

Life with Althaar

Episode 9:

Everything Althaar Always Wanted to Know about Sex (But Humans Keep Running Away Before He Can Ask)

Recording Script, 10/5/19 - Chris (draft 2, BAJ)

A beautiful beach. Sounds of waves crashing, seagulls and marimbas. Gentle feminine laughter can be heard.

JOHN

...And that's how I got promoted to Chief Engineer of All Things on Earth.

PRINCESS PANCAKES

Ooooh. You're a brave man. My colony needs brave Humans like you. I know it may sound crazy for me to say this, but I feel like we were destined to meet here on Paradisio Twelve. On this perfect clothing optional beach. And you've made quite an impression on my Imperial Concubines.

Ladies giggling.

JOHN

Errr... yeah... And they're quite impressive too. Those are some... breathtaking H₂O molecules.

PRINCESS

Then please, join us as we cavort in the oleaginous surf! Let us help you get that uniform off, my brave Chief Engineer.

JOHN

The quick release cord is right under my left armpit... but you can... start ...at... the neck... sure...

Kissing sounds.

JOHN

Your skin is so... soft. That crown really brings out the purple and green in your eyes, Princess.

PRINCESS

You can call just call me Pancakes...

JOHN

Ok... Pancakes. Uh, I hope this isn't a problem for you, but it's been awhile since I've had a roll in the hay...

PRINCESS

I know, you're sooo busy saving Earth with all your mechanical engineerings that you haven't given yourself time for pleasure...

Kissing sounds continue.

JOHN

Yeah, that's uhh... definitely the reason... So, uh, where (*kissing sounds*) did you (*kissing sounds*) get a name like (*kissing sounds*) Pancakes? Is all the royalty on your world named after Human foods, or do they just call you that because you're so sweet? Heh.

Giggles.

PRINCESS

(*delighted laugh*) So big and strong and funny, too! (*kissing sounds*) I can't wait to bring you home to.... (*gasp*) John! I've just had a terrible realization!

JOHN

What's wrong?!

PRINCESS

If you return with me to become the Supreme Emperor of planet Coital Embrace, then all your people on Earth will perish. And it will be my fault.

JOHN

No, no... not really... they're fine. They'll be fine.

PRINCESS

I couldn't live with myself if I stole away Earth's greatest hero simply for my insatiable lusty pleasure.

JOHN

Sure you could.

PRINCESS

No, John. No. Your place is on Earth, and mine is with my people.

JOHN

Maybe your people could come over? There's plenty of room.

PRINCESS

And since we are doomed to part, we'll just have to experience a lifetime's worth of pleasure in one night. Let me have you for just one Earth rotation, John. All to myself. And my Imperial Concubines of course, I don't do anything without my girlfriends..

Quick release cord on JOHN's coverall: POP! Woooooosh

JOHN

Wow, you really know your way around a quick-release cord.

PRINCESS

Please, John, please! Allow me to use you for my selfish pleasure just this one time.

A faint alarm sound in the background goes off, slowly building for the rest of the scene.

JOHN

I guess just this one time. Don't worry, ladies, there's plenty of me to go around...

More enthusiastic and numerous kissing sounds.

JOHN

Oh, wow. (*kissing continues*) Hey, uh, Princess? What's that noise? Is that your phone or something?

PRINCESS

I hear nothing but the thunder of my three hearts beating in anticipation of the hot, innocent, super-sexy, dirty things I'm going to let you do to me.

JOHN

Ohhhhhh-kay, then. (*kissing sounds*) Uh, hey, maybe we should go somewhere else before this gets... sticky? There's all this sand...

PRINCESS

You talk too much, John.

JOHN

Right, sorry.

PRINCESS

(starting to sound much less friendly)

Of course you are. You're a loser.

JOHN

Whoa. You're one of these dominant types, I guess.

PRINCESS

Somebody's got to wear the hydro-britches in this relationship. Turn over man-slug! I will have my incestuous way with you!

JOHN

Wait, what? Incest? Uh, does that mean something different on your planet? We (ouch!) usually call this--

PRINCESS SUSAN

Stop wiggling, loser! You can't even do this right, can you?

JOHN

SUSAN?!!! What are you doing here?

SUSAN

Shut up, loser. This is only going to hurt for about... 15 minutes. Physically, I mean. The mental anguish will never go away! HAHAAAA!

JOHN

Ok, just what the frid is going on...

JUDY

Shut up, loser!

JOHN

Judy? What are YOU doing here!? Oh! Uh, this isn't what it looks like, I just met these Embrace-atroids, I swear. ...Wait, hang on, why am I apologizing to you? You left me! For the other me!

JUDY

Beause the new you is so much cooler than the you you, duh. Just shut up, loser!

SUSAN

Shut up, loser!

COMMANDER

Shut up, loser!

JOHN

Commander? Where did you come from? Ow! Please, help me!

COMMANDER

Oh, that's just what we're going to do, John. Restrain him!

Sounds of struggling, then ZAP ZAP ZAP.

JOHN

Ow! Help! Someone, please! These electro bracers (*zap*) REALLY HURT!

STELLA

They won't zap you if you stop squirming.

JOHN

Stella Reyes! My hero! You must be here to rescue me!

STELLA

Aww. That's cute. Now hold still and let us do our thing, loser.

JOHN

Us? ...Wait, thing?

COMMANDER

Did you honestly think this gorgeous Amazon of the Sanitation Department showed up to have sex with you?

Laughter all around.

JOHN

But (*zap*) Yeeow! If you're not here to... then what... are you going... to do with me? (*ZAp ZAp*) Owwww!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, settle down now, Johnny boy...

JOHN

Mrs. F?! What is happening?!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Just stop struggling, that's a good lad. It'll be so much easier if you hold still.

JOHN

What? What's easier? Help!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

It's such a bother when someone insists on wiggling around like a Fytithian twitch-worm when you're trying to deVOUR THEM WHOLE!

JOHN

Aigh! Somebody help me! Please! Stella Reyes! You're Sanitation! You're supposed to stop people getting eaten! Don't you swear an oath or something? PLEASE!
STELLAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

JOHN screams, his tormentors laugh, the alarm builds until JOHN wakes, breathing heavily, and shuts off his alarm clock.

JOHN

What... in the Sixty-five Suns of Subitron was that about?

ALTHAAAR

(over the apartment intercom)

Good morning to FriendJohn! Can Althaar deduce from the ceasing of the Alarm Clock that FriendJohn has awakened, and is ready to be commencing his Sun-day? Althaar has made many many preparations for the experiencing of this day with FriendJohn! Althaar has constructed the Human br-unch! Althaar's flixators are quivering in anticipation! ...Will FriendJohn be long in emerging?

JOHN

Just... give me a minute, Althaar. *(to himself)* Gah. I'm going to need some coffee.

ALTHAAR

Althaar has secured many brunching foods with which to perform celebration of the Human Sun-day! As it is said on Earth, those who are working hard must be brunching harder! (*aping Cypress Hill*) Champagne in the MEM-BRANES! Drank champaaaagne ...got mem-braaaanes...

JOHN

Uhhh... Althaar, could you turn it down just a little bit?

ALTHAAR

Oh! The intercom setting is of too much loudness? Althaar will fix!

JOHN

No, not the intercom, just... can you just... dial back the enthusiasm a couple notches until I've had some coffee? I'm not a morning person.

ALTHAAR

Does... FriendJohn not exist during the morning hours? ...But then who has been consuming the break-fasts of Althaar?!

JOHN

I exist during the morning all right, I'm just not happy about it. Some of us Humans need a little longer to get our engines revved up.

ALTHAAR

Oh no! Althaar's researchings have been inadequate! Althaar has failed to procure an engine-revving mechanism for the brunch. Althaar must apologize for his omission!

JOHN

No, Althaar...

ALTHAAR

Althaar will dispose of these panned-cakes and Java-cups. Much laughing will be had at Althaar for his foolishness!

JOHN

Pancakes? Is that what I'm smelling? Well, that explains a few things...

ALTHAAR

If FriendJohn is willing to wait, Althaar can be dashing up up to Honest Zwiznarp's Refurbished Component Shack for a JumpJet4500! And then there will be a proper Human brunching!

JOHN

What? No! Althaar, Humans don't have engines, we're made of meat. I was using metaphors again, sorry. You got it right the first time, brunch is a food thing. You did a great job. Well, maybe I should reserve judgment until I taste it, but don't throw anything away! I'll be right out. Brunch is the perfect way to start a Sunday.

ALTHAAR

Eee! Althaar cannot wait to be committing the brunch with his dear friend John! Elation! FriendJohn, Althaar is now retreating behind the Curtain of Privacy, but he is leaving behind the fresh pot of Java! It awaits FriendJohn on the hot plate, which is keeping it at 363 kelvins exactly! For the brunching! For the consummation of the Sun-day! And now Althaar will prepare... the mimosaaaa. As it is said on Earth, the Sun is over the yardarm somewhere! But Althaar has not checked the attitude of the Fairgrounds to determine if this is locally the case. ...One moment please!

Sound of intercom clicking off.

JOHN

Pancakes and erections. I feel like I'm a teenager again.

Theme music

ANNOUNCER

Gemini CollisionWorks presents...

Life With Althaar!

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The living/dining area of Suite C. Intermittent beeps and boops of ALTHAAR updating his Human Culture Data-Base throughout the conversation.

JOHN

(polishing off some pancakes)

Mmf. Hey, Althaar, I'm sorry I was such a grouch earlier. These pancakes are delicious. As a rule, I really shouldn't be communicating with anybody until I've had at least two cups of coffee.

ALTHAAR

It is of no trouble, FriendJohn! And Althaar is sorry also that he was unable to locate a yard-arm. Can FriendJohn explain further the grouchiness? The communication is inadvisable because Humans must jump-start their engines, which are not real engines, but are instead made of meat?

