

*Life with Althaar*  
**Episode 8: Robot's Rules of Order**  
**Draft 3.0 (recording script), 8/1/19 - John (draft 3, BAJ)**

*A hallway or computer room in the station support levels. Bleeps of computers working away quietly. Then, alarms of computers breaking down noisily.*

**BRIDGE CREW MEMBER**

*(over the p.a.)*

All available robot Systems Maintenance units, please to report to Gimel 59. We have a critical mainframe malfunction. Yes, another one. And yes, all wires involved are over 16-gauge, so it is your problem. Repeat: All available Systems Maintenance units report to Gimel 59 immediately.

*Sounds of sullen trudging from two sets of robot feet. **One of the Robots whistling out-of-tune.***

**WORKER-BOT 1 (JOHN C. CALHOUN/FOUNDING-FATHER TYPE?)**

Ah, dash it all! Are we the first to arrive?

**WORKER-BOT 2 (PACINO?)**

Yeah, I think all the other systems crews're up in the Lower Concourse. Huh. What are we doin' here? I don't see no problem. Usually we get a priority call, there's at least some sparks comin' out of the thing.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

It's something inside the mainframe. Doubtless we'll need to access the terminal.

**WORKER-BOT 2**

I don't got clearance. You access it.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

If you don't have access, friend, what makes you think I do? We'll just have to wait for the foreman.

**WORKER-BOT 2**

Arright, long as we're waiting, I'm gonna have a smoke.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

You really ought to see someone about that. You're burning a tremendous amount of oil.

*Sounds of a third pair of feet.*

**FOREMAN-BOT (GEORGE FOREMAN)**

Hey, what are you doing standing around smoking? I ain't got time to do your jobs for you! Get on that mainframe!

**WORKER-BOT 2**

We don't got clearance, chief.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

Perhaps you would be so kind as to secure access on our behalf?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Damn, the things I gotta do around here. (*sounds of typing*) I'm probably the busiest robot on station! Why they won't just give you repair-bots the codes, I'll /never--

**TERMINAL VOICE**

The code you have entered is incorrect. Please try again.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

WHAT? Now hang on just a dang minute...

*Sounds of slower, more deliberate typing.*

**TERMINAL VOICE**

The code you have entered is incorrect. Please try again.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

No, I entered the right code twice. Now let me in!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

It is possible you may have mistyped. Please check to make sure you have not--

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Don't be putting any of that "mistyped" business on me. I am a robot, dammit. I am built for precision!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

--inadvertently engaged Caps Lock.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

What? There ain't no damn Caps lock. Just what in the hell are you trying to pull?

**TERMINAL VOICE**

It is possible you have entered a password belonging to another system. Remember: All mainframe passwords must contain at least twelve letters, two of them upper-case, two of them numeric, and three of the following /symbols:

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Yes, I know about the /symbols!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Ampersand, hashtag, percentage sign, asterisk, open-parentheses, closed-/parentheses

**FOREMAN-BOT**

I know! I know! SHUT UP ALREADY!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

... open-square-bracket, closed-square bracket, the “at” symbol; and one of the following emoji: grinning face, grinning squinting face, grinning face with /sweat, slightly frowning face, frowning face, heart, sparkling heart, 100, pile of poo, or...

**FOREMAN-BOT**

If you say ONE MORE WORD, I swear to roly-poly baby Jesus I will KNOCK YOUR LIGHTS OUT!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

...taco.

*Sounds of a massive thump, computer powering down. And here are the sparks.*

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Damn! DAMN! Something’s gotten into these terminals. You know, for things with such pleasant, soothing voices, they are the least-helpful bits of circuitry I have ever laid my sensors on! They’ve been slowing down our work all over the station!

**WORKER-BOT 2**

Think it’s another virus?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

I don’t know. That’s not my department.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

Perhaps it’s time to request a replacement from station command?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Oh, it’s past time! The Union’s filed three different requisition forms. Lemme call the bridge, see if this’ll light a fire under their asses.

*Sounds of electronic buzzing. A bleep as the Commander picks up.*

**COMMANDER**

This is Commander Torianna. Did you robots fix our milk frother yet?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

...Your *what* now?

**COMMANDER**

The milk frother. It makes sure the foam for our lattes on the bridge is at the proper consistency. You *are* at the mainframe in Gimel 59, yes?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Sure, /but--

**COMMANDER**

That runs our milk frother.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Oh yeah? We got called down here for a critical mainframe malfunction. No one said nothin' about a milk frother. You know we don't touch the drinks machines; it's right there in the Union contract.

**COMMANDER**

Nice try, pal. It's an autonomous beverage system peripheral, for which the Robot Union *is* responsible, according to the 2519 Fairgrounds CLA, section 5, subsection /3, paragraph--

**FOREMAN-BOT**

I got three yottabytes of accessible memory, Commander. I know the damn subsection.

**COMMANDER**

Then there's nothing more to discuss. Now please hurry; if I have to drink one more Americano I might just throw myself out an airlock.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Wait a minute, Commander. I practically stripped my gears getting down here because they said this was an emergency. And now I'm going to be here all afternoon just trying to get into the mainframe! I've got two baby-bots at home. One of them just learned Asimov's Three Laws, and I wasn't there to witness it!

**COMMANDER**

Well, I'm sorry to hear that, but the fact remains that the milk up here is going tragically un-frothed. Please let us know immediately as soon as /you've fixed it.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

No! Wait! That's what I called to say: What we've got up here is an untenable situation. We need new terminals, and quite frankly, we needed 'em yesterday. The ones we got are getting slower by the cycle, and it's reduced our efficiency by 87 percent! They're acting up anytime I lay my gloves on them!

