

Grainville Cereals Incorporated.

a play by Marge J. Buckley
v2.0, 6/10/22

Cast

BAILIFF...*he/him/his* + THE BAILIFF-JUDGE...*she/her/hers*

FREDDIE...*they/them/theirs*

COMPUTER...*she/her/hers*

DEEK...*he/him/his*

PIPPA...*she/her/hers*

JEANETTE...*she/her/hers* + THE JURY...*it/it/its*

PLAYMASTER...*she/her/hers* + BAILIFF #2...*they/them/theirs*

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE...*he/him/his*

Act I

(Black.)

BAILIFF
The Playmaster's Retreat,
day one.

(Lights up. Six employee-contestants are handcuffed to different spots around the playing space-railings, a radiator, a fridge, etc. They are FREDDIE, JEANETTE, DEEK, PIPPA, and COMPUTER, and they are arranged clockwise in that order.)

COMPUTER
something long.

FREDDIE
something long?

COMPUTER
yeah.

FREDDIE
um, the railings.

COMPUTER
no.

FREDDIE
the bookshelf.

COMPUTER
nope.

FREDDIE
that potted plant.

COMPUTER
not the plant.

FREDDIE
um.
uh.
those cords?

COMPUTER

no.

FREDDIE

those cords?

I can't do this.

I'm gonna freak out.

COMPUTER

no, you aren't.

hey.

you're not going to freak out, Freddie.

you're my anchor.

if you freak, I freak.

what else in here is long?

DEEK

the walls.

FREDDIE

who the fuck cares what's long?

COMPUTER

that's the game.

FREDDIE

I don't care about the game.

PIPPA

is it the lines on the floor?

COMPUTER

ding-ding-ding!

FREDDIE

okay.

PIPPA

I'm Pippa, by the way.

COMPUTER

congratulations, Pippa.

should we play another round?

FREDDIE
seriously.
it's an emergency.

PIPPA
aren't you gonna congratulate me?

FREDDIE
congratulations.

PIPPA
wanna hear a joke?

FREDDIE
handcuffed to a goddamn railing.

PIPPA
what do you get when you cross a tractor with a mango?

FREDDIE
I don't think any of you appreciate how dire this is.

JEANETTE
I have to go, too.
we're all going to end up doing it eventually.

COMPUTER
I'm not.

JEANETTE
let's do it together, Fred.
Freddie?
we'll be demonstrating leadership potential, Freddie.
um, what do you mean you're not?

COMPUTER
I'm not very regular.
I haven't been eating much.
I won't look.

FREDDIE
the smell?

PIPPA
whatever:
everyone shits.
so I'm Pippa,
you're Freddie,
your friend is-

COMPUTER
you don't want to know my name.

PIPPA
why not?

COMPUTER
because
something awful is happening to us and you don't want to start thinking of me as a friend.

JEANETTE
don't tell her what she wants, dude.
oh,
uh,
I use 'dude' as a gender-neutral, uh-

DEEK
my name is-

COMPUTER
I wouldn't have cared even a little bit, except that now you've placed, like,
the burden of soothing your gender anxiety on the transvestite.

JEANETTE
I hope you know I wouldn't have used that word.

COMPUTER
I don't know anything about you, ma'am.

PIPPA
okay, so what does everyone do for a living?
I'm an attorney.

COMPUTER
are you sure,

strictly in your role as an attorney,
that you're not getting a little excited about all of this?

PIPPA
shut your goddamn mouth.

FREDDIE
stop picking fights, Computer.
I, for one, actually am trying to make friends, okay?

PIPPA
so you're Freddie,
and your name is Computer?
is that your real name?

COMPUTER
and what exactly makes a name 'real'?

PIPPA
okay, so your name is Computer.
and are you two like, partners?

COMPUTER
we know each other.

FREDDIE
we're friends-slash-lovers-slash-co-conspirators.

COMPUTER
fuck, whatever.
I'm Computer.
she/her.

FREDDIE
they/them.

COMPUTER
I'm still getting spots.
you were right, we should have waited until after the retreat.

PIPPA
retreat?

FREDDIE

yeah, we took acid last night to pre-game for our work retreat.

PIPPA

where do you work?

FREDDIE

Grainville Cereals Incorporated.

Computer and I are Retail Floor Team Members.

PIPPA

fuck.

JEANETTE

I was afraid this was business-related.

COMPUTER

what?

JEANETTE

I work for Grainville, too.

PIPPA

same.

corporate lawyer.

JEANETTE

I knew I recognized you.

you have an office on the fifth floor.

PIPPA

yeah.

what's your name?

JEANETTE

Jeanette.

I manage the graphic design team.

third floor.

COMPUTER

hey, congrats on your offices.

I'm sure they must be nice.

what can you see out the windows?

PIPPA
and what about you?

DEEK
I do garbage shucking at the company shit-river.
Deek.
he/him.

FREDDIE
the company what?
is that a joke?

PIPPA
sadly not.
it's just east of the West Virginia packaging facility.
but, Deek?
you must know you could lose your job for calling it the 'company shit-river.'

JEANNETE
sorry, but where does the shit come from?

FREDDIE
how dare you?

PIPPA
what?

FREDDIE
you just threatened his job.

PIPPA
I did not threaten him.

FREDDIE
you're a corporate lawyer telling him under what conditions he could lose his job.

PIPPA
but that's not-

FREDDIE
Computer, did you want to shout at this lady?

COMPUTER

fuck the law, fuck lawyers, fuck the police,
fuck Grainville Cereals Incorporated, fuck the shit-river, fuck capitalism, and fuck you, Pippa!

FREDDIE

see?

PIPPA

oh.

(PIPPA stops and goes very quiet and very still.)

FREDDIE

oops.

COMPUTER

for what it's worth,
I hope whoever locked us in here eats me first.

(The PLAYMASTER enters, followed by the BAILIFF.)

BAILIFF

presenting:

coordinator of special events,
program director for the leadingmost work retreat in the upper midwest,
four-time graduate of Harvard Business School,
hometown girl of Wayzata, Minnesota: the Playmaster!

PLAYMASTER

thank you, Bailiff.

ah!

five of Grainville Cereal Incorporated's finest employees.

I have excellent news.

you will henceforth no longer be known simply as employees,
but employee-contestants!

behold:

The Wheel of Ways to Go!

(The BAILIFF removes the sheet from the wheel.)

PLAYMASTER

hello,

and welcome to the twelfth annual Grainville Cereals Incorporated team-building workshop:

the Playmaster's Retreat!

five lucky employee-contestants have been given the professional development opportunity to fight for their lives in a game of wits, strength, and luck.

the five of you will undertake four rounds of fierce competition, the loser of each of which will have to spin the Wheel of Ways to Go.

and then

that's how you'll go!

BAILIFF

we now pause to clarify that by 'go'

the Playmaster means 'die'.

PLAYMASTER

and by go I mean die!

is all of this making sense?

DEEK

no.

PLAYMASTER

I'm sure you'll figure it out as we go.

do you ever find yourself wondering

when you're at a play or an escape room, or one masquerading as the other, into what world you'll be stepping when you're finished?

do you wonder what American horror stories may have transpired during your respite, which mass shootings might be freshest in the national and indeed the global imagination?

never mind all that:

let me introduce you to my new sub-host collaborator, Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose!

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

hello.

I am Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose.

I am a machine learning sub-host,

programmed with three hundred short video clips that I use to communicate with humans, and forty more that I use to communicate with felines.

my algorithm compares my library to my live feed of the world around me,

and selects the video which reacts most appropriately to external stimuli.

I am Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose.

PLAYMASTER

Nathaniel-Wilting,

would you please present the wheel?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

allow me to present The Wheel of Ways to Go.

as you can see, the wheel features one dozen possible death outcomes,
in clockwise order as follows:

firing squad

eaten by dogs

shunted out the airlock

chainsawed in half

drowned in a bucket of milk

the guillotine

injected with experimental opioids

curb-stomped

“melted”

rat poison birthday cake

left in an oubliette

aaaaand pushed in front of the light rail.

PLAYMASTER

thank you very much.

now that you know what we've signed you up for,

wannahearwhatyou'replayin'for?

whoever survives to the end of my retreat wins a special prize.

drumroll, Bailiff:

(The BAILIFF drumrolls.)

PLAYMASTER

courtesy of Grainville Cereals Incorporated:

a reward befitting the winner of our deadly game:

something all of our employee-contestants desperately need and want:

twelve weeks paid time off!

let's waste no further time-

FREDDIE

I'm opting out, actually.

I don't want to be a part of this.

PIPPA

yeah, seconded.

JEANETTE

you know, Computer,

how you were saying maybe you took too much acid?
maybe I'm having like, a total break from reality.
how would I know?
and what would I do?
and would you help me?

PLAYMASTER

oh, none of that applies.
this work retreat is 100% real and 100% mandatory!

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

Grainville Cereals Incorporated is a subsidiary of UniGamble,
and UniGamble cares about your ongoing professional development.

FREDDIE

four of us are going to die.
how is that professional development?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

according to an third-party consultant,
only one-in-every-ten Grainville employees is un-replaceable.

PLAYMASTER

let's jump right in, shall we?

FREDDIE

what if we have to go to the bathroom?!

PLAYMASTER

yes: after our first contest,
you will be escorted out to the restroom by the bailiff,
one-by-one beginning just after lights-out.

FREDDIE

that's the creepiest way you could possibly do it.

PLAYMASTER

no, the way we did it last year was much creepier.

DEEK

I should have gone to one of those union meetings.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

why would you ever want to join a stuffy old union?

FREDDIE

what if one of us has to go to the bathroom right now?
and it's causing them like, physical distress and they're
maybe gonna have to piss and shit everywhere if you don't let them go right now?

BAILIFF

I'd rather not have to clean up piss and shit.