JOHN

Well, that's kind of in the ballpark. Not a real ballpark! But that's roughly the right idea, yeah.

ALTHAAR

Mm. And so, to accomplish the jump-starting, the Sun-day is to be initiated with coffee?

JOHN

Every day is to be initiated with coffee. I usually have a cup while I'm checking my emails first thing in the morning, and then by the time I'm done with that, I'm a little more ready to deal with people. That's what "revving up my engines" means. Does that make sense?

ALTHAAR

Very little, FriendJohn! But Althaar is certain he will be getting the hanging of it one day!

ALTHAAR enters more data into his Data-Base.

JOHN

Speaking of emails... I've been getting some weird ones lately. I must be on a spam list or something. "DJWFB seeks hydro-unit for a refreshing dynamic mix up." I'm not even sure what that means.

ALTHAAR

(typing away)

Each Human day is initiated with the coffee, or "cup of Joe." Which accompanies the checking of the emails. And only after these are concluded is interaction acceptable.

JOHN

Well, that's just me, we're not all the same. There are Humans that wake up bright-eyed and full of energy. Those Humans are what the rest of us like to call "annoying." *(type type)* There's lots of different morning routines. Some people start the day with exercise, some just get ready for work and out the door as fast as they can... And then on our days off, most Humans like to relax and stay in bed as long as possible.

ALTHAAR

FriendJohn must forgive Althaar, but this practice sounds very tedious. What activities of interest can be performed in the bed if one is not asleep?

JOHN

Well, there's, uh... there's... It's... Ok, I don't want to be a Human stereotype, but morning sex is pretty much the best way to start the day.

ALTHAAR

Mourning sex? Humans perform the sex to grieve for their departed ones?

JOHN

No! Well, sometimes. But no, I meant the time of day kind of morning. It's just. You know, sometimes you wake up and it's go time.

Type type type.

ALTHAAR

And what is the destination for the "go time," please?

JOHN

No, there's no-- it's just, you know, it's time for sex.

ALTHAAR

Althaar does not know! Althaar has been trying most strenuously to understand the Human sexual mores, but they are so very complex! And shrouded with enigma! Every time Althaar begins to think he is grasping the handle of them, he encounters more confusion! It seems that Humans are having thoughts of the sex during much of their waking hours, and yet they do not wish to speak of it. Except by using the idioms, which, as FriendJohn must have been noticing, are not always within the wheelhouse of Althaar.

JOHN

It's not just our waking hours. But yeah, Human sex stuff can get pretty complicated. It's not your fault you're confused--it's plenty confusing for us, too, and we're the ones doing it. I guess it's kind of a sticky subject. Heh.

ALTHAAR

...Is FriendJohn making a messy joke?

JOHN

Dirty joke. A little one, yeah.

ALTHAAR

Ah! Can FriendJohn explain it to Althaar, please?

JOHN

Oh, uhhhh...

JOHN's phone rings.

JOHN

Oh thank God. Hello?

CHIP

(on the phone)

Hey, John. I've got a situation down here, and I need some, uh, emergency maintenance work asap.

JOHN

Oh, you called the wrong number, Chip. This is my personal phone--you want the WSS line. It's my day off.

CHIP

Yeah, no, I called you on purpose. This is more of an... off the books kinda situation, and I think you're the one for the job. Should be quick.

JOHN

Off the books how? If you're having Robot Union problems, you're on your own. I'm not spending my one day off getting yelled at for having skin.

CHIP

No, it's... well, I guess you could call it a robot problem, but I promise, it's not a Union thing. It's... kind of a drinks machine thing? Look, just come down here and I'll explain.

JOHN

Chip, how many times do I have to say it? It's my day off!

ALTHAAR

And FriendJohn has much to explain to Althaar about the Human sexing, Mr. Frinkel!

JOHN

...On the other hand, how can I refuse a friend in need? I'll be right up. Sorry, Althaar, we'll have to have that talk another time. Duty calls!

ALTHAAR

Oh. But... Althaar had hopes that he might finally accomplish an understanding of the Human sex. It is a disappointment.

JOHN

Yeah, sorry. But Chip needs my help, what can I say? Besides, I might not be the best Human to explain sex in the first place. It's not like I've been having a lot of it lately. Ever since Judy and I stopped seeing each other.

ALTHAAR

Humans can choose not to perceive one another?! This is an ability unheard of by Althaar! (*to self, while typing*) It is most unfortunate that they can not use this skill on Althaar, or his studies would be of much less difficulty! (*back to JOHN*) And the termination of visual contact between Humans, this also is the end of the sexing between them?

JOHN

Yes. Well, uh... usually? That's one of the complicated parts. Listen, I'm gonna go see what Chip wants, ok? We can finish this... some time that is definitely not soon!

Door whoosh as JOHN hurries out into the hallway.

ALTHAAR

Oh, do not worry, FriendJohn! There will be plenty of time for continuing the discussions! The br-unch of Althaar is bottomless!

JOHN

Yeah, ok Althaar. I'll see you in a--

CRASH! Sound of a planter being knocked over

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Aah! Watch where you're going, you big ape!

JOHN

(screams in fear)

WhAAAH! Get away!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

How rude! You're the one lunging out of doorways at people!

JOHN

Sorry, Mrs. F., I'm a little jumpy. Slept weird. Bye!

JOHN runs off down the hallway. Door announcement in the distance as he leaves Alef 1.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Now what was that all about? I'll never understand the hurry these bipeds are always in. Or is he finally cracking under the pressure?...

ALTHAAR

Welcoming to you, Mrs. Frondrinax! Would you perhaps wish to join Althaar in the brunching?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, that sounds lovely! What is it, a kind of sport?

ALTHAAR

No, it is the meal that is commencing the Human Sun-day! Althaar must confess that he did not think to prepare any items suitable for consumption by Fugulnari, but perhaps a sparkling water would make appropriate substitute for the Human mimosa?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, don't you worry about that, Althaar, a mimosa would hit the spot right about now.

ALTHAAR

Mrs. Frondrinax, the Human mimosa contains the juice of oranges. Is it... the custom of Mrs. Frondrinax to be consuming extractions from fellow plant-beings?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Well, not normally, dear, no, you're quite right. But the juice of oranges is a different matter entirely. I've never liked those smug little bastards.

ALTHAAR

...Oh. Then please, be enjoying the mimosa of Althaar!

ALTHAAR pours MRS. F a mimosa, which she sips somehow.

ALTHAAR

The arrival of Mrs. Frondrinax is most fortunate. Now Althaar will not be forced to abandon his brunchings due to the unexpected departure of FriendJohn! The brunching is not a solitary activity, according to Althaar's researches.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Well then, it was very inconsiderate of Johnny to go leaving you in the lurch like that, wasn't it? I don't know about that boy sometimes, really.

ALTHAAR

Oh, Althaar does not take the offense, Mrs. Frondrinax! Althaar admires greatly the helpfulness and generosity of FriendJohn. FriendJohn is frequently making assistance to all his many friends on the Fairgrounds, even when the assisting turns out to cause FriendJohn discomfort or danger! Which is often! And, it is possible that the interruption of the Sun-day of FriendJohn will conclude swiftly, and then FriendJohn will return to complete the brunching! And the explaining to Althaar of Human sex practice! Ee!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Human sex? I should think you'd already have learned all there is to know about it, dearie. It's practically all they think about, as far as I can see. Dreadfully boring.

ALTHAAR

Althaar is not disagreeing, but the sex and the romance are of great cultural importance to Humans! So Althaar believes that a deeper understanding of these will be of much usefulness in his work.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

What's there to understand? They're constantly trying to climb on top of each other. Or any other sentient they can find, present company excepted, of course. But they don't stop there, no! They'll try to pollinate absolutely anything! Inanimate objects! Fictional characters! Abstract concepts!

ALTHAAR

Yes, Althaar has been reading many of the works of the great Human sexosopher Chuck Tingle, but these are raising more questions for Althaar than are answered! The 34th Human Rule is of much fascination. Althaar struggles still to grasp its many implications! Truly the Human sexing is a subject that requires exhaustive study.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

I'm telling you, Althaar, all you need to know is that they let their stamens run their lives. I can see you're devoted to this little project of yours, but do you really think Humans are worth going to all this trouble over? Such a primitive species, if you don't mind my saying so. Like a trunk without any branches!

ALTHAAR

Althaar believes this to be exaggeration, Mrs. Frondrinax. It is true that the sex is of much importance to many Humans, but Althaar has observed them thinking of many other things also! And FriendJohn has just this morning informed Althaar that he has not engaged in any pollinations since he ceased viewing of his former mate Judy. So Althaar does not wish to make the stereotype!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, John has been pollinating plenty, dearie. Not that I've been eavesdropping, mind you, but... my petals are sensitive, you know.

ALTHAAR

But... how has FriendJohn accomplished the pollinations without a mate? Where has this been occurring? Or can the sexing be achieved without physical contact?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, Althaar, can't we talk about something else? Anything, please! It's bad enough hearing about this sex nonsense from Humans all the livelong cycle! How about another mimosa, there's a good boy.

ALTHAAR

Oh! Althaar has been a poor host, Mrs. Frondrinax! (*pours*)

MRS. FRONDRINAX

That's all right, sweetie. And I'm sorry for getting cross with you--it's hard to be so far from home, you know how it is, and sometimes these Human shenanigans just dry my shoots right out! I'll tell you one thing, though: if you really must know more about Human pollination, you should check out John's sock drawer.

Transition to the Egg. Sounds of a party being set up: glasses clinking gently into place, some foot traffic as the staff gets ready for a busy day.

CHIP

Of all the irresponsible-- Keeping yourself in working order is right there in your contract! Seriously, this is strike two. Next time I'm going straight to Hoffa-bot, and you know how the Union feels about this kind of thing. I'm the one who brought you here, and so help me I'll ship you right back out!

BUBBLES

You're threatening me with banishment from the Fairgrounds? Oh noooo. You going to throw in a free rotor upgrade while you're at it?

