.)* Veronica's got some new leaves.

ZACH

Oh. Yeah. When did those come through?

*Looking at the plant. A very long pause. The faint sound of a mini-van approaching outside, and parking.*

VICKI

So. Darfur.

ZACH

I'll, uh... I'll be back, though. Don't worry. *(Tiny beat. Trying to joke.)* I mean, probably.

VICKI

Do you have a return ticket?

ZACH

*(Sarcastically.)* Nope. Going one-way.

*Sound of mini-van horn honking once, then honking again.*

ZACH

Guess you better, uh...

VICKI

Yeah.

*Short pause.*

ZACH

Yeah.

*Short pause.*

VICKI

Do you want the key? You can lock up.

ZACH

Yeah. Alright.

VICKI

*(Giving Zach the key.)* You know where to leave it.

ZACH

Okay.

*Pause.*

VICKI

We better say goodbye here. *(Short pause.)* Oh, my Mexican heart!

ZACH

*(Realizing)* Oh yeah.

*Zach removes the metal heart from the wall. He hands her the heart. She considers the heart. Brief silence.*

VICKI

Safe travels.

ZACH

I'll see you.

*She starts to go. She turns around, like she meant to say something else. She can't think of what it was she meant to say. Brief silence. Horn honking. She starts to go again.*

ZACH  
Say hi to E.T. for me.

VICKI  
Don't get shot.

ZACH  
Thank you.

*She holds up the plant and waves one of the branches at him.*

VICKI  
Bye. Bye.

*Vicki exits. The door closes behind her.  
Pause. Zach exhales sharply. After a moment he opens up one of the garbage bags. Takes out the check from the envelope. Considers it for a moment. Tears up the check over the bag, letting all the little pieces cascade down into the trash.*

## I BELIEVE IN THINGS

*The park. Sound of softball players in the distance playing catch, balls landing in leather mitts, intermittent thwacks. Bob is standing in the field alone looking out at the players. Zach wanders on, surprised to see Bob there. Pause. Then Zach approaches.*

ZACH  
Hey, man.

BOB  
Hi, Zach how are ya?

ZACH  
What are you doin' here, man?

BOB  
Nothin'. (Beat.) How are you doing?

ZACH

I'm good, man.

BOB  
Good.

*Awkward pause.*

ZACH  
Um. I'm sorry. I've like... I've like been like—uh—an asshole to you. But I mean I think... No, not "I think". Okay. Let's get rid of "I think" here / 'cause—

BOB  
Just don't. 'Cause it just sounds really forced. So just don't. *(Brief silence)* Anyway, whatever. *(Beat.)* I hear you're going to Darfur / by the way.

ZACH  
Um. Yeah that's the plan.

*Brief silence.*

BOB  
Are you gonna be leaving soon?

ZACH  
Uh. Yeah. Tomorrow.

BOB  
Shit.

ZACH  
Yeah. Well. Um... *(Short pause.)* I kinda feel like we're supposed to have some kind of conversation here, you know?

BOB  
That's why you came here? To like find me

ZACH  
Well I mean... if we didn't talk about it, then it would be like that thing we don't talk about.

BOB  
Okay.

*Short pause.*

ZACH



Like if I've said things... I—I'm

BOB

It's fine, I'm cool, but just like have you ever put yourself in my shoes? Ever just imagined things? Like what they're like for me? Ever just like thought about ME? Like EVER?

*Beat.*

ZACH

I have put myself in your shoes.

BOB

I get it—

ZACH

And I do think about you—

BOB

No, I get it—

ZACH

You're one of my only friends.

BOB

It's just— *(Beat.)* I'm just like this THING. I'm just like this THING that you can like put over here, put over there—

ZACH

I'm sorry.

BOB

—And...you know— I needed to step back. I just — I needed to Run this out. 'Cause it—it was my Withhold. But I want you... *(Beat.)* I mean, I—I still want you as a friend. 'Cause... *(Sighs.)* Like

ZACH

Well, look, man—

BOB

I don't know. It's just—I don't want to misread something that's cool and think it's cooler than it is. Like I don't want to make any Considerations.. Right? But...Look, you came through. Thank you. You just put everything back, you know what I mean? 'Cause I just... deleted your number and took off your e-mail from all my stuff but... it's my bad, man.