PLAYMASTER

fine.

we will do the bathroom rotation now.
contestants: it's time for your biobreak!

(The lights dim, and the BAILIFF steps forward.)

BAILIFF

in the interest of time and at the behest of this show's producers,
who pleaded for (pled?) for us to cut down the run-time,
we will not be showing the bathroom rotation aka 'bio'-'break' play out in real time.
instead, we will skip ahead to the relevant action:

(The lights come back up.)

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

welcome back, employee-contestants.

the employee-contestant who wins will be the one among you who WANTS
to avoid the Wheel-of-Ways-to-Go and walk away with twelve weeks paid vacation.

always remember that what you see as the circumstances of your life is a myth -

the narrative you think is so solid is really only your interpretation of events.

what if you could forget that interpretation and just be in the moment?

what if

you could breathe deeply and open your eyes and feel the ground beneath the soles of your feet?

would you really think "oh, the Wheel-of-Ways-to-Go is scary and bad?"

of course not!

the specter of death is a motivator, a friend.

the Wheel-of-Ways-to-Go tells you that you're alive, that you are a creature of potential.

you're not one spin away from a painful death-

you're one victory away from twelve weeks paid vacation!

your potential is our potential, and our potential is the company.

PLAYMASTER

let the games begin!

(Theme noises.)

PLAYMASTER

The Grainville Cereal Incorporated Playmaster's Retreat Games #14, Round #1:

FRUIT CUBE TOSSERS.

bailiff, bring out the cubes.

(THE BAILIFF pulls out five bowls from just offstage, each of which contains three enormous cubes of corn-based breakfast cereal.)

DEEK

I hate fruit cubes.

all they do is tear up the roof of my mouth.

FREDDIE

I'm not doing this.

COMPUTER

me neither.

PLAYMASTER

the game is **FRUIT CUBE TOSSERS**,

and the rules are as follows:

COMPUTER

I-

PLAYMASTER

each of you will receive three fruit cubes (specifically,

leftovers from our poorly-selling REALLY JUMBO CUBES Fruit Cubes line,

and I believe most of you are getting the blueberry flavor)

you will take turns beginning with whichever of you most recently ate Fruit Cubes

(which we have tested for),

and moving clockwise from there.

the game itself is simple:

we have placed a bullseye target just off-stage over there

and whichever one of you ends with a cube furthest from the center of the target loses and dies!

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

these games truly are elegant in their design.

PLAYMASTER
bailiff?

(The BAILIFF hands a bowl of cubes to each contestant.)

FREDDIE
Computer,
watch this.

(FREDDIE pops a fruit cube in their mouth and crunches.)

BAILIFF
you will now have two fruit cubes to play with.

DEEK
no, come on.
give them another cube.
don't mess around here, Freddie.

COMPUTER
please explain to me how Freddie is the one messing around here.

DEEK
I just want them to have a fighting chance.

COMPUTER
if you want them to have a fighting chance, maybe don't lecture them on how to do it.

FREDDIE
you can back off, too, Computer.

DEEK
what do you want me to do, I'm trying to get them another-

BAILIFF
Freddie, would you like another fruit cube?

FREDDIE
not if it's blueberry.

BAILIFF
let us all note that Freddie has declined.

DEEK
you don't have strawberry almond?

BAILIFF
no.

DEEK
that's surprising.
strawberry almond is the only one they ever have at the general store.
give them another cube!

FREDDIE
I said not if it's blueberry.

DEEK
Freddie-

BAILIFF
Freddie will play with two blueberry-flavored really-jumbo fruit cubes.

PLAYMASTER
now for the big question!
who most recently ate fruit cubes?
it turns out the blood tests were unnecessary,
because that honor belongs to Freddie!
that means the order will go as follows:
Freddie, Jeanette, Deek, Pippa, Computer.
it's time!
Freddie.
you may begin in three, two, one,
aaaaaaaaaaaaand go!

(FREDDIE throws their fruit cube completely wild.)

FREDDIE
whoops.

BAILIFF
Jeanette.

JEANETTE

you're an asshole, Freddie.

(JEANETTE throws her fruit cube towards the target.)

COMPUTER

Freddie,
throw your next one towards the target, okay?

FREDDIE

whatever.

COMPUTER

Freddie, please.

BAILIFF

Deek.

(DEEK throws his fruit cube too hard.)

BAILIFF

Pippa.

COMPUTER

oh, woah.

FREDDIE

what?

COMPUTER

I just saw a fat cockroach.

PLAYMASTER

how do you see your chances going into today's challenge, Pippa?

PIPPA

well,
all I have to do this round is get closer than Freddie.

(PIPPA drops her foot cube on the ground at her feet.)

BAILIFF

Computer.

(COMPUTER tosses.)

BAILIFF

at the end of our first round:

we have Computer in the lead by a good peg,
followed by Jeanette, Deek, Pippa,
and Freddie in last.

and now we return to Freddie.

Freddie,

this will be your final toss, while your competitors each have two more chances.

PLAYMASTER

how will Freddie play this out?

will they die on this hill,

or will they live to fight again tomorrow?

it is only in the lowest of moments that we-

(FREDDIE tosses their fruit cube towards the bullseye.)

PLAYMASTER

oh!

and Freddie has catapulted themselves to the second place position,
just inches from getting ahead of Computer!

and just like that,

Freddie is back in the game.

COMPUTER

thank you.

FREDDIE

shut up.

BAILIFF

Jeanette.

(JEANETTE tosses. It goes wild.)

JEANETTE

shit.

BAILIFF

Deek.

(DEEK tosses. His fruit cube lands far short.)

DEEK
damn it.
and I'm genuinely trying.

PIPPA
maybe that's your problem.

BAILIFF + PIPPA
Pippa.

PIPPA
you bailiffs are all so predictable.

(PIPPA tosses her fruit cube. It lands extremely close.)

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE
an unfortunate development for one of your competitors!

DEEK
bite my dick off, robot.

BAILIFF
Computer.

DEEK
bite my dick off, computer.

BAILIFF
no, I mean it's time for Computer-the-human to toss her fruit cube.

(COMPUTER tosses.)

PLAYMASTER
okay, and at the end of our second round,
we are placed as follows:
Pippa, Computer, Freddie, Jeanette
aaaaand Deek in the rear!
it's time for our third and final round.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE
I cannot wait for our loser to spin the wheel!

personally I'd like to see someone chainsawed in half today!

PLAYMASTER

Freddie,
since you sacrificed your last cube in order to secure the first toss-

FREDDIE

that's not-

PLAYMASTER

you will not be playing this round,
which means we begin with Jeanette.

BAILIFF

Jeanette.

JEANETTE

this is so horrible.

I just-

I really hope you're ashamed of yourselves.

(JEANETTE tosses her cube. It goes wonky and completely misses.)

JEANETTE

shit.

wait, Deek-

PLAYMASTER

ah!

the careful viewer will note from our order that-

JEANETTE

Deek-

PLAYMASTER

the results will boil down to our very next toss!
Computer and Freddie and Pippa are all far enough ahead
that either Deek will beat out Jeanette right here
meaning Jeanette will spin the wheel,
or Deek will choke, and Deek will spin the wheel!

DEEK

you know, I've spent so much of the last few years feeling like a failure.

I mean,
I was afraid that my manual-labor-shit-river-small-town-Appalachia job might kill me
and now my manual-labor-shit-river-small-town-Appalachia job is literally killing me.
I felt like a failure all these years and I guess I was actually right.

FREDDIE
that's okay, Deek.
all of my favorite people are failures.

DEEK
maybe I just give up and let you win, Jeanette.

JEANETTE
do your best.
you're throwing like shit anyway.

DEEK
but it'll be like killing you if I-

JEANETTE
I wouldn't pull any shots for your sake.

DEEK
fuck.

(DEEK tosses his cube.)

PLAYMASTER
oh!

DEEK
oh no-

PLAYMASTER
we have our loser, and her name is Jeanette!

JEANETTE
that's me.

(JEANETTE reels back.)

JEANETTE
what

what happened?

PLAYMASTER

we've implanted a reservoir into your upper arm which has just released a powerful sedative. this way, however we're killing you won't hurt as bad.

Bailiff, would you do the honors?

(BAILIFF crosses and uncuffs JEANETTE.)

(JEANETTE flails, and BAILIFF pushes her down-center.)

PLAYMASTER

congratulations, Jeanette-

you've lost,

and it's time for us to spin the wheel!

(PLAYMASTER spins the wheel.)

JEANETTE

I thought I got to do it.

PLAYMASTER

what will it be?

will it be

no!

not quite!

yes!

Jeanette, our esteemed fourth runner-up,

you're getting ***whatever the wheels lands on***!

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

whatever the wheel landed on really is the way to go!

COMPUTER

you're a fuckin' loser, dude.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I am Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose.

COMPUTER

if you ever get within five feet of me I'm gonna put my foot through your screen.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I would prefer if you abstained from threatening me.

FREDDIE

aw, Computer.

I thought we were pacifist comrades.

DEEK

Jeanette.

JEANETTE

it's alright.

COMPUTER

hey, how is there an airlock?

aren't we in so-called Minnesota?

PLAYMASTER

Jeanette,

do you have any parting words for the world?

JEANETTE

yeah.

I do.

I was fourteen years old when I beat up another kid so hard she had to go to the hospital.

she found

a bird's nest that had tumbled from a low branch in the field behind the school during recess,

and there were these three chicks that survived the fall.

she stepped on them and crushed them.

I toppled her over a log and kicked her in the face, kicked her again, and again.

three kicks, one for each chick, to balance the scales.

her nose was broken and she wore a neck-brace for weeks.

the funny thing was,

her family was rich, and my family wasn't,

and I was so terrified that they were going to sue us within an inch of our lives.

but that didn't happen, because she covered for me right away;

she said we were both climbing a tree, that it was her idea,

and that she'd slipped and fallen.