CHIP

This isn't a joke, Bubbles! You can't just waltz around handing out essential components willy nilly to every wandering bot that pulses you!

BUBBLES

Streez, Chip, you really know how to drain a gal's battery.

CHIP

Bubbles! We've got the Magnosian Meet-up this afternoon, and those bucket-mouths can literally down a martini in ½ the time it takes any other bartender to make them. I need you firing on all cylinders! I picked up your contract because you can shake a drink in 3.67 jiffies but frid, if you keep malfunctioning like this, I'm going to stick with organic staff from now on. Maybe a Xybidont--they don't have your speed, but hey, twelve arms is better than two. And even a peanut butter junkie wouldn't flake out on me like this!

Door whoosh as JOHN enters.

CHIP

Reliability, Bubbles. Commitment. That's what I-- Oh, hey, John! Thanks for coming, buddy! Bubbles, you better hope this works.

JOHN

Morning, Chip.

CHIP

I appreciate you making time for me on your day off. Can I get you an adult Human beverage?

JOHN

Oh, no thanks, I just came from brunch. Althaar makes a surprisingly strong mimosa.

CHIP

Suit yourself. Some days I need to grease the wheels a little, if you catch my drift. *(sound of beer can opening)* Anyway, sorry for dragging you away from your brunch, but I'm really in a fix here.

JOHN

Actually, your timing was perfect. Things were about to get... weird. So, what did you need?

CHIP

Right. John, this... is Bubbles. She's the Electric Egg's new high-volume service bot.

JOHN

Nice to meet you, Bubbles.

Sound of a sonic pulse hitting JOHN.

JOHN

Gah! What-- what the hell was that?

BUBBLES

Oh, sorry! I thought... your ID chip scans as a robot. I didn't realize you were made of meat! I'm so sorry!

CHIP

Never mind what he's made of! This is exactly what I'm talking about! You can't just keep pulsing every bot who walks in here! Let's... just all three of us step into my office, ok?

Bar noise subsides as they go through the analog door to CHIP's office.

JOHN

What are we doing back here? I thought you said this was a drinks machine problem.

CHIP

It... kind of is. Bubbles here is a drinks machine. And a problem.

BUBBLES

Rude.

CHIP

Hwæt, NERCA! Activate protocol: Run Silent, Run Deep! Password: Meredith.

There is a bloop of the computer system responding, and the bar noise cuts out abruptly, replaced by faint white noise.

JOHN

Ok, what's this now?

CHIP

John, the Electric Egg is of course a 100% above board business that complies with all relevant League of Humans and ICSB regulations, but there are times in this line of work when a little discretion is necessary. So I invested in a full security suite for the office a couple years back. Right now, what's said in this room is only between the three of us. And I'd like to keep it that way.

JOHN

Uhhhh, ok? Is this going to take long? Because I'll get docked if my page-o-matic isn't on 28/7 in case of emergency. Also, no offense, but you're starting to creep me out.

CHIP

Ok, I'll cut right to the chase. It's really hard to find good help in this industry, John. Bubbles is a Foster SpeedWell 3000--one of the best bartending-bots in the galaxy. Her specialized hardware allows her to serve an incredibly high volume of customers extremely efficiently. It's not just the extra appendages or the nozzle attachments--her entire build is optimized for high-speed beverage preparation.

JOHN

Ok.

BUBBLES

And just like any other service industry workers, most bar-bots like to unwind a little after work. Take the rough edges off.

JOHN

Ok.

CHIP

But our Bubbles doesn't just use a belt grinder on those rough edges like your typical bot.

BUBBLES

My tastes in entertainment are a little more... unusual. And last night, I... might have put a little too much Nitro in my Glycerin and tonic.

JOHN

Ok?

CHIP

Now normally, what my staff does when they're off the clock would be none of my business. As long as they show up for their shifts on time and ready to work, and I don't end up named as an accessory after the fact, then they can do whatever they want with their down time. A simple rule, right? Fair, wouldn't you say? But could Bubbles stick to it? Of course not! Last night she got completely glitched, AGAIN, and now this morning, she shows up without her vibro-couplers.

JOHN

...You lost me.

CHIP

That's the *one* component her high-speed decanting assembly can't work without, John. She couldn't have lost her rangefinder, or her DC adaptor, no! It just had to be the vibro-couplers! We've got a huge event today, and right now she's no more use to me than a simple household blender!

BUBBLES

This is so embarrassing. Come on, Chip, how would you feel if I went around broadcasting all your kinks to a total stranger?

JOHN

Hang on, it's a sex thing? I... didn't think robots even had those.

CHIP

Most of them don't.

BUBBLES

Like I said, some of us have unusual tastes.

CHIP

And of course, I had to hire one of them! Not a normal, sensible, reliable bot who only uses their access panel for repair purposes! No, I have to end up with one who can't keep her manipulator arms off any smooth-transmitting ship's-bot who blows through here!

BUBBLES

Hey, slow your roll there, judgy. Yeah, I like to hook up with the occasional bot on shore leave. It's harmless fun, as long as everyone's kept their anti-virus software up to date. Ok, so it got a little out of hand this time. But you should talk--I've seen the kind of freaky shness you Humans are into!

JOHN

Whoa, whoa! It's ok, Bubbles, you don't have to be embarrassed. I think I know where this is going. I had the same thing happen to me on my 23rd birthday. Me and a few buddies hopped a shuttle to Jupiter's Red Spot District looking for some down and dirty fun. Bad idea. I shoulda known there was something up when a gorgeous Venusian wanted to buy ME a drink.

CHIP

Yeah, that never happens.

JOHN

He drugged my Tranya and Tonic and robbed me blind. Bubbles, did this ship's-bot steal anything else?

BUBBLES

Oh, no, uhh... he didn't steal anything. We were... ya know... we were doing it.

JOHN

...annd now I'm lost again. Doing what?

CHIP

You know how some of these bots like to get down?

JOHN

I guess I don't.

CHIP

Ok, well, "opposites attract" isn't just a Human saying. It applies to bots too.

JOHN

So, what, these bots are... magnetized, or...?

CHIP

Not literally, it's... You know how some Humans get more turned on the less they and their partner have in common? I'm sure you've seen some of what's out there on HECNET. I mean, let's face it, she's not wrong--Humans *are* into a lot of pretty freaky shness. Anyway, some of these bots have a kind of... fetish that works along the same lines.

BUBBLES

Ughhh, just put me on "sleep mode" until this is over...

JOHN

A “fetish?”

BUBBLES

...It’s that little switch on the bottom of my dorsal panel...

CHIP

John, how old are you?

JOHN

Oh, for-- I know what a fetish is, Chip! Will you just tell me why I’m sitting here on my day off?

CHIP

They like to swap parts!

BUBBLES

I can’t...

CHIP

So this morning, Bubbles wakes up sporting a brand-new, completely useless astrogation rod, and meanwhile, her vibro-couplers are somewhere out there behind the access panel of some midship-bot whose name she can’t remember. OR the name of his ship, which for all we know has already cast off!

JOHN

So... she can’t trade them back.

CHIP

Exactly. We need a replacement. Which means filing a request with the Robot Union’s Maintenance and Wellness Subcommittee. Which Bubbles is too embarrassed to do.

BUBBLES

Seriously, I’d rather you just switched me off right now.

CHIP

And I would just tell her grow whatever the robot equivalent of a spine is and deal with it, if that’s what it takes to get her up and running, but of course, the Union paperwork is a nightmare. It could be literally weeks before replacements are approved, and if she’s not back at full capacity before second shift, the Magnosian mixer is going to be a total frilling fiasco. So going through the Union isn’t an option. Buuuut... I have reason to believe that there are some backup vibro-couplers sitting in the WSS supply closet. So what I was thinking was, if a couple of those happened to go missing and find their way up here to the Egg...

JOHN

I don’t know, Chip. That sounds pretty shady. I still haven’t finished my probationary period--I could get in a lot of trouble. Why don’t you just go through official WSS channels? I mean, technically, Bubbles *is* just a kind of Drinks Machine...

BUBBLES

Hey! Technically, you're just a meat tube connecting a mouth to an anus!

CHIP

You think I didn't try that? H.F. chewed my ear off for half an hour about what the Union would do if it caught him trying to do an end-run around their requisition process. You're my only hope. I'm really in a bind here. I'll make it worth your while, I promise. You name it! Drinks on the house? A year's supply of Eighty-Percent Burgers? There's worse things than having an interstellar entrepreneur owe you a favor, you know. I will do literally anything.

JOHN

I guess a couple hundred credits couldn't hurt.

CHIP

...I will do almost anything.

BUBBLES

I could really use your help, John. Sorry about the meat tube thing.

JOHN

Actually... I do have a chore I'm putting off right now.

CHIP

...An expensive chore?

JOHN

No, it won't cost you anything but your time. But... it might take a lot of time. And you probably won't enjoy it much.

CHIP

Well, you've got me over a barrel here, Johnny. Get me those vibro-couplers, and I'll wipe down the entire He 20 biodome with a Bronsonian towelette if you want. What do you say?

JOHN

...All right. I can't make any promises, but I'll see what I can do.

BUBBLES

My hero!

CHIP

You're a lifesaver, John!

Transition out of the Egg. A station-wide p.a. announcement:

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS-BOT

Attention all Fairgrounds staff. This is your recreation director-bot, with a reminder that a time limit has been implemented for the Gravity Free Twister Tournament that will be taking place in Samech 5 tonight at 25:30. We will not be having a repeat of the Infinite Zugzwang incident. All participants, please consult HECNET to ensure you have signed up for the division appropriate to your species, taking into account number and length of appendages, any poisonous or acidic skin secretions, the location of any “Boo-tay” zones, et cetera, et cetera. Only correctly pre-registered sapient beings will be allowed to participate. Tickets to the viewing gallery are still available for pickup in the Gimel 21 recreation center, for those wishing to observe the no doubt thrilling spectacle. These are, as always, available on a first come, first served basis. All attendees will receive a complimentary pretzel or soft-baked concretionary nodule upon entrance. That is all.