ZACH

Yeah. Well. I understand.

BOB

No. I just like... I just like feel literally screwed in the head sometimes. Every single day... every single day... I try to... *(Trails off. Beat.)* It's really weird. It's like... Like I never... *(Trails off.)*

ZACH

Alright. Alright. *(Reaching out and touches Bob's trembling hand. A moment.)*

*Pause.*

BOB

Thank you.

ZACH

Yeah.

*Long pause.*

ZACH

So. Um. So... How's it been, man?

BOB

it's been alright.

ZACH

What's been going on?

BOB

I had something happen the other day in Session. I'm doing my Purification now, so

ZACH

Oh

BOB

[ \* "Sup" = *supervisor abbreviated.* ]

I was like Running an Incident with my Sup. \* From like another life, you know? Actually, it was the Seventies. In the Vietnam War. I was traveling. Across time.

ZACH

How do you know

BOB

it was Vietnam? The heat. And I was in uniform.

ZACH  
What was the

BOB  
Flannel, I think. Uh. Or linen. *(Beat.)* I died when I was twenty-two.

ZACH  
Really young.

BOB  
Yeah.

ZACH  
And you know what caused your... *(Short pause.)* Death?

BOB  
Vietcong caught up with me. On the Cambodian border. Actually I was um—I was an agent. Like a covert...uh—uh—courier. Like moving classified intelligence around. I even like... y’know—Like interrogated the Vietnamese. But the program that I was actually involved with, I didn’t know much about at all. It was all very sensitive stuff. High level, y’know?

ZACH  
Far out.

BOB  
Yeah. *(Short pause.)* Yeah. You know it feels good to eject yourself. You know what I mean? Like when you realize that it’s just a choice. That we were installed here, in all of this out-of-date software. Just...when you see that, it’s just like— Pffsscchoo!

*Long pause.*

ZACH  
Well, I um... I gotta head out. But um

BOB  
Cool cool

ZACH  
I’ll see you when I get back.

BOB  
Wait, when’d you say you’re

ZACH  
Soon. Soon. I’ll be back soon. *(Beat.)* So um... Take care of yourself, alright, Bob?

BOB  
Okay.

ZACH  
Alright, man.

BOB  
I'll see you.

*Zach starts to go. A ball comes whizzing past Bob; lands on the grass behind him.*

BOB  
Alright! I'm gonna get those fucking assholes. *(Grabbing the ball, walking toward the field.)* Think this is funny? You think this is funny? Huh?

*A PLAYER appears.*

PLAYER  
Excuse me. The ball?

*Short pause.*

BOB  
You almost hit me in the head, you know.

PLAYER  
It was an accident. I'm sorry.

BOB  
How sorry are you? *(Beat.)* How sorry are you?

ZACH  
Give the guy his ball back.

PLAYER  
Come on, it's a park.

BOB  
How sorry are you?

PLAYER  
Can I get the ball back?

BOB  
You almost hit me in the head.

PLAYER

I didn't mean to hit you in the head.

BOB

You didn't mean to.

ZACH

Dude—

BOB

But you almost did.

ZACH

Don't make a thing

BOB

I'm not making a thing. You know, it's like what – This is where we're fucking living now? People are so full of shit on this planet. Taking no responsibility for what's going on around you. Taking no fucking control. "This is a park"? "This is a park"? This is a park"?

PLAYER

It is a park.

*Pause. Bob approaches the Player.*

BOB

Alright, come on. Let's go! Let's see it!!

*The Player and Bob fight. Zach stands there not knowing what to do as the player beats up Bob. Eventually, Zach walks away.*

## **OPEN PLAIN**

*Long silence. Vicki enters.*

VICKI

I'm so sorry, Bob. *(Gives him tissue.)* Are you okay?

BOB

He just like got in a few good shots. This is all he did to me. See?

VICKI

I still don't really understand how this all –

BOB

Fucking... this guy. Playing like softball. Ball goes flying. Hits me. In the fucking head. I just fucking flipped out. Sometimes people, right? Life...

VICKI

yeah.

BOB

And that's what it's all about. If all of us did that, Vicki. I bet that violence would go down. You know what i mean? Like, everybody's responsible to put each other's ethics in. Like some people wouldn't stand up to that and wouldn't be like, "that's not cool." But...