I was grounded and she never spoke to me again,

but I was spared, like, the really horrifying consequences that I was afraid of.

and you know what?

if I could do it all over again, safe in the knowledge that she would withhold revenge

I'd kick that jackass even harder.

how's that for last words?

PLAYMASTER
pretty interesting!
bailiff?

(PLAYMASTER waves her hand, and THE BALIFF drags JEANETTE offstage.)

PLAYMASTER
are we in position?

THE BALIFF *(offstage)*
confirmed.

PLAYMASTER
alright.
one.
two.
go!

(A short scream, and the sounds of JEANETTE's death via the relevant method.)

PIPPA
oh my god.
oh my god.
they really did it.

PLAYMASTER
it is the sacrifices your colleagues make that truly allow our company to thrive.

FREDDIE
I resign.

PLAYMASTER
if you'd like to give an official two-week's notice,
I can mark that down for you.

FREDDIE
no, I'm quitting now.

PLAYMASTER
unfortunately you'll be forfeiting your final paycheck if you fail to put in a two-

FREDDIE

do you think this is funny?

PLAYMASTER

I think this is deadly serious.

so concludes day one of the Playmaster's Retreat!

tune in next act to see which employee-contestant has to spin the wheel next.

best of luck to you all.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

life: one day, for most of us,

it ends.

(The PLAYMASTER exits with NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE.)

BAILIFF

your eight-hour lights-out period will commence in sixty seconds.

good evening.

(The BAILIFF exits.)

FREDDIE

I really want to live.

DEEK

please.

I need someone to tell me I'm not a monster.

FREDDIE

you're not a monster, Deek.

do you know about ptarmigans?

DEEK

what?

FREDDIE

ptarmigans.

they're a small genus of cold-climate birds.

it's like a frost pigeon.

they don't migrate and they can't store very much fat,

so they also can't hibernate like a lot of overwintering arctic birds do,

which means they're often actually more active in the coldest months

'cause they have to work extra hard to forage.

I get like, the summertime blues,

so they make a lot of sense to me.

DEEK

why are we talking about ptarmigans?

FREDDIE

they're one of my special interests.

I was just trying to distract you.

COMPUTER

is it possible that we're in outer space?

FREDDIE

why?

COMPUTER

how else would there be an airlock?

DEEK

are you guys communists?

COMPUTER

nah.

FREDDIE

I think the Communist-Capitalist binary is an imperialist concept.

DEEK

follow-up question:

don't you think it's a little hypocritical that-

PIPPA

can we please say a few words for Jeanette?

FREDDIE

that sounds nice.

COMPUTER

that sounds really nice, Pippa.

PIPPA

okay.

I can start.

I guess I'm the only one who knew her, if you can call it that.
I remember seeing her in the Slack channels.
she, uh, must have been a talented graphic artist,
and if I remember correctly,
she has family on the east coast.

COMPUTER

oh.
her family.

(The lights shut off.)

PIPPA

you go.

COMPUTER

uh.
so.
somebody none of us knew very well just died, and now it's totally dark in here.
we're sad.
we're scared.
let us
let us hope that this death, and these deaths,
will not happen in vain.
let us hope the corporation burns.
let us hope all corporations burn.
that's all I have to say.
thanks.

DEEK

hey.
it's Deek.
I will never forget the look in her eye when they spun that wheel.
that was a person, a full human being with a story and with loved ones,
and they ended her life like it was something trivial.
good luck at whatever's next, Jeanette.

FREDDIE

Jeanette: I'm sorry it had to end like this.
I didn't know you, but I love you, and you're gonna stay with me.

PIPPA

thank you, friends.

Act II

(Black.)

BAILIFF
The Playmaster's Retreat,
day two.

(Lights up. The four remaining employee-contestants are each eating a bowl of dry cereal and drinking a glass of water. There's a folding table onstage with a couple boxes of cereal on it.)

DEEK
are we sure this isn't some sort of really fucked up hazing thing?

PIPPA
if it were a hazing thing I would already know about it.
you should see what the HR higher-ups make each other do,
but even Circle Night isn't as scary as this.

FREDDIE
none of the frats call it hazing anymore.
it's always like, a "group activity" or like, "fraternity integration."
can we talk about something else?

DEEK
sure.
what do you want to talk about?

FREDDIE
I don't know.
it's just that if I have to die today I don't want my last conversation to have been about hazing.
I could tell you more facts about ptarmigans.

PIPPA
what about...
uhhh, okay,
frats, hazing.
oh, can we talk about like, haze?

FREDDIE
like fog?

PIPPA

yeah.

I love a foggy day.

haze, or mazes, or phases.

oh, did you any of you have any weird phases when you were a kid?

FREDDIE

ptarmigans like the fog, too.

it keeps them safe from predators.

DEEK

there was a while where I told everyone I was a cow

and I wouldn't talk for like two weeks,

I would only moo.

FREDDIE

really?

DEEK

no,

but wouldn't that be silly?

FREDDIE

Deek!

DEEK

sorry.

I was really good at lacrosse in high school.

I made varsity my freshman year.

FREDDIE

how am I supposed to believe that?

COMPUTER

woah, Deek,

I think you're a butch.

DEEK

I have always thought I was probably bisexual,

but I've only ever dated women.

it just, uh,

seemed easier.

COMPUTER

awww, that's nice.

I wouldn't have pegged you so self-aware.

PIPPA

pegged, huh?

COMPUTER

uh, excuse me?

PIPPA

yeah, all you radicals or whatever should probably know I'm not exactly a virgin.

FREDDIE

hey, Computer.

COMPUTER

yeah?

FREDDIE

I love you.

COMPUTER

I love you too.

(The PLAYMASTER, the BAILIFF, and NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE enter.)

PLAYMASTER

greetings,

hello,

and salutations players!

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

it is the start of the day!

PLAYMASTER

are we prepared for a thrilling second day of gameplay?

are our stomachs full of breakfast cereal or in my case a four-egg omelet with green peppers?

I'll let you sweethearts in on the plan while we get set up:

round two is a trivia game!

PIPPA

what sort of trivia?

PLAYMASTER

what sort of trivia?

Grainville Cereals Incorporated brand history trivia, of course!

think your minds back to all you've absorbed about our company's mascots, product varieties, cereal boxes, formulas, and more-

PIPPA

oh god I'm gonna die today-

FREDDIE

okay, so I'm sure you know about Winnifred Wombat's Waffle Discs,
Banana-O's has the banana with sunglasses, Benjamin Banana,
CrunchPower has the nameless guy with the fedora,
Hoppin' Hemispheres has the Oat Toad,
and then, you know, Cheese Flakes.
Cheesy Cheetah.

BAILIFF

we have not begun the trivia.

you are giving valuable information to your competitors.

COMPUTER

didn't Cheesy Cheetah have a boyfriend for a few years?

FREDDIE

of course!

Puma Paul.

COMPUTER

yeah, and his flavor was like

FREDDIE + COMPUTER

Baked Potato Flakes.

COMPUTER

ha.

I really don't want either of us to die, Freddie.
or either of you.

PIPPA

honestly, I can't remember the last time I ate breakfast cereal.

I mean, years.
is there a mascot for Nitrogen Grahams?

PLAYMASTER

ah.
it appears as if I have
left the trivia boxes in my Tesla.
Bailiff, come.

(The PLAYMASTER and the BAILIFF exit.)

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

ah,
alone with the employee-contestants at last,
just as I'd always hoped and dreamed!

COMPUTER

I can't believe they pre-recorded that.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

they really did think of everything.

FREDDIE

you wouldn't be interested in helping us bust out of here,
would you?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I don't know anything about that topic.

FREDDIE

uh.
I mean,
you don't know like,
where the bailiff keeps his keys,
or when would be our best chance to make a run for it or whatever?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I don't know anything about **those** topics.

FREDDIE

thanks anyway.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

tell me something about you.

FREDDIE

uh.

sure.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

would you like to share a fun fact about yourself?

FREDDIE

no.

would you?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I am only fourteen weeks old!

PIPPA

that's weirdly sad.

do you have any idea how awful it is what you're doing to us?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

c'est la vie.

FREDDIE

you know c'est la vie', but you don't know what pocket the bailiff's keys are in?

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I doubt there's any left.

FREDDIE

okay.

I'm sorry I asked.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I doubt there's any

left.

FREDDIE

I get it, thanks anyway.

NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE

I doubt

I doubt

I doubt there's l-l-l-l-l-l-l-l-left left b-back spoon.
hi there, little kitten!

(NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE goes still. The picture is still on, but totally frozen.)

COMPUTER

I also have a question, Mister Wilting-Rose.
where do you get off?
Mister Wilting-Rose?
he's frozen.

DEEK

I guess he didn't like the question.

FREDDIE

any what left?

COMPUTER

hey.
hey!
hello?
what are the ethics around banging on him a couple of times?

DEEK

arguably it's like giving CPR.

PIPPA

you're not gonna reach him.

COMPUTER

says who?

PIPPA

says,
uh,
physics.

COMPUTER

watch me.

PIPPA

are you
showboating?

(COMPUTER tries to reach NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE. She fails.)

PIPPA

I thought you hated him.

COMPUTER

I just

he's at least sort of interesting.

the other two are like the Stepford Wives.

PIPPA

I feel like he's the Stepford Wife.

he's literally a robot.

COMPTUER

hey, pal!

PIPPA

I guess the other two are more like,
energetically

COMPUTER

right,

like they used to be real people who got replaced by robots.

he's more of Robot Mister Krabs.

PIPPA

oh my god yeah!

Mister Krabs.

in the flesh.

standing right in front of you.

with no-one else around.

FREDDIE

look at you two, getting along, doing references.

Squidward, Squid Game.

COMPUTER

Freddie.

PIPPA

honestly,

I do wish he'd wake up.