The WSS office. Ointment-y noises and a bit of audible wincing from H.F. His pager rings.

H.F.

(to himself)

And it never fails. Just once I’d like to be able to finish putting on a Salusan Spice Plaster without any interruptions. *(answers the phone)* Wanting and Sustainment Systems, how may we reverse entropy in your immediate vicinity?

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

(on the phone, with sounds of liquid behind her)

Hello? This is Amber? On the Bridge? There’s a problem with a wire?

H.F.

Ok Amber, can you be more specific? What’s this wire doing?

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

It’s leaking?

H.F.

Uh huh, wires don’t leak, Amber. That would be a pipe, and that would be the robot plumbers’ problem. I hope this interaction has been satisfactory, thank you for your interest in Wanting and Sustainment Systems, Incorporated, and--

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

Wait? The Commander said to call *you*?

H.F.

Oh, she did, huh? This is gonna be good. Can you describe the “wire?”

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

About 4 inches in diameter? With a flow of approximately 20 gallons per minute?

H.F.

Yeah, that is exactly 0% my problem. I don’t know why you--

More sloshing as the COMMANDER has approached AMBER's comms panel.

COMMANDER

H.F., we need someone from WSS down here immediately!

H.F.

For a broken pipe? That's way outside our remit, Mindy. What are you trying to pull? If the plumber-bots are on strike again, I feel for you, but there's no way I'm crossing a picket line.

Sloshing, gushing.

COMMANDER

They're not on strike, they're just being... robots. I called them down when the leak started, and they were halfway through the repair when Frall just *had* to tell them what exactly was spilling all over the floor of the bridge.

FRALL

You did advise me last week to make more attempts at friendly conversation with the crew, Commander. The viscosity, soluble solid make-up, and titratable acidity of this substance indicate an entirely digestible liquid. I believe most sapient beings would consider that worthy of comment.

COMMANDER

In other words, it's a drink. And now the plumber-bots are engaged in a spirited discussion of whether or not the needed repairs are covered under their contract, and have helpfully informed us that any intervention on our part in said discussion will be construed as an attempt by management to interfere with the collective bargaining process, and considered grounds for Union retaliation. Meanwhile, the carpet is getting soaked. So will you please just get down here! It's really sticky, and the whole bridge smells like a fruit salad!

H.F.

(to himself)

Pineapple juice! On my way, Commander.

H.F. ends the call and gets up to leave from his janky chair, as the janky office door opens, jankily.

JOHN

(suspiciously chipper)

Top o' the morning, H.F.!

H.F.

John? What are you doing here? You're not on duty 'til third cycle.

JOHN

Sure, I know that, but I was in the neighborhood, so I thought this would be a good time to catch up on that inventory check you wanted me to do.

H.F.

...You ever get around to reading the employee manual like I told you?

JOHN

Oh, uh, yeah, of course...

H.F.

Uh huh. So then, you already know that WSS doesn't do overtime pay. And that you putting in for overtime would be grounds for, what was it... "immediate dismissal and the levying of an 'insubordinate egalitarianism' fee of not less than 82 thousand credits?"

JOHN

Ok, you got me, I didn't know that. But I do now, so... thanks. It'll give me something to remember the next time I'm feeling too chipper.

H.F.

You do that. Anyway, I'm on my way out. Another pineapple juice line popped a leak down on the Bridge, and we're on the hook for this one.

JOHN

This place just keeps getting weirder. You couldn't get the plumber-bots to handle it?

H.F.

Nah, Frall tipped them off, damn their... whatever Frall uses for eyes. That makes five pineapple juice incidents this month. Three of them just this week! I don't like this, B. I don't like it one infinitesimal bit. If we can't figure out how to put a stop to this, or at least kick it back over to the Robot Union, we're going to be swamped.

JOHN

Yeah, or... tropical beached.

H.F.

I know they grow a ridiculous amount of pineapples in the hydroponics farms, but why is there juice being piped all over the Fairgrounds? It just doesn't make any sense.

H.F.'s pager rings again.

H.F.

Wanting and Sustainment Systems, how may we--

FRALL

Good afternoon, H.F. Lieutenant Commander Frallen-Br'ar here. I just wanted to let you know that, based on the Commander's current state of mind and the condition of her footwear, you have approximately five minutes to get down here before she orders you thrown in the brig for "gross negligence and being a royal pain in my personal ass."

H.F.

I'm on my way right now, Lieutenant. And speaking of pains in the ass, thanks a lot for letting those plumber-bots know about the pineapple juice! Super helpful!

FRALL

Don't mention it. See you soon!

They hang up.

H.F.

All right, I gotta get to the bridge. You can stick around and take a look at the inventory if you really want, just don't punch in, or, you know.

JOHN

Got it, thanks. Good luck on the bridge.

H.F. exits.

JOHN

All right, time to grab Chip some vibro-couplers out of the closet and be on my way. Easy-peasy, pineapple-squeezy.

JOHN opens the supply closet. Several cardboard boxes can be heard tumbling out as he does so. We are heirs to a rich audio drama tradition.

JOHN

Aah! Wow, we really are overdue for an inventory check. Ok, vibro-couplers, vibro-couplers... what's this one? "Part XN-038752 alpha." Great. Do any of these boxes actually say what's in them, or...? (*sound of rummaging*) Nnnope. Ok, John, think. I don't have time to go through all these boxes before H.F. gets back. Which means I need an inventory number. But if I log in to the inventory system, WSS will know I'm here, which means I'll get fired and somehow owe them more money than I could make in a decade. So how can I possibly...

Typing and/or mouse clicking on the janky office computer.

JOHN

...“Login as guest?” It can't be that simple, can it? Nothing's ever that simple. Especially for me. Annd yup, there's the catch, it wants a password. (*considers his options for a moment*) Screw it. “12345.”

He types this and presses enter. A tense beat. Then the cheery sound of the inventory system being accessed.

JOHN

You have got to be flotting kidding me.

Brief music transition to a sticky, soggy and disheartened Bridge. The crank of a wrench.

H.F.

...annnd that should do it. (*bangs wrench on pipe*) At least until this place starts flooding with marinara sauce. And just so we're clear, there's no way you can convince me that's a beverage.

COMMANDER

Ok, cleaning-bots, the leak has been contained! Now it's up to you to get the bridge back to a functional state as quickly as possible. Prioritize the touch screens, please, I can't stand it when they're sticky.

H.F.'s pager goes off again.

H.F.

Wanting and Sustainment Systems, how may we--

*Weird liquid noises over the phone. **The occasional distant giggle.***

PLUMMER-BOT

Hello! This is Christopher Plummer-bot speaking. I'm currently in the Samech 5 Zero-Gravity Gymnasium, and I'm afraid we're going to need an emergency drinks machine repair immediately.

H.F.

What kind of drinks machine repair?

PLUMMER-BOT

We have a pipe down here spraying pineapple juice all over the place. And I do mean *all* over the place, because, well, Zero-Gravity...

H.F.

Just because the pipe's got a drink in it doesn't make it a drinks machine, Plummer-bot. It's structural. Which makes it you plumber-bots' problem.

PLUMMER-BOT

Structural or no, we've had some sapients floating around down here and drinking the spillage.

H.F.

So?

PLUMMER-BOT

So this pipe is currently dispensing a beverage.

H.F.

What? It's a leaky pipe! It's not my fault some idiots are drinking what comes out of it!

PLUMMER-BOT

Nonetheless, what we have is a potable liquid coming out of this pipe, and going into the alimentary system of one or more sapients. Which makes it a drinks machine in the Union's book, and therefore renders it outside the purview of Fairgrounds Plumbers' Local 23. I can get Mother Jones-bot on the line if you would like to discuss this further.

H.F.

Not on your edelweiss! If you'd have just done your jobs and fixed the leak when it started, no one would have had time to be drinking this stuff in the first place!

PLUMMER-BOT

Regulations state that before any repairs can commence, all foreign substances must first be identified--

H.F.

Oh, that's convenient!

PLUMMER-BOT

--and while we were busy determining the titratable acidity of the leakage, some sapients unfortunately discovered its potable properties and began consumption. Therefore, the repairs fall within the bailiwick of WSS, and Robot Union members cannot be--

H.F.

Yeah, yeah, I get it. All right, I'll be there as soon as I can.

H.F. hangs up.

H.F.

Mindy, can I talk to you for a minute? We've got a problem.

COMMANDER

What is it now, H.F.?

H.F.

I just got a call about another of these leaks up in Samech 5. So now that's 6 in a month.

COMMANDER

I'm sorry you're having a sticky month, H.F.

H.F.

My point is, they're speeding up. I don't know what's going on, but whatever it is, is getting worse.

COMMANDER

What do you suggest?

H.F.

Well for one thing, if this keeps up, I'm either going to need you to bring in some outside help, or back me up with the Robot Plumbers' Union.

COMMANDER

I don't think so, H.F. I'm not giving the Union any more ammunition against us right now, we only just avoided a general robot strike. And as for outside help--it's WSS's responsibility to fulfill their contractual obligation to the Fairgrounds, so if you're understaffed, you'll have to take it up with your employers. But surely you and John can handle a few leaky pipes?

H.F.

(under his breath)

Pipes!

COMMANDER

It can't be as bad as all that. Lieutenant Frall specifically said the situation wasn't dangerous.

FRALL appears.

FRALL

On the contrary, Commander, these leaks, if left unchecked, have an 86% chance of causing catastrophic damage to the Fairgrounds and most residents therein.

COMMANDER

What? This morning you said it was harmless!

FRALL

Not quite, sir. Your question this morning was in terms of the substance itself, and possible danger to the crew upon contact or consumption. And in those terms, it presents no danger whatsoever to any species currently on the bridge, except for a perhaps a slight chance of indigestion.