VICKI

Wait can you like see? Let me see. Turn toward me.

BOB

I wish you could have been there. It was all just me. Beating him up. His face was just covered in blood. Just like dripping. I like chipped a tooth. *(Beat.)* Is there something buzzing over here? I keep hearing this high-pitched like *(Nose starts to bleed.)*

VICKI

Ooo.

BOB

Shit.

*She offers him another tissue.*

VICKI

Are you gonna like rest? You're not gonna like get up and like to go to school tomorrow and stuff right?

BOB

School? School's over.

VICKI

School's over?

BOB

Done. My biochemistry teacher kicked me out of class. I'm gonna take a medical leave, everything's gonna be erased.

VICKI

Oh, God.

*Pause*

BOB

They said it was “a health thing”. I had to be told specifically “we're afraid you have a health problem” by my professor, in his car. You know, i mean, it's just – you know? Like he drove me from up there, a Hundred and Thirty-Fifth. This morbidly obese...uh, I think he's like Brazilian or something? In his Saab. *(Pause.)* Are you sure nothing's buzzing

VICKI

I don't know what you're talking about. *(Short pause.)* You need to like let me give you an Assist

BOB

Really?

VICKI

Yes. It will totally help you heal.

BOB

Alright.

*She brings him a chair.*

VICKI

Here. Sit.

BOB

Oh. We're doing it now?

VICKI

Yeah.

*Beat. Bob sits.*

VICKI

So close your eyes. The command is 'feel my finger.' Then I just go like this. *(Touches a point on Bob's body, with a single finger, using moderate pressure.)* And you let me know you felt it. Then we just keep doing that 'til something happens.

BOB

Alright.

VICKI

So this is the Assist.

BOB

Okay

*Bob's eyes are shut. Vicki, standing beside him, starts to perform the Touch Assist. After each command she touches a point on his body. She begins far away from the injuries on his face, gradually approaching the wounded area. She handles the whole body this way, paying particular attention to extremities.*

VICKI

*(Touches)* Feel my finger.

BOB

*(Quietly)* okay

VICKI

Thank you. *(Touches)* Feel my finger.

BOB

okay

VICKI

Thank you. *(Touches)* Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay

VICKI

Good. *(Touches)* Feel my finger.

BOB

okay

VICKI

Thank you. *(Touches)* Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay

VICKI

Thank you. What's happening?

BOB

Uh.



*Silence.*

VICKI

Okay so we're just gonna keep going. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Good. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Good. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB  
Okay.

VICKI  
Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB  
Okay.

VICKI  
Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB  
Okay.

VICKI  
Good. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

BOB  
Okay.

VICKI  
Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

*Brief silence.*

VICKI  
Thank you. (*Touches*) Feel my finger.

*Brief silence.*

VICKI  
What's happening?

BOB  
Heavy... Lead...

VICKI  
Okay.

BOB  
Cold... All cold... Can't move...

VICKI  
Okay.

*Silence.*

BOB

I feel like this tiny... like pin... and this... this sort of wave... is like funneling over me... It's like this... this... vessel and I'm at the bottom.... and like the world is a giant mass... like spreading over me... this empty hollow vessel and all of the weight from the entire universe and the extreme outer circles of time itself is expanding around me stuffing me down. This colossal... like... force... and it's like... It's like taking over me.

*She gently puts her hand on the wounded part of his face. Long pause.*

VICKI

How do you feel now?

*Silence.*

VICKI

Is there anything—?

BOB

An open plain.

*Silence.*

VICKI

What is it about an open plain?

BOB

We're sitting... you and me... on a very... very... wide open plain. The air is...so... nice. And we're in a kind of... Time is going on forever. Inside us. At the same time. All of us. We are free. We are light. We are... high... up. We're – we're—we're... *(He starts to laugh a little.)* We're not even here. We're not here. You're not here. And I'm not here. *(He laughs.)*

VICKI

Alright. We're gonna end here. Okay?

BOB

Okay.

VICKI

Okay. You can open your eyes.

*He opens his eyes. She smiles.*

BOB

I feel a lot better now.

VICKI

Good. I'm really glad.

*End.*