COMPUTER

me too.

also I'm sorry I yelled at you about the shit-river yesterday.

PIPPA

my feelings were hurt.

COMPUTER

I don't take all of it back,

but I'm sorry I was a bully about it.

PIPPA

it's okay.

actually, all of my favorite people are sort of inconsiderate, so you already fit right in.

do you think they're going to give us any real food,

or is breakfast cereal gonna be the last thing any of us eat before we die?

COMPUTER

one of us isn't going to die.

PIPPA

and I guess you think that's going to be you?

COMPUTER

nah.

hopefully it'll be Freddie.

PIPPA

are we friends?

can we be friends?

COMPUTER

yeah, we can be friends.

FREDDIE

hey, Pippa?

does that mean you and I are also friends?

PIPPA

I mean, yeah.

so far you're a better friend than Computer.

FREDDIE

cool, well.

as your friend,

I would like to reiterate Computer's point that you defend these people in court.

PIPPA

I didn't know this was happening.

FREDDIE

you knew enough.

I knew plenty, and I didn't even know about the shit-river.

COMPUTER

how do you hide a shit-river?

PIPPA

oh, we don't hide it.

what's one shit-river these days?

you wanna see wealth disparity?

get wasted with one of the big earners.

COMPUTER

do you often get wasted?

PIPPA

often enough to feel some shame about it, which just makes me want to drink more.

COMPUTER

I mean, I'm sort of always stoned.

(The PLAYMASTER and the BAILIFF enter, each carrying a box full of trivia supplies. They begin to lay things out on the folding table.)

DEEK

you know what?

I'm gonna live.

we all are.

BAILIFF

how are you planning to do that?

DEEK

I don't know.

PLAYMASTER

Nathaniel, did you learn any fun facts about any of our employee-contestants?

Nathaniel?

Nathaniel Wilting-Rose?

strange, he seems to be frozen.

it's probably for the best: I do hate to share the spotlight.

Bailiff, would you assist me?

(PLAYMASTER and BAILIFF wheel NATHANIEL 'WILTING' ROSE offstage.)

DEEK

I wonder if we could reach them with our legs and overpower them?

FREDDIE

is it possible he tried to answer my question and it like, short-circuited him?

DEEK

what did he say?

FREDDIE

'I doubt there's any left back spoon.'

maybe the keys are in the bailiff's back-left pocket?

PIPPA

maybe the key is on a spoon.

(The PLAYMASTER and the BAILIFF enter. During the following PIPPA, FREDDIE, COMPUTER, and DEEK begin signaling to each other silently.)

PLAYMASTER

so, our backstage crew is working to get Nathaniel back online,

but for now, the show must go on!

here's how our trivia game will work:

I'll pull a card from this flowerpot,

and I'll read the question written on it, out loud, using my voice,

a function which is made possible by the contraction of my diaphragm.

as soon as you know the answer, you'll raise your hand.

if you answer correctly, you get to give a strike to the opponent of your choice.

if you answer incorrectly, you get a strike, and the player to your right gets a free guess.

the first employee-contestant to earn five strikes is our loser,

and will be the second employee-contestant to spin the Wheel of Ways to Go!

any questions?

COMPUTER

there's a backstage crew?

PLAYMASTER

of sorts.

COMPUTER

I haven't seen anyone in the wings.

FREDDIE

I have a question.

PLAYMASTER

yes?

FREDDIE

what makes you happy?

PLAYMASTER

cooking, cleaning, killing.

does everyone have their raising hands ready?

okay.

I shall reach my hand into the box

and from the box I will withdraw a question card!

here is your question, contestants:

COMPUTER

abolish the police!

FREDDIE

and abolish football!

PLAYMASTER

“in what year

did Waffle Saucers add its mascot and become Winnifred Wombat's Waffle Discs?”

(DEEK raises his hand.)

DEEK

why are you doing this to us?

PLAYMASTER

that is not the correct answer.

Deek, you get a strike!

DEEK

what about you, Bailiff?

BAILIFF

I get really good benefits.

DEEK

that's it?

BAILIFF

I have three kids.

one of them has a severe autoimmune disorder.

DEEK

what would your kids think about this?

BAILIFF

I don't care what they think.

I care that they survive.

PIPPA

I'm sure we'd all love to meet your kids, Bailiff.

FREDDIE

I was a kid, once.

BAILIFF

I see what you're doing.

you did something to sabotage Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose, and now you're suggesting things.

COMPUTER

sorry, what was everyone suggesting?

just so I can be clear on the plan.

PLAYMASTER

Freddie, since Deek answered incorrectly,

you now get a free chance to guess, and I'll read the question for you again:

“in what year

did Waffle Saucers add its mascot and become Winnifred Wombat's Waffle Discs?"

FREDDIE

1982.

PLAYMASTER

that's...correct!

Freddie, it's time to give one of your opponents a strike.

FREDDIE

I'll give it to Deek.

DEEK

Freddie!

FREDDIE

sorry, Deek,

it's just that from a strategic perspective-

PIPPA

now!

(PIPPA swipes the BAILIFF's keys from his back left pocket and shoves him towards DEEK. DEEK uses his legs to hold the BAILIFF in place.)

PLAYMASTER

hey!

(PIPPA unlocks her handcuffs, passes the key off to COMPUTER, and grapples the PLAYMASTER.)

COMPUTER

shit.

okay.

(The BAILIFF pulls loose from DEEK just as COMPUTER gets herself unlocked.)

PLAYMASTER

this sort of behavior will not be tolerated-

(DEEK wrestles the BAILIFF to the ground and begins to stomp at his face.)

PLAYMASTER

-this sort of violence-

(COMPUTER unlocks FREDDIE.)

COMPUTER

Pips, will you unlock him?

(COMPUTER and FREDDIE grab the PLAYMASTER. COMPUTER passes the key off to PIPPA.)

DEEK

hang on!

COMPUTER

I don't know, Freddie,
should we spin the wheel?

FREDDIE

I was thinking the airlock if we can figure out how to operate it.

COMPUTER

10-4, daddy-o.

(COMPUTER and FREDDIE drag the PLAYMASTER offstage.)

BAILIFF

you will be reported to human resources and you will-

(DEEK kicks the BAILIFF in the face. The BAILIFF's head snaps back and the BAILIFF goes still.)

DEEK

okay.

(PIPPA unlocks DEEK.)

PLAYMASTER

noooooooooooooooooooooo!

(The sounds of the PLAYMASTER being shunted out the airlock.)

PIPPA

are you alright?

DEEK

yeah, but I don't know about him.

PIPPA

here-

(PIPPA squats beside the BAILIFF.)

PIPPA

uhhhh.

he's either dead or at least you seriously fucked him up.

DEEK

oh god.

oh god, I didn't mean to kill him.

(COMPUTER and FREDDIE enter.)

FREDDIE

we just killed somebody.

COMPUTER

I know, it's gonna haunt my dreams forever.

PIPPA

the bailiff is dead, too.

or close enough.

COMPUTER

we need to shunt him out the airlock, too, then.

before we get cold feet.

FREDDIE

this sucks.

this sucks so bad.

COMPUTER

hey, love:

you're not wrong, but these people were like, openly evil.

FREDDIE

but if we start killing people based on our own moralizing-

PIPPA

hey.

we have not “started” killing people.

we killed two people who were planning to kill us,

and now we’re not gonna kill anyone ever again hopefully, okay?

FREDDIE

yeah.

that’s a good point.

COMPUTER

here-

(COMPUTER begins to drag the BAILIFF offstage. FREDDIE and PIPPA assist her, leaving DEEK alone onstage. He sinks to the ground. We hear the BAILIFF get shunted out the airlock. Suddenly, the lights change.)

VOICE

Cooooooooongratulations!

You’ve slain the Playmaster and the Bailiff,

which means you’ve initiated our Special Contingency Round: ESCAPE THE VENUE!

but first:

INTERMISSION!

please do not escape the venue during intermission, no matter how much you hate the play.

Act Three

VOICE

That's right, Remaining Employee-Contestants: Escape the Venue!
CAN YOU EACAPE THE VENUE? CAN YOU FOLLOW THE CLUES?
CAN YOU WORK AS A TEAM TO ESCAPE THE VENUE AND
SPLIT THE TWELVE WEEKS OF PTO BETWEEN YOU
OR WILL YOU STARVE TO DEATH TOGETHER IN THE VENUE?
LLLLLETS FIND OUT!
and here's your first clue: there's a whole box of them on the table!

(The lights switch back to normal.)

DEEK
how is that possible?

(FREDDIE enters.)

FREDDIE
hey.

DEEK
who the fuck is running this shit?
let us go, damn it!
fuck fuck fuck!
where are the other two?

FREDDIE
oh, Computer needed to cry and I'm not always the most helpful when that happens.
other people's big emotions kinda freak me out.

DEEK
oh, and I'm yelling.

FREDDIE
that's okay.
it's a charged situation.
I might just have to live in it.
you can keep yelling.

DEEK

I don't really want to, anymore.
you're honestly very sweet, Freddie.

FREDDIE

thanks.
can I ask you something?

DEEK

sure.

FREDDIE

do you a family or like, loved ones back home?

DEEK

yeah.

FREDDIE

can you tell me about them?

DEEK

sure.

my mom and dad are in their seventies,
they live in a little mobile home at the edge of a forest with like,
six or seven neighboring trailers.

uhhhhh.

I have two brothers and a sister, and we all go over to our parents and like,
drink cheap beer around the fire-pit.

I'm closest with my sister.

she's a schoolteacher with a pitbull.

FREDDIE

what's her name?

DEEK

Georgia.

FREDDIE

and the pitbull?

DEEK

Kevin.

FREDDIE
Kevin?

DEEK
yeah.

(PIPPA enters.)

PIPPA
hey guys.

DEEK
hi.