COMMANDER

So where does this catastrophic damage come from? And why are you just now telling me about it?

FRALL

Well, sir, the substance--

H.F.

It's pineapple juice!

COMMANDER

Excuse me?

H.F.

I don't know, I'm no interdimensional ball of infinite cosmic light, but I'd bet Miss Sophie's dancing slippers that it's pineapple juice flowing through this pipe. (*clonks a tool against the pipe*) And now, filling up the Samech 5 Zero-Grav Gym.

FRALL

Mr. Fornes is correct. The substance could accurately be referred to as "pineapple juice."

COMMANDER

...Pineapple juice.

FRALL

Yes.

COMMANDER

Which is, for some reason, being piped all over the Fairgrounds.

FRALL

Yes.

COMMANDER

And which is also, for some reason, springing leaks that are going to somehow destroy us all.

FRALL

That is the gist of it, sir, yes.

COMMANDER

...Frall? Remember we had that talk about you being more proactive in offering information I would consider relevant? Information about things that can kill me... is always relevant. Ok? I want a full report on this pineapple juice situation immediately. Particularly the lethal parts.

FRALL

Understood, sir. Please wait one moment while I... consult my records.

Popping/shimmering of FRALL traveling interdimensionally.

H.F.

Their "records?" They have records?

COMMANDER

I assume that's just an expression, although who knows. It would be just like them to keep some kind of alternate dimension full of old-fashioned filing cabinets, out of sheer perversity.

FRALL reappears.

FRALL

Ahem. Much like their counterparts among the early seafarers of Earth, the first Humans to travel into deep space were often vulnerable to a nutrient deficiency known as “scurvy.” Although this problem had largely been solved by the time of the Fairgrounds’ construction, it was something of a *bête noire* for Bennet Cheesecloth, the chief engineer in charge of designing the Fairgrounds’ life support systems. Cheesecloth had a long-standing obsession with pirates, having grown up romanticizing their life of plundering the high seas. Due to his rank, and the numerous inefficiencies of the Fairgrounds’ design committee, he was able to indulge these eccentricities without attracting any notice, and install a frankly Rube Goldberg-ian mechanism to ensure that future residents would never fall short of their recommended Vitamin C requirements. In short, he dedicated several areas of hydroponics exclusively to pineapple production, set up an automated harvesting and juicing system, and then fed the resulting liquid into Life Support’s humidification units, producing a vitamin-rich mist that would then be piped all over the station and inhaled unnoticeably by every resident, preventing the dreaded scurvy without any effort or knowledge on their part. Cheesecloth called it the Ascorbic Aerator, and it was his pride and joy, until his death by keelhauling in 2479.

COMMANDER

Huh. That’s kind of brilliant, even if it is needlessly elaborate.

FRALL

Well, it would be if it worked.

COMMANDER

So it doesn’t actually prevent scurvy?

FRALL

Not in the least. All it actually does is make everything on the station vaguely sticky and provoke the occasional allergic reaction.

COMMANDER

Ugh. Typical.

H.F.

So, if this has been going on since they built the place, why are we suddenly springing all these leaks now?

FRALL

The Fairgrounds was built under the assumption that it would handle hundreds of millions of visitors per year, and the capacity of the Ascorbic Aerator was set accordingly. After the downshifting, the total throughput of Life Support is much lower than Cheesecloth planned for. And, since the Aerator was installed covertly to avoid anyone noticing how Mugato-shit insane the whole thing was, it was overlooked in the downshifting process. Simply put, the system is producing pineapple juice almost eight times faster than it’s being consumed, and the pipes are at a level of pressure they were never intended to sustain. They will all burst in time.

COMMANDER

Ok, that’s definitely inconvenient, but I don’t see what makes it deadly.

FRALL

It's a combination of several factors, Commander. Species with particularly delicate skin or other exterior organs will sustain damage from exposure to the undiluted form of such an acidic liquid--our MedCenters will be seeing a marked increase in chemical burns. There is of course a great deal of electronic equipment that could be damaged by spillage, in some cases beyond repair, not to mention the station's robotic crew. And finally, access to a large volume of nutrient-rich fluid will most likely cause a population explosion among any opportunistic invasive species in residence.

COMMANDER

Invasive species? You mean...

FRALL

Yes, Commander. Vent-biters. The exponential increase in food supply will lead to a commensurate spike in reproduction. Pineapple juice will literally coat the walls of the decommissioned sectors, and even working 28 hours a day, the robot cleaning crews will be unable to keep the vent-biters from gorging themselves upon it. Sanitation will be overwhelmed within a few days of the brooding.

COMMANDER

Oh, great Hooker's ghost! All right, so we need to shut this Aerator down. The first step should be reducing the supply--we'll cut pineapple production immediately. Amber, get the head of Hydroponics on the line.

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

Yes, sir?

FRALL shimmers.

FRALL

Commander, depriving the Aerator system of ingredients will eventually allow it to be drained and deactivated, but that process will require approximately eight weeks. The station will remain in danger as long as the pressure exceeds the system's intended capacity. We will need to extract an additional 1,771,561 gallons of juice immediately in order to prevent further leakage.

COMMANDER

Can't we just dump it into space?

FRALL

Unfortunately, Mr. Cheesecloth, perhaps correctly fearing that his life's work would go unappreciated by future Fairgrounds residents, ensured that the Aerator system had no valves or other outlets anywhere within the vicinity of the outer hull. We could try ganging hoses together to reroute some of it out of the emergency exhaust ports...

COMMANDER

Perfect! The emergency exhaust system was built to expel large volumes quickly.

FRALL

Large volumes of gases, sir, not liquids. The process will necessarily entail frequent cleaning breaks to ensure that the ports do not become clogged.

COMMANDER

Still, if we temporarily repurpose all the exhaust ports--

FRALL

I'd strongly advise confining the procedure to the ports facing opposite the Fairgrounds' direction of orbit. Otherwise, our path will take us right into a cloud of the recently-expelled liquid, and we'll have a station that's sticky inside *and* out. Shortly thereafter, the acidity of the juice will begin to have an effect on the Fairgrounds' indium-tin oxide coating. I trust I don't need to elaborate.

COMMANDER

Crap. Ok, so we'll only use the rear ports. But will that be enough?

FRALL

Almost certainly not, sir. The reduction in pressure should somewhat decrease the chance of pipe rupture, but it will likely be insufficient.

COMMANDER

Still, it's better than nothing, right?

FRALL

That's one way of looking at it.

COMMANDER

Ok, then. Get the plumber-bots on it right away. And by Rogar's twitching whiskers, do NOT say anything to make them think this Aerator is a drinks machine! There's no way we have enough organic crew to pull this off.

FRALL

Understood, Commander.

FRALL discorporates.

COMMANDER

Well, H.F., you heard the cloud. We'll work as fast as we can to bring the pressure down, but until we get this sorted out, well, you're probably going to be the stickiest being on the Fairgrounds. And that's saying a lot. Good luck.

WSS pager rings, H.F. answers it.

H.F.

Wanting and Sustainment Systems. Please tell me this isn't about a puddle of piña coladas...

Transition to Chip's office at the Egg.

JOHN

Ok, Bubbles, just hold still for a second while I lock down this flange...

Sound of bolts being tightened in BUBBLES' chest cavity.

BUBBLES

(giggling) Ooh, that tickles!

Wrenching and tapping.

JOHN

Annd.. *(wrench)* that should do it. *(closes her access panel)* So? Feeling any better?

BUBBLES

Ooh yes! I feel whole again. I'm going to aerate these drinks so hard those big ol' gulpers will be burping for a week!

We follow them out of the office and into the bar area.

CHIP

Oh, hey, you're done already! Great! So, are we back up to speed, here, or what? Bubbles, we ready to turn these Magnosians upside down and empty their pockets?

BUBBLES

You know it!

CHIP

Amazing. John, I owe you huge, seriously. Anything you want, you name it, it's yours. I'll pay you back any way I can. Except literally. Can I start by having Bubbles whip you up a tasting of one of today's specialty cocktails?

JOHN

Sure, why not? With over a billion inhabited planets, it's definitely 5:00 somewhere.

Sounds of a cocktail being made with terrifying robotic efficiency--ice clinking, different liquors being poured, super-fast shaking.

BUBBLES

Here you go, John! We call this one the Sidewinder!

CHIP

I'm going with a desert-planet theme for today's event--Magnosians are a tundra species, so anyplace without permafrost, they think is really exotic. We're texture mapping the walls so it looks like endless sand dunes. Bubbles here will be crewing the "Mirage Bar," which is going to look like an oasis, complete with holo-palm trees and some animatronic parakeets I picked up when the Fairgrounds were auctioning off the equipment from the "wildlife of Earth" exhibits. You can pick up some amazing stuff at those auctions for practically nothing.

JOHN

Oh. Is that why Dee's been using a robotic flamingo for a mic stand?

CHIP

You know it! Say one thing about Chip Frinkel, say he knows a bargain when he sees one!

JOHN

Fair enough. Well, bottoms up! ...oof! That is strong.

BUBBLES

Sidewinders are venomous, so we wanted it to have some bite.

CHIP

Do you think it needs to be a little sweeter? (*tastes*) Whooooo... I dunno. I kinda like that gasoline flavor profile.

Music transition to the bridge. A crowd of plumber bots are milling about.

FRALL

All plumber-bots are present and accounted for, Commander.

COMMANDER

Thank you, Lieutenant. All right, plumber-bots, your attention please! I've called all of you here under Emergency Article Zed Beta Tau to do an emergency reroute of liquid through the exhaust port assemblies. You'll be running auxiliary tubing to the ports to reduce stress on an overloaded system.

PLUMMER-BOT

And what system is that, exactly?

COMMANDER

A... pipe system, that... Lieutenant? Why don't you pass out those diagrams so these bots can see what they're dealing with? (*sotto voce*) And ix-nay on the oose-jay, or it's your incorporeal butt.