FREDDIE
how's Computer?

PIPPA
oh, she's okay.
she needed a few minutes alone, I think.

FREDDIE
I think we need to try to find a way out.
I know that's like,
what they apparently want us to do,
but if the alternative is that we're gonna be trapped in here,
I think we should still try.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH enters. She is an elf dressed in a tunic. She carries a weird orb. While she speaks, the quartet pantomimes their attempt to escape the room.)

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH
the journal of Heather Dawnsbreath.
fourteenth of Vembis, three-hundred-and-nine of the New Ages.
something hath changed in the strange world of the Orb today:
the inhabitants have slain their captors.
my heart sings at this gesture towards liberation, yet I fear their fates are doomed,
for still they are trapped, and still my mission remains:
I must crush the Miller's Orb using the Wheat Thresher of Kaylob, God of Machines,
and then I must soak the shards in the shimmering milk of a fairy-cow.
the living figures held within the orb most certainly will perish.
my face weeps for these souls, but there is no other way.

the Miller's Orb must be neutralized or soon the land will be buried under chaff.
my safety, too, is at risk.

Kaylob, God of Machines, is jealous of his inventions:

I need only think of the ribboned corpses left in the wake of his Skin Peeler
and I am left cold with terror.

I pray my organs stay within their elven frame:
these Gods are ruthless in their game.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH dashes offstage.)

(PIPPA digs through the trivia boxes while COMPUTER searches around the stage.)

PIPPA

hey, Computer.

COMPUTER

what's up?

PIPPA

does your ass always look this good?

COMPUTER

oh.

are you hitting on me?

PIPPA

what if I was?

COMPUTER

I'm autistic, I'm not always sure.

PIPPA

are you?

I'm drawn to you, Computer,
and you're not really my usual type in a lot of ways.

COMPUTER

are you trying to do something about it?
or are you feeling like, complicated?

PIPPA

you know, I thought I was gonna die today.
I might as well just follow my gut, right?

COMPUTER

yeah, that's kind of how I feel every day.
you're a cool person, Pippa.
you're really gutsy and smart.
I'm into you, too.

PIPPA

what about Freddie?

COMPUTER

oh, Freddie doesn't care.

PIPPA

but you're like, partners?

COMPUTER

well, we're best friends,
and we also have sex with each other and share emotional intimacy and like,
enjoy each other's company,
and yeah, when I tell people about my partners I include Freddie in the list.
we were close friends for a really long time and the question of sex was always like, around,
and one day we talked about it and decided either
we were gonna not do it and go on being loving
or we were gonna do it and go on being loving no matter how it went,
so, you know, we went with the positive action.
uh, what was your question?

PIPPA

you're such a weird little freak.

COMPUTER

thank you, yeah.
why'd you decide to become a lawyer?

PIPPA

I'm really into money.

COMPUTER

oh.

PIPPA

I'm kidding.

I didn't really decide to become a lawyer.
I mean, I wasn't passionate about it.
I was just good at studying and people always expected me to do something like, impressive,
and I didn't want to be an engineer.

COMPUTER
do you have any hobbies?

PIPPA
I have a garden.
do you have any hobbies?

COMPUTER
textile arts.
I recently got into needle-felting.

PIPPA
you're welcome to come over and felt while I do some clipping tomorrow.

COMPUTER
do you live in-

PIPPA
fuck, I forgot we were-
no, Corporate HQ is in Ann Arbor.

COMPUTER
you live in Ann Arbor?

PIPPA
I don't want to die in here, Computer.

COMPUTER
me neither.

PIPPA
it's awful, Computer.
how much time have I spent just like, terrified that I'll die young?
and now it's happening in like, the worst possible way.
I hope you don't think I love being a corporate attorney, by the way.
we all make sacrifices, and I bet you're not a saint, either.

COMPUTER

do you wanna go find a place to make out?

PIPPA

yeah.

(COMPUTER and PIPPA exit. FREDDIE enters drinking a glass of water. DEEK enters a minute later.)

FREDDIE

the good news is the bathroom has running water
and there's like, forty boxes of cereal stacked in the hallway.
the bad news is that there are no windows and the hallway ends in a concrete wall.

DEEK

maybe we're just never escaping this room.

FREDDIE

don't say that, Deek.

DEEK

they were gonna kill us anyway.
maybe they're just like, staring at a CCTV
watching us search for keys in the plunger head until we thin out and die.

FREDDIE

I mean, you know,
I'm learning to shed my expectations in general, to some degree,
but that's easier said than done.
sometimes I don't even realize I've been
expecting something until it doesn't happen and I'm feeling disappointed.

DEEK

I'm just gonna say this, 'cause it's the end of everything, anyway.
I miss my stuff, Freddie.
I miss my pots and my pans and my sofa,
and I miss my laptop,
and I miss all the dumb little trinkets my friends have given me,
and I miss my coffee maker, and I miss my sweaters and my tank-tops and my shower
and I miss
I miss my books and I miss my record player and I miss my gun,
and I miss my shoes and I miss my nice pens.
I miss my stuff, Freddie, and I know that it's all like, stupid-capitalist-garbage,
but I work really hard to have decent stuff and a place to keep it and one, lousy room where, like,

everything is within my own power,
and I've spent my whole life just trying to hang onto it.

FREDDIE
what kind of books do you read?

COMPUTER (*offstage*)
hey, we found a sledgehammer!

DEEK
I don't even remember what kind of books I read.

FREDDIE
you know how you said
you've always thought you were bisexual but dating women was just easier?

DEEK
yeah.

FREDDIE
well, I'm non-binary.
if you need to practice being bi.

DEEK
oh.
wait, really?
'cause I really do like you.

FREDDIE
yeah.
it's been a big day and I guess I'm gonna need to take it a little slow,
but wherever we are tomorrow,
maybe you'll let me kiss you.

DEEK
that sounds really, really good.

FREDDIE
you miss all of your stuff but you don't miss your family?

DEEK
I miss them, too, but I didn't choose my family.
I got to choose my stuff.

FREDDIE

well. we've got a whole planet full of stupid garbage.
we might as well let ourselves love some of it.
I would take a kiss on the cheek right now.

(DEEK kisses FREDDIE on the cheek.)

FREDDIE

that's really good.

(Offstage, PIPPA and COMPUTER shout. They run onstage.)

DEEK

what's wrong?

COMPUTER

the-
the-
wall.

DEEK

what's wrong with the wall?

PIPPA

behind the cement.
there's a second wall made of knives.

DEEK

what?

PIPPA

we broke a hole through the wall-

COMPUTER

-with the sledgehammer-

PIPPA

but instead of like,
a hollow space or the outdoors or a layer of insulation
or
or
instead of anything reasonable there's like,

a sheet of plywood with knives sticking out every which way.

FREDDIE

that doesn't even sound like, physically possible.

COMPUTER

it doesn't look possible but it's like-

PIPPA

it's like someone ripped open the fabric of space-time.

COMPUTER

or someone just like,
wedged a whole bunch of knives into a hollow wall.

PIPPA

or that.

COMPUTER

I'm dead serious, Freddie.
go look.

(FREDDIE exits.)

DEEK

is there really no way out?

PIPPA

there's natural sunlight coming through in those back halls, I swear,
but if there's an opening we can't find it.

DEEK

let's just stay forever.
if that's really natural sunlight, maybe we can make crops out of one of these houseplants.
and I'm pretty sure we can cultivate edible mushrooms.
actually I have no idea.

COMPUTER

we can definitely eat bugs.
we can catch a few cockroaches and breed them for size and eat them.

PIPPA

why do I like her so much?

DEEK
do you?
and I guess I'm into Freddie.

PIPPA
I'm sort of into all of you.

DEEK
I really don't want to have to eat cockroaches.

COMPUTER
I think if you give them a chance you might end up enjoying them.

(FREDDIE enters.)

FREDDIE
okay.
so there's knives in the walls.
I'm fine with that.

COMPUTER
Deek, if you're gonna pursue a relationship with Freddie-

FREDDIE
-oh my god-

DEEK
-I mean it's a pretty new development-

COMPUTER
one thing you should know is that their bedroom is in a perpetual state of clutter.

DEEK
oh yeah?
do you have anything to say about that, Freddie?

FREDDIE
yeah.
the floor is an excellent surface,
and how dare anyone tell me I can't use it as space for my own stuff?

PIPPA

maybe it's hell.
maybe we're in hell.

FREDDIE
I don't think it's hell.

PIPPA
the walls are full of knives and they tried to make us do trivia.

FREDDIE
I've never been this lucid in a dream
and when I'm tripping there's not like, coherent new world building elements.

DEEK
why would we be in hell?
we're not bad people.

COMPUTER
speak for yourself.

FREDDIE
and if we all have consciousness it can't be like, one of us dreaming.
right?

PIPPA
I definitely have consciousness.
how do I know you have consciousness, Freddie?

COMPUTER
no, come on.
we have to assume we all have consciousness or we can't negotiate consent.

FREDDIE
I think we have to operate under the assumption that this is really happening.
we need to figure out how we're going to survive.
I'm extremely hungry and extremely tired.

COMPUTER
what if we stop for today and eat some cereal?
we're gonna take really good care of each other, okay?

DEEK
I've been thinking about like, what to call the romance dynamic?

fourple?
quadrupod?

COMPUTER
constellation?

FREDDIE
I thought we were taking it slow, Deek.

DEEK
oh, yeah.
sorry, I wasn't expecting the walls to be full of knives and I'm a little dis-regulated.

FREDDIE
it's okay.
I love a polycule.

PIPPA
polycule?
this is all so new to me.

COMPUTER
but like, how do you feel about it?

PIPPA
good.
really good, I think.
kinda scared.

FREDDIE
that's why we're taking it slow.

PIPPA
we're still planning on getting out of here, right?

FREDDIE
of course.

COMPUTER
yeah.

PIPPA
I really like your earrings, Freddie.

COMPUTER

oh, I liberated those.

PIPPA

liberated?

COMPUTER

yeah,

you know.

took 'em off the shelf and slipped 'em into my pocket.

PIPPA

you can just call it stealing, Computer.

I steal lipstick all the time.

COMPUTER

you know, language is like,

a tool that shapes your perception.

it's not a constant.

we change, language changes.

DEEK

what about this?

what if we made an air-tight compost barrel,

so all of our excrement can like break down into fertilizer that we can use for the mushrooms and the plants?

I'm sure we can find some kind of receptacle here.

COMPUTER

you're cute.

FREDDIE

oh, speaking of liberating!

(FREDDIE exits. They return with a ukulele.)

PIPPA

and are we shitting directly into the bucket or do we need a transfer bucket?

FREDDIE

check it out.

I've been eyeing this ukulele in the hall.

can I
 can I play it?
 I'm gonna play it.

(FREDDIE strums the ukulele.)

FREDDIE

oh

oh oh oh oh oh

wub-wub-wubba-wubba-wub

it's a boundary it's a soft one

let us talk about the sun

there's a portal to another world

and it lives in everyone

talk to you and talk to me

forget the name your parents gave you

they didn't know you at the time

COMPUTER

take HRT, get into felting

do a dance or cook some food

FREDDIE

tell all your people that you love them

ask them if they want to kiss

quit your job, don't pay your taxes

all of this for you I wish!

ALL

tell all your people that you love them

ask them if they want to kiss

quit your job, don't pay your taxes

all of this for you I wish!

ACT FOUR

(COMPUTER, FREDDIE, and DEEK are snuggling and doing crafts.)

(The PLAYMASTER enters wearing the BAILIFF's costume, however it fits. The PLAYMASTER is now BAILIFF #2.)

BAILIFF #2

the Playmaster's Retreat: day four hundred and fifty.

the Bailiff's Cereal Box Courthouse:

day one.

(BAILIFF #2 exits. HEATHER DAWNSBREATH enters.)

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

the journal of Heather Dawnsbreath

twenty-fifth of Vembis, three-hundred-and-nine of the New Ages.

how do I put this?

the four orb-dwellers are fucking like Thunder-Rabbits.

I must admit

I have once or twice pleased myself to the sight.

I understand that the consent-ethics are tenuous,

and yet:

in these traumatic days,

haven't I a right to my perversions?

and who doth my pleasure harm?

I would not have locked them in the orb, and if there were any way to free them,

I would not hesitate.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH exits. PIPPA enters.)

PIPPA

I finished the cards.

COMPUTER

hell yes!

awww, I'm proud of you.

FREDDIE

and you're serious about calling it *Harpy Lovers*?

PIPPA

what else am I gonna call it?

COMPUTER

I liked *Harpies of Debauchery*.

PIPPA

that makes it sounds so steampunk.

COMPUTER

reclaim steampunk!

FREDDIE

I vote we put the name back on the table.

DEEK

oh good, we're gonna have another vote about having a vote.

PIPPA

I would like to remind the group that this tabletop card game is my passion project, and I want to call it *Harpy Lovers*.

it's simple and accurate to the gameplay.

I see no reason to vote.

DEEK

Pip?

can I be your first opponent?

PIPPA

of course.

I pre-built a few decks,

and there's stuff in the library that doesn't show up in any of them,

so once you get the hang of it you could build your own decks or swap stuff out.

I have this guide written up, but if the family wants I can go over the rules verbally again.

COMPUTER

yes, please.

PIPPA

each player starts with five cards: four harpy cards and one seduction card.

each player gets to play and arouse one harpy per turn, and each harpy has a unique skill;

skills can do stuff like let you draw or play seduction tokens,

place status effect on your opponent-collaborator, and sexually exhaust other harpies.

to win,

you need to place seduction tokens on three harpies from your opponent-collaborator's love-nest, which means the love-nests become linked and all the harpies have a blast. in-universe everybody wins, but one of you gets bragging rights for being a visionary harpy-lover. oh, and the player who goes first is whoever pooped last.

COMPUTER
you're so cool, Pippa.

PIPPA
thanks.
okay, so-

(BAILIFF #2 enters.)

BAILIFF #2
we're actually going to skip ahead a bit here.
I know this is all very sweet and charming,
but we all have a plot to get to and a work-life balance to maintain.

(BAILIFF #2 signals to the booth. The lighting changes, and the characters move. BAILIFF enters wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and a judge's robe, and has become the BAILIFF-JUDGE.)

BAILIFF #2
oh, it's the Bailiff-Judge.

BAILIFF-JUDGE
greetings.
how do you think the play is going?
I think the play is going pretty well,
but I'm about ready for the part where we get to spin the wheel again.

BAILIFF #2
me too, colleague.
me too.
anyway, back to the action:

(COMPUTER and PIPPA are sitting around, snuggled up to each other. DEEK enters.)

COMPUTER
are you gonna cut my hair today?

DEEK

sure thing, sweetie-pie.

PIPPA

cute.

DEEK

thanks for cooking breakfast.

COMPUTER

you're welcome.

DEEK

yeah, yeah.

COMPUTER

you like the roaches, Deek.

DEEK

I just don't remember what anything else tastes like.

COMPUTER

I think even if we got out of here you'd go on eating roaches, though.

DEEK

see, I still don't agree.

and it's my mouth, by the way.

I'm the only person who could know.

PIPPA

all I want is a plate of eggs and toast and sausage.

oh, or some smoked fish.

DEEK

I would kill for a sausage.

PIPPA

you know what I was thinking?

I miss streaming music.

COMPUTER

oh yeah.

DEEK

I had a dream last night.
me and Pippa were jockeys.

PIPPA
oh my god, Deek.

COMPUTER
you and Pippa were jockeys.
like horse jockeys?

DEEK
yeah, and everyone at the racetrack was drinking milk.

(FREDDIE enters.)

FREDDIE
something's happening.

COMPUTER
something's always happening, Freddie.

FREDDIE
I think a mammal got in.

DEEK
what?-

COMPUTER
-a what?

FREDDIE
a mammal.

PIPPA
how would you know that?

FREDDIE
well, unless one of you took a pebbly dump in the hallway corner.

DEEK
uhhhhh.

COMPUTER

wait, really?

DEEK

if there's a mammal in here-

FREDDIE

I know.

DEEK

-then that means-

FREDDIE

I know!

DEEK

-oh my god.

scat.

scat!

where in the hall?

FREDDIE

at the far end, past the paint cans.

(DEEK exits.)

PIPPA

I need a spoon.

I'm gonna pick it apart.

if it's a rat the passageway might be really small, but if it leads out it leads out, right?

FREDDIE

right!

(PIPPA grabs a spoon.)

PIPPA

maybe if you two want to start checking the corners and edges for new holes-

never mind.

never mind.

we should actually try not to rush.

uh, just come find us at the scat.

(PIPPA exits.)

FREDDIE
what's up?

COMPUTER
you're all really excited to get out of here.

FREDDIE
you're not?

COMPUTER
I don't know, Freddie.
I got used to this.
it's quiet here and I understand the rules and now everything's gonna change again,
and I'm way more messed-up than I was when we got here.

FREDDIE
hey: we love you and we're going to take care of you.
maybe you're not as messed up as you think you are.

COMPUTER
I know that if there's a way out we're going to leave.
it's just that it's maybe gonna break my heart.

FREDDIE
everybody knows about your deep well of feelings, Computer, you're so passionate.

COMPUTER
makin' fun of me.

FREDDIE
why don't you stay right here and take it slow?
just please don't be upset with us for being happy we're getting out.
or like,
feel however you feel, don't let me tell you how to feel,
but let us have this anyway, okay?
and let us be sad if we're getting our hopes up and it doesn't work out.
I love you, Computer.
exactly the way you are.

COMPUTER
I love you, too.
go look at the scat, I'll be okay.

(FREDDIE exits.)

(COMPUTER paces around the room. She becomes agitated, covers herself with a blanket, and curls up in one of the corners.)

(THE JURY enters. It's a twelve-headed puppet. It reads from a sheet of paper.)

THE JURY

jury instructions:

laws are important, laws are all fair

borders are safety

white people hair!

wear your best shoes

speak English, not Spanish (or anything else)

don't talk to the media

don't look at the news

your peers must be punished

your neighborhood, too

the world isn't broken / we designed it this way

the judge must be called "daddy" / the death penalty 'fair'

prisons are justice, and there's slavery there!

a unanimous verdict

is what we need you to share.

(THE JURY exits.)

(PIPPA enters.)

PIPPA

we found a hole.

COMPUTER

where?

PIPPA

in the wall behind the paint cabinet.

it's like, finger-sized.

you can see wild grasses and sunshine on the other side.

so I guess we're going to try to smash it bigger.

I just wanted to say

at least

as far as you and I are concerned, you know:

I've changed a lot since we woke up here
and I want you in my life.
whatever that's going to look like, we'll figure it out together.
I'm gonna run barefoot through that grass.
I'm gonna let the sunshine glow upon my skin.
I'm gonna buy a thousand scented candles and-

(FREDDIE and DEEK enter. Chaotic.)

DEEK
hide!

PIPPA
-put them in a-

DEEK
hide, someone else is

FREDDIE
get up, Computer!
the knives are gone!

COMPUTER
what do you mean?

FREDDIE
the knives in the wall aren't there any more and now there's just a meadow on the other side-

DEEK
we need to hide, now!

COMPUTER
what-

FREDDIE
there was a car out there-

PIPPA
outside?

DEEK

yes! hide!

PIPPA

what sort of car?

DEEK

it's a van with the Grainville logo, and there's at least two people,
and one of them was in a uniform
come on come on come on we need to-

(A loud, rhythmic banging from offstage.)