FRALL

Understood, Commander. (*to the bots*) Gentlebots, I have here the relevant schematics... Take one and pass the rest down, please.

Rustling and murmuring as they do so.

FRALL

As you can see, we've identified seventy-three access points to this pipe system that can be redirected to the rearward exhaust port intakes. If the first digit of your serial number is 0 or 1, you'll be assigned to--

PLUMMER-BOT

Lieutenant, I have a question, if you would?

COMMANDER

No, we wouldn't. This is an emergency! Focus, please!

PLUMMER-BOT

Emergency or no, Commander, the Union's contract is molybdenum-clad! Robotic employees are not responsible for the repair and maintenance of drinks machines!

Suspicious muttering from the other bots.

COMMANDER

Jones dammit.

FRALL

If you inspect the diagram, Plummer-bot, you'll observe that this system has no connections whatsoever to any drinks machines. Therefore--

PLUMMER-BOT

Nonetheless, these diagrams clearly show that the liquid in these pipes is the very same that has been leaking into the Zero-Gravity Gymnasium. A liquid whose potable qualities has been well established!

Indignant reaction from the bots.

COMMANDER

They're pipes. Pipes! Pipes are not drinks machines! And if we don't get this stuff out of them, they'll explode!

PLUMMER-BOT

Don't try to wriggle your way out of this with technicalities, Commander!

COMMANDER

Rrgh! Frall, a little help?

FRALL

Gentlebots, these pipes are officially designated as part of the Life Support system.

PLUMMER-BOT

And is not the ingestion of liquids necessary to the support of sloppy, slovenly, slipshod Human life? Ha! You'll have to do better than that!

FRALL

If you take another look at the schematics, you'll note that the pipes to which you have been directed are all among those that have yet to spring any leaks. Therefore, the substance inside--

PLUMMER-BOT

The drink!

FRALL

The substance inside is completely unavailable for ingestion by any life-form as long as the pipes remain intact. Throughout all of galactic history, gentlebots, there has never been a single instance of any being drinking so much as a drop of any substance from a closed pipe.

PLUMMER-BOT

You'll not bamboozle us with such tenuous logic, Lieutenant! I say it's a drinks machine, and I say to Hell with it!

Agreement from the bots.

FRALL

You want logic? Okay. *(beat)* It's a week before your birthday, and someone gives you a present: a perfectly wrapped scan-proof box with something inside.

PLUMMER-BOT

Er... What's this now?

FRALL

Unbeknownst to you, the box contains an antique PDA with a captive AI chip.

Gasp! from the bots.

PLUMMER-BOT

I wouldn't accept it. I'd report the person who gave it to me to the police.

FRALL

The box is scan-proof. You won't know what it is until you've opened it. So you have nothing to report.

PLUMMER-BOT

Then... I'd open it.

FRALL

But it's a birthday present. To be opened on your birthday. To do otherwise would render it *not* a birthday present.

PLUMMER-BOT

Very well... I'd wait until my birthday, and then report it.

FRALL

So you'd keep that poor, defenseless AI as your prisoner? For a full week? In clear violation of the Silicon Sentience Act?

Murmurs of robotic disapproval.

PLUMMER-BOT

No! I don't... I wouldn't... I...

Zap, crackle, pop as his logic circuits short out.

FRALL

Anyone else have a problem with my logic? (*cowed silence from the bots*) All right then. As I was saying, those of you with serial numbers starting with 0 or 1 will be routing tubing from these valves in Sectors Alef through Dalet to this junction in the Central Atrium. Those of you with serial numbers starting with 2 and 3, you'll be doing the same in Sectors Tet through Kaf. 4's and 5's, you'll be responsible for connecting these feeds with the exhaust junctions in He through Chet.

Fade out on the previous into another announcement:

BURROUGHS-BOT

Attention all entrants and attendees for tonight's Zero-G Twister tournament. Due to a... drinks machine malfunction, the tournament will be postponed indefinitely. Repeat, you should *not* join us in the Samech 5 Zero-Gravity Gymnasium this evening if you're looking to observe or participate in a spirited game of Twister. If, on the other hand, you come from a species that's immune to motion sickness, and you're feeling a powerful thirst, then today is your lucky day.

Transition to the Electric Egg, where things are starting to pick up as a few Magnosians start to arrive and awkwardly mingle.

XTOPPS

Mang, you Humans got some jecked-up hobbies.

DEE

Oh, come on, Xtopps! It's just a kids' game, it's not a Human sex thing.

JOHN

We'lllllll...

DEE

...Ok, I guess it's kind of a sex thing once you get to like, middle school age. When you start having crushes, but you don't have the first idea what to do about it. Twister gives you an excuse to get tangled up together with your crush, without having to admit how much you enjoy it.

JOHN

Especially when the spinner makes them wrap a leg around your back.

DEE

What? Why your back?

JOHN

The back is safer. Do you remember the first time you sat on a guy's lap?

DEE

That was a long time ago.

JOHN

Well whoever's lap it was, I guarantee he remembers.

DEE and JOHN laugh.

XTOPPS

I don't get it, zoods.

DEE

Uh, well... it's hard to explain, Xtopps. For starters, you don't really have a lap.

JOHN

It's... kind of a question of hydraulics.

XTOPPS

Like I said, jacked-up hobbies. So how do you win?

DEE

Well, with the cross-species version, they had to add a timer. So, the players get eliminated when they can't make it to the right color before the buzzer goes off. Without the time limit, a single match could last for months--some of these folks have a lot of appendages to work with.

JOHN

Oh, wow, yeah. A game of Xybidont Twister would take forever. Worse than Monopoly.

DEE

Right. Plus, with the classic version, gravity's pretty integral to the process--the winner's usually just the last person to fall over--so when you take balance out of the equation, it gets even more complicated. With all those different arms and legs and tentacles and pseudopods, of all different sizes and shapes, some with suckers, some with adhesive membranes... it's like a wrestling picture made by David Cronenberg. ...Actually, I'd totally watch that.

JOHN

Well, nobody's going to be watching any Twister for a while, I guess.

DEE

Yeah, what is going on with the gym? Burroughs-bot said something about drinks machines, that's you guys, right?

JOHN

Yeah, but I'm off duty, so H.F. would be handling it. ...Although, now that you mention it, I don't know what the hell kind of drinks machines would be in a gym. Weird.

BUBBLES

Hey, John, can I get you another Sidewinder?

JOHN

Oh, no thanks, that one was a little strong for me actually. How about a... Pygmy Short-Horned Lizard?

BUBBLES

Mm, if you want something with less of a kick, you're better off going with the Merriam's Kangaroo Rat. That's vodka, red sambuca, and prickly pear juice, with a lemon twist. How about it?

JOHN

Sure, why not.

BUBBLES whips up the drink as a MAGNOSIAN bellies up to the bar.

MAGNOSIAN

Uh, hi, um, can I get a, uh, Thorny Devil, please?

BUBBLES

Sure thing, sweetie! And John, here's that Rat for you. Enjoy!

BUBBLES makes the MAGNOSIAN's drink as JOHN tastes his.

JOHN

Mm! That's... surprisingly tasty, Bubbles, thanks. Might want to workshop the name a little, though.

JOHN's pager goes off.

JOHN

Huh, speak of the Thorny Devil. *(bloop)* Hi, H.F., what's up?

H.F.

Sorry to do this to you, kid, but I gotta call you in early. Emergency protocol--and it's a real emergency this time, not "dilution of WSS brand integrity" or some other whim-wham from corporate. I'm still stuck in the gym dealing with a cascading leak situation, which would be a lot easier to fix if I didn't have to do it in the middle of a giant floating cloud of pineapple mist, by the way, and now I just got a call that there's another busted juice pipe in Yod 14, right outside Poppy's. So you're gonna need to grab a wrench and get over there on the double before they track this stuff all over the Upper Concourse.

JOHN

What the hell is going on with all the pineapple juice?

H.F.

Oh, yeah, the Commander and Frall filled me in on that. Turns out some smarkhead installed a system to pipe it all over the Fairgrounds, because, you know, the Fairgrounds. And now the thing's gone into overdrive, and if the Commander can't figure out a way to offload this stuff, we're all going to end up covered in it.

JOHN

Well, I guess that's not *so* bad. There are a lot of worse things that can happen to you on the Fairgrounds than getting covered in juice.

H.F.

Come on, B, you should know better than that by now. Repercussions, right? There's no such thing as a minor problem on the F-- (*wet smacking noise, sputtering*)

JOHN

What was that? Are you ok?

H.F.

(*spitting out juice*)

No, I'm not ok, I had to take off my scuba mask to call you, and I just got smacked in the kisser by a floating juice blob the size of a capybara! Just get over to Yod 14, will you?

JOHN

Uh, would it make a difference if I told you I've been drinking?

H.F.

Unless you can drink 1,771,561 gallons of juice before shift change, I don't want to hear about it!

H.F. hangs up. During the preceeding, the MAGNOSIAN has ordered and consumed 3-4 more drinks.

MAGNOSIAN

Um, hi, yes, I'd like another drink, please?

BUBBLES

Sure thing! What was it, a Roadrunner?

MAGNOSIAN

Um, no, I'd like to try a Giant Hairy Scorpion this time, if that's ok.

BUBBLES

Oo, good choice!

More hyper-speed drink shaking.

JOHN

Huh. I may not be able to drink all that juice, but I think I know who can... Hey, Chip! Got a minute?

CHIP

Uh, sure, but can you make it quick? The rest of the Magnosians are going to be showing up any time now, and like I told you, these folks are serious drinkers.

JOHN

Yeah, I noticed.