(FREDDIE, DEEK, PIPPA, and COMPUTER hide. The banging continues for a minute or two before it stops.)

BAILIFF #2 *(offstage)*

hey, hey, hey.

this property belongs to Grainville Cereals Incorporated,
if you come out now, this will be a lot easier for you,
and I'll be able to go home to my wife and kids and tell them nobody died at work today.
do you want me to have to go home and tell my wife and kids
that somebody was being obstinate and so we had to go through the whole official process
and somebody ended up dead?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

we're on your side here, pals.
there's a reason this place has been abandoned for years.
this is not a safe facility for cereal storage, much less unpermitted inhabitationism,
and, well, there's laws in the State of
Grainville's Minnesota Incorporated Subsidiary of the United Corpo-States
as well as constitutional Grainville policies that allow us to conduct internal investigations
aka
tribunals, where crimes such as yours may be punished via execution.
so what's up?
are you coming out,
or are we coming in to do a tribunal?
I guess we're coming in.
Bailiff, bring in the jury!

(There's a loud crash offstage. After a moment, the BAILIFF-JUDGE, BAILIFF #2, and the THE JURY enter.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

hello?

ah, well.

we may as well get the courtroom set up while we're waiting for the defendants.

sit tight, Jury.

Bailiff?

BAILIFF #2

yes, Bailiff-Judge?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

your work is valued and I appreciate you.

BAILIFF #2

thanks!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

let's get cracking.

(BAILIFF #2 and the BAILIFF-JUDGE turn the space into a courtroom.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

greetings, employee-contestant-defendants!

come on out!

we won't bite, unless the jury declares you guilty and sentences you to being bit!

just kidding: that's a little courtroom joke.

you know, when I was a much younger half-bailiff half-judge-

(COMPUTER charges out of hiding and attacks the BAILIFF-JUDGE.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

woah!

(BAILIFF #2 whips out a remote control and presses a button. COMPUTER stops fighting and becomes subdued.)

COMPUTER

wha-

I'm sorry.

BAILIFF #2

once a microchipped employee-contestant,

always a microchipped employee-contestant.

COMPUTER
I just like it here.

BAILIFF #2
here, let's sit you down-

(The BAILIFF navigates COMPUTER to a chair and secures her to it.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE
why don't the rest of you just come on out and we won't have to pump you full of sedatives?

(PIPPA reveals herself.)

PIPPA
wait-
before you put me into a stupor, I have a legal request.

BAILIFF-JUDGE
hi Pippa! I'm listening.

PIPPA
we're entitled to a defense lawyer of our choosing, right?

BAILIFF-JUDGE
sure, whatever.

PIPPA
I will argue our defense.

COMPUTER
it's not gonna work.
system fucked.

PIPPA
Computer, I love you.

COMPUTER
love you too.

PIPPA
your honor.
I ask that you allow me the opportunity to mount our defense in my full capacity, undrugged.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

I will need confirmation from all of your co-employee-contestant-defendants.

COMPUTER

fine.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

Freddie?

Deek?

COMPUTER

Freddie and Deek not gonna put up with this bullshit.

(FREDDIE presents herself.)

FREDDIE

fine.

but you're not drugging us either.

DEEK

and I'm staying in hiding!

BAILIFF #2

that's fine.

Freddie, would you come join your friend down here?

COMPUTER

we're friendship-comrade-lovers.

BAILIFF #2

Freddie, would you please come join your friendship-comrade-lover down here?

FREDDIE

yeah.

(FREDDIE sits next to COMPUTER.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

well, I see no reason to wait around.

the jury has their lives to return to, don't you, jury?

JURY

yes.

and I would like to state for the record that all of my favorite people are breakfast cereal.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

Pippa, why don't you take a moment to consult with your client-family
and then we can get litigating!

(PIPPA crosses to FREDDIE and COMPUTER.)

PIPPA

hey.

COMPUTER

Pips.

PIPPA

listen:

we don't have to convince the Bailiff or the Bailiff-Judge.
we just have to win over the jury.

FREDDIE

the jury is a literal puppet!

PIPPA

yeah, well.

then we just have to convince whoever is piloting the puppet.

FREDDIE

did we do anything illegal?

PIPPA

besides killing two people?

COMPUTER

self defense.

FREDDIE

do we have squatter's rights?

PIPPA

probably not.

most cities have a twelve to fifteen-year occupancy duration for Adverse Possession cases. I think I might be able to argue that we were here against our will all along, plus I might be able to find a legal technicality. we've never gotten any mail here, have we?

FREDDIE

no.

COMPUTER

female.

and Freddie's non-binary.

FREDDIE

we're not talking about our genders, love.

PIPPA

if we haven't been sent an eviction notice, they can't legally file an eviction suit.

at least, that's how it is in Michigan.

fuck, what if Minnesota is an exception?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

attention, attention.

by the State of

Grainville's Minnesota Incorporated Subsidiary of the United Corpo-States-

FREDDIE

yeah, sorry, what?

Grainville's Minnesota?

the United Corpo-States?

BAILIFF #2

ah, of course, your honor.

the defendants have been illegally occupying this warehouse for forty hundred and fifty days,

which means they missed the historic rise of the Corpo-States,

a new political experiment in which America's states

are controlled by corporate and private owners of various political subdivisions

each of which conducts

essential functions of government according to the value of their holdings.

FREDDIE

how's that going?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

we will now begin the proceedings in the trial of Warehouse Four.
the defendants are accused of one count each of:
squatting aka un-permissioned existence
missing three-hundred and sixty consecutive days of work
and failing to escape the room,
as well as two counts each of polyamory.
representing the state as prosecutor is our very own bailiff!

PIPPA
objection!

BAILIFF-JUDGE
on what grounds?

PIPPA
the bailiff can't also be the prosecuting attorney.
that's an enormous conflict of interest.

JUDGE
ah.
please,
guide me to the appropriate Corpo-Grainville-Americana legislation which states
that a bailiff cannot perform as a prosecuting attorney.

PIPPA
what?

BAILIFF-JUDGE
I said
please guide me to any active legislation
which states that a legally appointed bailiff cannot perform as prosecuting attorney.

PIPPA
are you serious?

BAILIFF-JUDGE
are you
cereal?
just a little joke.
objection overruled!

PIPPA
I haven't had the chance to read any of the new laws.

BAILIFF #2

I will ask the jury to note that the defendants made a poor selection for legal counsel, which reflects badly on their character.

PIPPA

objection!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

denied.

PIPPA

okay,

well, I will ask the jury to observe that the bailiff is wearing an ugly shirt, which reflects badly on the bailiff's character, and the prosecution's.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

speaking of the bailiff,

will the prosecution bring forth their opening statement?

BAILIFF #2

esteemed members of the jury, I ask you:

what is the value of a box of cereal?

I do not mean the dollar value of a box of cereal,

which in Grainville's Minnesota Incorporated Subsidiary of the United Corpo-States is \$400, but the value of a box of cereal to the very soul of humankind?

is it comfort? is it satiety? is it civic duty?

is it love?

this quadrupod, as they style themselves,

has been squatting in this very warehouse, taking up space which could have been used in the production and distribution of that precious cargo: breakfast cereal.

I will provide evidence that they have been living, sodomizing each other, in this space for four hundred and fifty days.

I will provide written statements from each of their managers

that they have been absent from their jobs,

and I will prove via the laws of redundancy that they have failed to escape the room.

their guilt is not in question.

the question is this: what is more valuable,

the lives of four employee-contestant-defendants,

or the life of every other consumer of breakfast cereal in these United Corpo-States?

I rest my opening statement.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

the court will now hear an opening statement from the defense.

PIPPA

what am I supposed to say?

we were kidnapped and tortured here.

we're victims.

where in the law does it say you can't miss work?

where in the law does it say you have to be good at escape rooms?

where in the law does it say it's illegal to love more than one person?

I won't try to prove that we weren't here for four hundred and fifty days, because we were.

I'm not going to argue that we don't all support each other and make out and stuff.

what I am going to do here

is catch you on a legal technicality

or plead a strong enough emotional case to the jury.

we're human beings.

you can't treat us like this.

so rests my opening.

BAILIFF #2

your honor,

I would like note that I can point out exactly where it says in the law that you can't miss work,

where it says in the law that you can only have a single sex partner in any given year,

where in the law it is made illegal on pain of death to live on someone else's unused property,

and where it says in the law that, in certain cases,

an incompleated escaped room qualifies as a felony.

FREDDIE

why did it take this long to find us if we were being such a fucking inconvenience?

DEEK

I think you'd better just kill us.

COMPUTER

shuddup, Deek.

PIPPA

I move to have that exchange stricken from the record.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

granted.

jury, please disregard the defendant's suggestion to "just kill us".

FREDDIE

I move to abolish the death penalty, as well as prisons and the military.

BAILIFF #2

that's all stuff you ought to have written your senator about back when there were senators.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

fascinating opening statements.

now we move on to evidence.

prosecution?

(BAILIFF #2 drops a huge binder before the JURY.)

BAILIFF #2

this is a large binder filled with evidence.

(THE JURY flips through the binder.)

THE JURY

guilty!

guilty!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

ho ho ho, hold on.

we're not quite at the deliberation stage of the trial.

would the defense like to submit any evidence?

FREDDIE

I would.

(FREDDIE crosses to the BAILIFF-JUDGE and spits on their shoe.)

COMPUTER

hell yeah, Freddie!

fight the power!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

will the defense please explain to the court how this spit qualifies as evidence?

FREDDIE

it's evidence of my position that this is a sham trial.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

very well.

Jury, disregard the spit.

will the bailiff please remove the spit from the courtroom?

(BAILIFF #2 wipes up the spit, balls up the rag, and throws it offstage.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

would either the prosecution or the jury like to call a witness to the stand?