CHIP

They're a bar owner's dream, John. Walking bundles of social anxiety with massive gullets attached. They have to get smashed just to get up the courage to talk to each other. Their species was on the brink of extinction before they discovered fermentation. Most of this bunch have never gotten laid before, but by this time tomorrow, every one of them will be heading home with a raging hangover and a ship full of fertilized egg froth. *(happy sigh)* If only their brooding season happened more than once every nine years, I'd be happier than a Mebsutan lava-pig in pahoehoe.

JOHN

Uh huh. So, about the party--how married are you to this desert theme? Because I think I know a way you could get yourself in good with the Commander if you were to tweak the drinks menu a little bit.

CHIP

Eh, I don't know, we put in a lot of work on these recipes.

JOHN

Also, if you don't, we're probably all gonna die.

CHIP

...Course we are. Ok, what's the deal?

JOHN

I'll get ahold of the Commander to figure out the details, but in the meantime, you and Bubbles start adding pineapple juice to the drinks specials--we need to use up as much as we can before we're all swimming in it.

CHIP

Please tell me that's a figure of speech.

JOHN

Nope. In fact, H.F.'s doing just that as we speak.

XTOPPS

I wonder if he's the first zood ever to scuba-dive in pineapple juice?

DEE

Probably not. We Humans do have some pretty jecked-up hobbies.

Transition to the Bridge. A wet/dry vac can be heard off in the distance still dealing with the spillage.

COMMANDER

Ok, so we've bought ourselves a little time with the exhaust ports, but that won't last. What other options do we have? Can we re-activate the mist system in the mothballed sectors until the pressure stabilizes?

FRALL

Unfortunately, Commander, although the Ascorbic Aerator was left untouched during the downshifting process, most of the Fairgrounds' other systems were significantly cut back, to bring them in line with the reduced needs of the station's remaining population.

COMMANDER

So the only component of Life Support that wasn't scaled down was the one that does absolutely nothing to actually support life?

FRALL

Precisely, sir. The current capacities of the electrical power and non-pineapple-based Life Support systems would be inadequate to the task of bringing the decommissioned sectors back on line.

COMMANDER

If I ever get my hands on one of those engineers...

FRALL

Quite. If we were to make such an attempt, the Fairgrounds would suffer from a brief period of rolling blackouts before our generators shorted out one after another.

COMMANDER

Ok, so that's--

FRALL

Which would naturally disable our CO₂ removers, leading to the eventual unconsciousness and death of any members of oxygen-dependant species on station, including of course your own.

COMMANDER

I get it, it's--

FRALL

However, the oxygen excreted by the vegetation in hydroponics would be able to stave this effect off for at least a few days, whereas the results of the failure of the artificial gravity inducers and air pressure gauges would be more immediately and spectacularly lethal for most organic inhabitants.

COMMANDER

Well, that's--

FRALL

The drop in air pressure would cause all amoeboid species to explode instantaneously, of course, coating the walls and corridors with their cytoplasm, whereas you Humans would survive a few minutes more before the the blood in your circulatory systems began to boil. The exoskeletal species would endure the longest, but ultimately the absence of gravity would play havoc with their internal homeostatic systems, relocating hearts to where brains should be, swapping gallbladders with duodenum, filling the sinus cavities with wayward Malpighian tubes, and so on. And then of course once they open their mouths--

COMMANDER

Enough, Lieutenant! I get the picture! Such a disgusting picture.

FRALL

You did specify earlier today that you wished to be briefed on any station conditions likely to lead to your personal extinction, sir.

COMMANDER

So I did. Thanks for that. But next time, you can be a little less forthcoming with the... biological specifics, ok? What I'm looking for is a way to *prevent* my extinction. Do we have any other options for offloading this excess juice before the system fails?

FRALL

I don't believe so, Commander. There would appear to be no other possible mechanism for disposing of such a large volume of liquid anywhere on the Fairgrounds, particularly given its acidity and... stickiness.

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

Commander? There's a call for you? From one of the WSS subcontractors?

COMMANDER

I'm busy, Amber, take a message. No, on second thought, don't take a message, H.F. knows there's no way I can send him any plumbing bots. Tell him to get off my back and get on those leaks!

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

Ok?

COMMANDER

There must be something somewhere in these schematics that would-- (*getting excited*) Hang on, what's this in Tsade 31...?! Look here, if we were to-- ...No, never mind, there was just a bit of pulp stuck to the screen. We're doomed. Did anyone have 'drowning in pineapple juice' in the bridge crew's 'method of our inevitable demise' pool?

AMBER ON THE BRIDGE

Commander? It's the other one? From WSS? He really wants to talk to you?

COMMANDER

Oh, for-- (*bloop*) B? Whatever you want, I don't have time for it. Until we figure out a way to empty out these ridiculous pineapple juice pipes, you and H.F. are the only ones authorized to repair the leaks, so suck it up and get back to work!

JOHN

That's why I called, Commander: I think I might have a solution for you. I've just met some people who really can suck it up. Do you know anything about Magnosians?

COMMANDER

Not much. A whole bunch of their ships have docked this week. Sort of... froggy-looking sentients, right? I've seen a few of them in the corridors, but I haven't spoken to any.

FRALL

Hardly anyone has, Commander. They are, without exception, pathologically shy.

JOHN

Right. Except when they've been drinking. Which all of them are going to start doing in the Electric Egg in just a few minutes. I think if we can get a high-volume feed set up in here, we could serve the entire pineapple juice problem to these folks mixed in with their liquid courage.

COMMANDER

You expect these Magnosians to drink over a million gallons of pineapple juice?

JOHN

I know it sounds crazy, Commander, but I just watched one of them down at least a couple of gallons worth in a few seconds. I really think we've got a shot.

FRALL

The capacity of the Magnosians' gullets is as legendary as their inability to handle simple small talk, Commander. If we are able to deliver the excess liquid to the Electric Egg in time, I anticipate a high likelihood of success.

COMMANDER

This place just keeps getting weirder. All right, Frall, alert the plumber-bots to the change of plans. B, you stay there so you can hook up the feed to the Egg's drinks systems once they arrive. And let's hope these standoffish bastards are feeling thirsty.

Transition to the Electric Egg in Hawaiian luau mode.

DEE

(on mic)

Aloha, Magnosians, and welcome to Island Paradise night at the Electric Egg! Hau'oli wau aia oe ma Ko'u ola! I'll be your host this afternoon as you enjoy the sounds, and tastes, of the galactically-famous tropical islands of Earth! My name is Dee Mallory, but today you can call me... Hokulani.

Hawaiian music vamping.

DEE

All of tonight's specialty cocktails feature 100% fresh juice straight from the Fairgrounds' hydroponic farms, not from concentrate or printed in a molecular fabricator, so boogey board your way up to the bar, grab yourself a Yaha Hula Hickey Dula, and feel your inhibitions wash away! I hope you're all ready for a hip-swaying, grass-skirt blowing, coconut-cracking hula jam because tonight at the Egg, everybody gets lei-ed!

Woo!s etc. from the already-lubricated Magnosians. Music continues. We move over to the bar area, where lightning-speed drink prep can be heard.

JOHN

Wow, Bubbles is killing it.

CHIP

Thanks again for the quick repair job on her. Sapon's a pro, but when it comes to high-volume beverage service, there's nobody in the galaxy better than Bubbles. And the luau thing worked out great too, so it was my pleasure to help you out with that.

JOHN

Not so fast, Chip. The juice thing was a favor for the Commander. You still owe me one. And I know exactly how I want to collect.

CHIP

...Oh. Right. So, what do you need? By way of... non-financial remuneration?

JOHN

Like I said, it's a chore I've been putting off. So let me know when you have some down time, and I'll set it up.

CHIP

Well, the party's only going to last another hour or so--the Magnosians should all be three membranes to the wind and back in their spawning chambers by then--so I guess I'll be free after that. Might as well get this over with.

JOHN

Perfect. Meet me at my place after the party, then. Alef 1, Suite C.

CHIP

Uh, ok. Is... your roommate going to be there?

JOHN

Yup.

CHIP

...Great. Hey, Bubbles? When you get a second, I'll have a Screaming Wipeout. Heavy on the Jäger.

The song ends to raucous applause.

DEE

Mahalo Magnosians! (*applause*) I am really feeling the island vibes! And it looks like you're feeling them, too, am I right? (*applause, cheers*) Wow, thank you, thank you so much! I want to take a moment to introduce the rest of the band: on ukelele, bongos, xaphoon, nose flute, and of course the slide guitar, here he is, folks, the King Kamehameha of the Keys, the Dr. Fu Fong of the Fleezborp, the one and only, Xtopps!

Thunderous applause and other noises of large-mouthed alien enthusiasm.

XTOPPS

Mahalo my zoods... Mahalo... you're too kind...

DEE

We've got some classics ready for you straight from the Earth's sultry, sexy, sandy beaches, so let's keep this luau going! Xtopps, why don't you lei us down some island rhythms?

XTOPPS

The Sun God spoke to me... and he said, "Those who will not dance will have to be shot." So let's keep it shakin', zoods!

The next song starts as the crowd goes wild. Transition with another announcement:

BURROUGHS-BOT

Attention all Fairgrounds staff. This is your recreation director-bot. Although the unauthorized beverage dispersal in the Zero-Gravity Gymnasium has finally been terminated, I have been informed that recreational facilities are not considered high-priority according to Fairgrounds cleaning-bot protocol, so the gym will be playing host to a frankly absurd quantity of pineapple juice for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the Twister tournament will be postponed indefinitely-- (*muffled talking in the background*) ...One moment please. (*hand over the microphone*) ...but it's all sticky. (*muffled talking back*) The facility is filled with floating globules. (*muffled talking*) Who likes it that way? (*muffled talking*) There are no tongues in Twister, mister. (*talking*) ...Ugh, Humans.

Attention all Fairgrounds staff. This is your recreation director-bot. Tonight's Zero-G Twister tournament will take place as scheduled in the Samech 5 gymnasium. Spectators are advised to bring a tarp or liquid-repellent field generator. That is all.

Transition to Alef 1, Suite C. ALTHAAR is humming to himself as he types away on his PDA.

ALTHAAR

FriendJohn, Althaar is having another question. Althaar has read of the 'casual sex'. Is this the equivalent of the 'business casual'? Does the 'casual sex' involve the wearing of the khakis or the shirts of polo?

JOHN

Uh, no, no, it's just... eegh, that's a surprisingly disturbing image. No, uh, casual sex is what Humans usually call it when they want sex that doesn't involve any kind of emotional commitment. Just basically... using each other's bodies to get off.

ALTHAAR

And off of what are these Humans getting, please? The bed is the customary location for the Human sexing, correct?

JOHN

Usually, yeah. But...

ALTHAAR

But Althaar knows there are many other locations that may be used as well! Such as the Zero-Gravity Gymnasium! Or the Gimel 33 public toileting facilities!

JOHN

...Right.

ALTHAAR

So the "getting off" is performed to relocate from the bed to one of these?

JOHN

No... uhhh... ok. Getting off is kind of... well, with casual sex, it's pretty much the whole point. You're just there to get off, and then you're done. Like, I had a friend on Earth that went through different sexual partners faster than you could learn their names. We used to say that she treated them like Kleenex.

ALTHAAR

Ah! In 'casual sex', the Human nasal cavities are evacuated on the partner or partners!

JOHN

No, not literally! Well, probably sometimes literally, but no, most Humans would think that was pretty gross. This Human definitely thinks it's gross. Bleh. No, what we meant was that she got rid of her partners quickly. She didn't get close to them.

ALTHAAR

(gasp) Mrs. Frondrinax was correct! Humans can pollinate each other from great distances!

JOHN

No, sorry, that was another metaphor. Or, well, I guess phone sex is a thing, so kind of? This is even harder than I thought. Listen, let's just put a hold on the sex questions for now, ok? I've actually--

Doorbell rings.

JOHN

Oh, perfect timing.

JOHN turns on the door intercom with a bloop.

JOHN

Is that you, Chip?

CHIP

(over the door intercom)

You know it! So, let's get this favor over with, yeah? Chip Frinkel is fully lubricated and ready to go!

JOHN

What?! It's not that kind of favor, Chip! What is with everyone today?

CHIP

No, yeah, what I meant was I've had at least one of everything on the Island Paradise drinks menu. So I'm pretty lubricated. Also, the inside of my mouth feels sorta prickly. Too much pineapple. Mmneh.

JOHN

Oh, ok. Well, come on in.

Door whoosh as CHIP enters.

ALTHAAR

Greeting and welcome to the home of John B and Althaar, Mr. Frinkel!

CHIP

(trepidatiously inching into the room with his eyes shut)

Uh... Hi, Althaar, thanks for-- oof!

Thump as CHIP stumbles into a piece of furniture.

JOHN

You can open your eyes, Chip, Althaar's behind his privacy curtain.

CHIP

Oh, ok. ...Spuyten Duyvil! This place is huge!

JOHN

Yeah, the Iltorian Commonality doesn't skimp. Here, have a seat. I was going to offer you a drink, but... maybe a coffee would be a better idea.

ALTHAAR

Ooh! Althaar will make preparation of the Java for the guest of FriendJohn!

JOHN

Hang on, Althaar, he's actually your guest. Kind of. See, I was thinking about your questions after I left this morning, and I finally decided that I'm... definitely not the most qualified person to be educating anybody on the subject of sex. What you really need is someone who's a little more cosmopolitan, someone who's been around the block a few times. Metaphorically! What you need is the kind of Human who, say, spends their days and nights mingling with sapients from all over the galaxy. And who knows enough about alien mating customs to be able to explain what makes Human sex so different.

CHIP

Oh, frill me.

ALTHAAR

(contained excitement noises) Oh! FriendJohn has arranged for Althaar a tu-tor! Joy and jubilation! There will no doubt be a great enlightenment for Althaar, and a proportional burgeoning of his Human Culture Data-Base! Althaar is filled with gratitude for the cleverness of FriendJohn, and also for the generous participation of Mr. Frinkel!

JOHN

My pleasure, Althaar. So, Chip, that's your favor. Answer all of Althaar's questions about Human sex, and we'll be square. I'll just go and get that coffee going for you--you two let me know if you need anything else, ok? And Chip? I know this might not be your favorite way to spend an evening, but seriously, I'm eternally grateful you're here.

ALTHAAR

Ee! Mr. Frinkel, is FriendJohn not the most thoughtful and considerate of room-mates?

CHIP

He sure is. *(beat as he prepares himself)* Ok, Althaar, let's talk Human sex. What exactly has you confused? Do you know... what all the parts do?

ALTHAAR

Oh, yes, Mr. Frinkel! The Human reproductive anatomy is not so unusual in comparison to other species. Althaar believes he has an adequate understanding of its biological functions. But in attempting to comprehend the social aspects of Human sex practice, Althaar is an asphyxiating marine creature!

CHIP

...What?

JOHN

(calling from the kitchen)
Fish out of water, Althaar!

ALTHAAR

Thanking you, FriendJohn! One moment please, Mr. Frinkel, while Althaar opens his list of mystifications...

Bleepity noises as ALTHAAR scrolls through the lonnnng list.

CHIP

Wow. That's... quite a list you've got there.

ALTHAAR

Indeed, Mr. Frinkel! Althaar anticipates many learnings will be had from the collaborations between Human and Iltorian this day!

CHIP

John, I'm definitely going to need that coffee!

JOHN

Coming right up!

ALTHAAR

Mr. Frinkel, Althaar humbly requests clarification of the following concepts and practices:

- The casual sex: This is not performed in the 'business casual', but is instead intended to be getting off? And it may be performed at a distance? Althaar has much confusion from this. The nasal cavities may be involved?
- Also, the getting off: off of what, please?
- Screwing: Althaar has confirmed that there are no threadings on the Human organs of copulation. How is the screwing accomplished? Are specialized tools required? Must the Human participants be unscrewed after completion?
- The birds and the bees: Are these of specific species, or is any member of these clades sufficient for the sexing? How are they participating in the pollination process? How is the Human without access to this wildlife able to compensate for their absence? Also, there would seem to be much danger of painful stinging on sensitive portions of the Human anatomy! How is this avoided? Or is this a desired result?
- Shagging: The carpet must be installed for the Human sexing? Is this so that it may then be munched? Are particular utensils or sauces required for this consumption of floor coverings? Althaar's researchings lead him to believe that the carpeting is not an appropriate source of nutrition for Humans, but this munching seems to be a most popular activity. Confusion!
- Why are Humans asking 'Who is your Daddy?' during the sexing, please? Althaar's understanding of Human taboos indicates that this would be not at all an appropriate time to be making introduction to the relatives.
- Sexual healing: Althaar is informed that the Fairgrounds' MedCenters are not performing this. What certification or accreditation must be attained in order to practice this form of medicine? What is 'that feeling' which leads to the need for these procedures? It seems to Althaar that such techniques would often be inefficient and unsanitary.
- Going all the way: Where is this destination? Oh! Is this perhaps the 'off' to which the Humans are getting?

ALTHAAR's questions crossfade into the ending theme music:

ANNOUNCER

You've been listening to *Life with Althaar*, episode nine...

Everything Althaar Always Wanted to Know about Sex (But Humans Keep Running Away before He Can Ask).....

This episode was written by Christopher Lee

featuring

John Amir as John B

Berit Johnson as Althaar

Ivanna Cullinan as Commander Torianna

Alyssa Simon as Lieutenant-Commander Frall

Amanda La Pergola as Mrs. Frondrinax

Philip Cruise as Hardyfox Fornes

Christopher Lee as Chip Frinkel

Zuri Washington as Dee

{etc. with other parts}

and Ian W. Hill as your announcer, William S. Burroughs-bot, {etc.}

Life with Althaar was created by Berit Johnson and Ian W. Hill

This has been an audio production from Gemini CollisionWorks.

Tune in again in two weeks for our next episode, but until then, what's this? It looks like another piece of mysterious email has just arrived in John B's inbox...

JOHN

Another weird spam? "LRXSU and HVMB in heated exchange--watch now!" Oh, and there's a vid link. *(beat)* I'm probably going to regret this, but what the hell, now I'm curious. And whatever it is, it can't be more disturbing than catching a glimpse of Althaar.

Bloop. Classic cheesy porno music. Whirrs and bleeps.

SURVEYOR-BOT

I bet if I opened you up, I'd find a dirty tangle of wires.

MAID-BOT

I may be a first-class maid-bot on the outside, but inside, my components are covered with filthy dust. Are you ready to sanitize me?

SURVEYOR-BOT

You got the wrong bot. I'm the one that's going to throw you in restraining bolts and replace your vacuum tubes.

MAIS-BOT

Oooh! Maybe you should switch em out for some thermal limiters. Because I think it's getting hot in here.

SURVERYOR-BOT

That's just the dust buildup. When's the last time you got a cold blast of compressed air in your access panel?

MAID-BOT

Why don't you open it and find out?

Tiny metal door squeaks open.

MAID-BOT

Ooh!

SURVEYOR-BOT

I thought so. You're filled with outdated components. It's probably going to take me all night to swap these out.

MAID-BOT

Oh! You're just going to take all my favorite little bits and pieces and throw them down the disposal chute? You beast!

SURVEYOR-BOT

You know better than that. My anti-waste subroutine won't let me. I'm just going to have to find another place for them... maybe... somewhere in here.

He dramatically wrenches open his own access panel.

MAID-BOT

Oooh! What a shiny internal rangefinder you have! I bet it's accurate to plus or minus .07 decimeters!

SURVEYOR-BOT

Why don't you try it on and see? Looks like it should fit right where you've been keeping that nasty upholstery attachment...

Unplugging and plugging noises as they trade parts.

MAID-BOT

Oh, yes! Yes! Reduce... reuse... recycle!