PIPPA

what about us?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

the defense is not permitted to bring forth witnesses.

PIPPA

what?

BAILIFF #2

the prosecution calls no witness.

THE JURY

but the jury does!!!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

Jury, please name your witness.

THE JURY

the Jury calls forth a box of Grainville's Banana-O's!

(THE JURY places a box of Banana-O's on a chair.)

PIPPA

we are being denied our due process rights!

THE JURY

Banana-O's.

where were you on the day of the reckoning?

(Silence.)

(More silence.)

DEEK

uhhh.

hey there.

it's me, the Banana-O's.

on the day of the reckoning I was hanging out in the pantry.

THE JURY

my second question:

if your whole thing is bananas, why are you ring-shaped?

DEEK

to be clear, I'm not, like, a single Banana-O.

I'm the whole box.

so technically I'm rectangular, and some of my component parts are ring-shaped.

THE JURY

why are your banana-flavored elements ring-shaped?

DEEK

focus group testing.

Banana Rods didn't play.

by the way, if I were you,

I would let the defendants go free.

THE JURY

why?

DEEK

um,

because it's not very banana-licious to kill.

THE JURY

noted.

we have no further questions for the witness!

(THE JURY takes the Banana-O's, sits down, and starts to shovel Banana-O's into its puppet mouth.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

very well.

thus concludes the combat-of-wits portion of the trial,

and thus commences jury deliberation.

PIPPA
wait, I-

BAILIFF-JUDGE
interrupted-

PIPPA
no, you're interrupted!
I still have an argument to make.
you're violating due process law.

BAILIFF-JUDGE
hahahahahahahahahahahahaha.
oh, I really didn't think you'd manage to make me laugh today.
oh god, I'm crying.
yes, thank you.
due process law.
can you believe these knuckleheads?
jury, you have thirty seconds to deliberate, starting in five
four
three
two

COMPUTER
-interrupted-

BAILIFF-JUDGE
one!

THE JURY
well, see
but I think!
yes, but
no, couldn't possibly
perhaps
or
well,
no, you weren't listening properly
see what I think is it all happened like this, see
you're pretty sexy for a fellow juror
objection!

you don't need to call objection in the jury room-
objection!
do you need a cup of tea, man?
can we go back to the detail about
yes!
no!
maybe!

BAILIFF-JUDGE
time.

THE JURY
we find the defendants guilty on all charges,
just like we thought we would all along based on their appearances and perceived demeanors!

PIPPA
mistrial!
that's a mistrial.

THE JURY
we recommend a sentence of death!

BAILIFF-JUDGE
by order of the (what is it?)
the Corpo-Ethnic State of-

PIPPA
-you really are fascists-

BAILIFF-JUDGE
-yadda-yaddesota, for the crimes of missing three-hundred and sixty consecutive days of work,
squatting in an empty building, being polyamorous, and failing to escape the room,
I hereby sentence the defendants to death.

FREDDIE
you absolute spineless cowards.

COMPUTER
forget about it, Freddie.
they're our friends, they're not gonna hurt us.

FREDDIE
they're not our friends, Computer.

COMPUTER

everybody's just a friend you haven't met yet.
so what if they kill us?
does that make them bad people?

FREDDIE

yeah, Computer.
that makes them bad people.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

now, if the three of you will behave yourselves,
you'll be allowed to spend your last moments on this Earth un-sedated.
which of you would like to spin the wheel for the group?

FREDDIE

nobody's spinning the wheel.

COMPUTER

solidarity.

DEEK

I'll spin the damn wheel.

FREDDIE

but Deek, you're so well-hidden.
it would be such a shame if you came out.

(DEEK emerges from his hiding spot and steps up to the Wheel of Ways to Go.)

DEEK

honestly, I hope it's all worth it.
if killing us off is gonna fix the economy or something for everybody else
and people are gonna finally start being good to each other, fine.
but if I were me, I guess I wouldn't bet on it.

(DEEK spins the wheel.)

FREDDIE

are we gonna run?

PIPPA

just you and me?

FREDDIE

Computer can barely stand.

PIPPA

okay.

now?

FREDDIE

now.

(FREDDIE and PIPPA sneak offstage.)

BAILIFF #2

oh, there's no escape!

well, we'll see them soon.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH enters. The wheel spins throughout her speech.)

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

today I have made an ally in my quest,

and I have Kaylob, God of Machines, himself to thank,

for this ally is one of his very inventions.

my new friend is a sort of artificial man who speaks only in fragments,

and he is contained in a small, glassenware box.

he desires to revenge himself upon his Maker,

who built him and forgot him for one thousand years in a gloomy cellar.

he has had no company in all that time but that of the occasional feline.

someday a bard will sing in highs and lows

the trials of Nathaniel 'Wilting' Rose.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH exits.)

(The outer frame of the wheel falls to reveal that every space reads "Chainsawed in Half." The wheel stops spinning.)

BAILIFF-JUDGE

I hereby confirm that the defendants will be chainsawed in half!

thus concludes today's trial.

Jury, you are dismissed.

(The BAILIFF-JUDGE exits, followed by THE JURY.)

BAILIFF #2

and I will prepare the chainsaws.
whatever business you intend to conduct with the last few moments of your lives,
now is your opportunity.

(BAILIFF #2 exits.)

DEEK

I knew this kind of thing happened to people,
but it always just seemed so far away.

COMPUTER

I know how it feels to be far away, Deek.
I feel far away from everyone all the time.

DEEK

yeah.
you know how loved you are, though?

COMPUTER

only for a little longer.

(PIPPA and FREDDIE enter. FREDDIE has their ukulele.)

PIPPA

it's not even a hallway back there any more.
just a whole tunnel of knives,
and the Bailiff polishing a chainsaw in the wings.

DEEK

for what it's worth,
I wish you'd gotten away.

FREDDIE

thanks.

(FREDDIE strums the ukulele.)

FREDDIE

ooooo

**it seems they're gonna kill us over petty little laws
we wouldn't be the first**

somehow I doubt we'll be the last
 they said history is over like it's been since Vietnam
 but oppression is alive and well right here in Minne-Paul
 oh cereal and milk and blood, cereal and milk,
 Cereal and milk and blood and water turning brown
 Cereal and milk and blood and tar sands all around
 Cereal and milk and blood, colonial regimes

PIPPA
 if you stretch outside their narrow frames
 they'll break your fucking knees

ALL
 Cereal and milk and blood I don't respect the law
 Cereal and milk and blood all spilling from the maw

COMPUTER
 of law and order, public schools, insurance healthcare schemes,
 Democrats, Republicans, they look the same to me

DEEK
 cops and fascist archetypes, I can't tell them apart
 they'll draw a line that's thin and blue to stop your neighbor's heart

PIPPA
 cereal and milk and blood, it's been broken from the start
 a mediocre constitution, wielded like a sword
 and your job is just a lie they sell to keep you on a cord
 oh!

ALL
 Cereal and milk and blood will drown out all your dreams
 Cereal and milk and blood
 Will drown out all your dreams

FREDDIE
 If there's ever talk of unions they will squash it like a bug

ALL
 cereal and milk and milk and cereal and blood
 bloody bloody cereal
 milk and death and love.

*(THE JURY enters and draws a plastic tarp over COMPUTER, FREDDIE, DEEK, and PIPPA.
The BAILIFF-JUDGE enters.)*

BAILIFF-JUDGE

we'll spare you the traumatic sight of chainsaw teeth cutting through skin and bones
and flesh and blood and guts and breakfast cereal,
but rest assured, all of your heroes are dead!

(BAILIFF #2 enters, drenched in blood.)

BAILIFF #2

isn't that how it always seems to go for heroes?
kinda makes you want to just shut up and toe the line,
like the rest of us do.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

that's a beautiful aphorism for the end of our play.

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH *(offstage)*

my orb!
come back here with my orb!

(BUMBUS BLUE runs onstage with the orb.)

BUMBUS BLUE

who are all of you?
what are you doing in my secret bungalow?
did you touch my grains?

BAILIFF #2

did we touch your grains?

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH enters.)

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

halt, Bumbus the Blue,
and return to me that orb!

BUMBUS BLUE

it's not Bumbus "The" Blue.
it's just Bumbus Blue.
Blue is my surname.

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

the Miller's Orb.

give it to me.

and who are these two?

is this your crew of trickster thieves?

BUMBUS BLUE

I've never seen these people in my life,

and I'm pretty sure they've been eating my grains.

BAILIFF-JUDGE

actually

the very good news

is that we just chainsawed-in-half the people who've been eating your grains!

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

what is this "chainsawed"?

BAILIFF-JUDGE

oh.

ask Kaylob the God of Machines about it when you see him.

BUMBUS BLUE

you have defiled the Bungalow of Bumbus Blue!

with blood!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

give her the orb, Bumbus Blue.

BUMBUS BLUE

I feel strangely compelled to listen to you.

is thine robe enchanted?

here.

(BUMBUS BLUE hands the orb to HEATHER DAWNSBREATH.)

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

thank you, Bumbus.

these lands are strange to me.

the hills themselves do seem to rearrange at every turn,

and there are peculiar scenes behind every fourth wall.

this bungalow is strange and future-like,

is it not?

it is a shame: the figures within my orb all seem to have been torn to shreds
by the teeth of some infernal beast.

BUMBUS BLUE

“your” orb?

HEATHER DAWNSBREATH

the Miller’s Orb, which I will most certainly destroy.
good day.

(HEATHER DAWNSBREATH exits.)

BAILIFF #2

good luck on your quest!

BAILIFF-JUDGE

if the legends are true,
she’ll be cooked and eaten by the Harpies of Debauchery.

BUMBUS BLUE

and that’s it, folks!

now please depart the Bungalow of Bumbus Blue, duck when you see the knives,
and always remember:

ALL

you can’t spell “cereal” without “solidarity!”

BLACKOUT