**COMMANDER**

Your gloves?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

It's an expression.

**COMMANDER**

It's really not.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Look, Commander. You can't expect us to keep the computer systems up to scratch if it takes us half a cycle just to access a terminal.

**COMMANDER**

I'm afraid replacements just aren't in the budget right now, Foreman.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

What do you mean, not in the budget? I personally witnessed two, not one, but count 'em, *two* miniature golf tournaments in the past three weeks. One of 'em had a 5,000-credit cash prize!

**COMMANDER**

Which came out of the Recreation and Morale budget. Are you an accounts bot? No. You're not. You're Systems Maintenance. Just do your job and let us do ours, ok?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

But I can't do my job with these janky old terminals!

**COMMANDER**

I'm sure you'll figure it out. In any case, we've got bigger problems than the terminals. So what I need from */you* is--

*Sound of a splash and sizzle.*

**COMMANDER**

--to buckle down and and--oh, great! I just made an evocative, spectacularly-timed gesture to drive home my point, and wouldn't you know it, I've spilled my Americano all over the intercom! Well, that's just perfect. Foreman, I won't tell you again! Fix the frother now, before we all go into caffeine withdrawal. And send someone down here to swap out this intercom panel while you're at it. Torianna, over and out.

**WORKER-BOT 1**

Well, that was magnificently unhelpful.

**WORKER-BOT 2**

Hoo-ah! You're telling me.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

We've been using these terminals for decades, and they've been getting slower the whole time. We see bots all up and down this station working longer and longer hours, just to keep up with our damn out-of-date, crumbling-ass infrastructure. This chintzy credit-pinching will *not* stand! They've been balancing the budget on our backs! Well, not any more. I am officially putting my foot down! Or whatever the robot equivalent of that is!

**WORKER-BOT 2**

...So... what do we do, boss?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

I'll tell you what we do: Systems Maintenance Local Number 4903 is going on strike!

*Credits music.*

**ANNOUNCER**

Gemini CollisionWorks presents

*Life with Althaar!*

Episode 8:

“Robot’s Rules of Order”

*Transition to JOHN and ALTHAAR’s bathroom. A shower faucet being turned off. Drips.  
A yawn.*

**ALTHAAR**

*(from the kitchen)*

Ah! The showering is completed! FriendJohn has successfully removed all of his sebaceous residues?

**JOHN**

You bet, buddy. Oh, streez, I’m gonna be late again. Hey, Althaar? I need to get out of here in a hurry, can you pop into your room for a minute?

**ALTHAAR**

Oh! FriendJohn! Please do not exit the apartment without consuming the breakfast that Althaar has prepared! Althaar wishes to ensure that FriendJohn has all necessary nutrients to sustain him during his work cycle!

**JOHN**

I appreciate that, but, are you still in the kitchen? I really gotta go, and I can’t walk very fast while I’m covering my eyes, so...

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar does indeed remain in the kitchen, FriendJohn. But! He can compress himself into the oven, so that FriendJohn may retrieve the breakfasting foods without the expelling of fluids! One moment, please!

*Clanks and groans of a large Iltorian contorting himself to fit into a small oven.*

**JOHN**

Althaar, you really don’t need to do that, you can just go to your room. Althaar?

**ALTHAAR**

*(from within the oven)*

Althaar is en-sconced! Please enter, FriendJohn!

**JOHN**

All right, have it your way. Coming in!

*JOHN enters the kitchen.*

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar has risen particularly early this morning to bake the muffins for FriendJohn, in preparation for his work cycle! The muffins are of both the English and non-English varieties! FriendJohn may find them resting on the stove! Right above Althaar's perilously-contorted carapace! Please tell Althaar if they are satisfactory, please!

**JOHN**

I'll have to get back to you on that, Althaar, I don't have time to eat them now. I'll, uh, grab these two, I guess. (*heading out into the living room*) Thanks! See you lat--

*A massive THUD.*

**JOHN**

OW!!

**ALTHAAR**

What is happening?!

**JOHN**

I ran into the door. Why isn't this thing opening?

**ALTHAAR**

Has FriendJohn sustained an injury? Is Althaar required to provide urgent medical assistance?

**JOHN**

NO! Uh--definitely not. I'm fine. I'll be out of here in just a-- Huh. The door's not opening. Maybe the sensor's busted?

*A beep as he accesses the manual door control.*

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Hallo! Ich bin die Kommandant! Guck mal wie ineffizient ich bin!

**JOHN**

What?... Open. Open, please!

**ALTHAAR**

There is a problem, FriendJohn?

**JOHN**

Uh... the terminal is... German? For some reason? Come on! Open! Uh, bitte?

**TERMINAL VOICE**

{Konnichiwa! Watashi wa shirei-kandesu. Watashi ga dorehodo /hikoritsuteki ka mitekudasai!}

**JOHN**

Uh... English! Ingles! Por favor!

**ALTHAAR**

What is happening now, FriendJohn?

**JOHN**

I think it's turning Japanese.

**ALTHAAR**

Oh no! The terminal is turning Japanese?

**JOHN**

I really think so, yeah. Parlez-vous anglais?

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Privyet! Ya Komandushiya. Pasmotree kakaya ya ne effektivnaya.

**JOHN**

Dammit! Where's that crowbar?

**ALTHAAR**

Does FriendJohn acquire assistance?

**JOHN**

No, it's fine, I just--

*Prying and grunting.*

**JOHN**

Have. To. UGGHHG!

*A heavy CREAK. Sparks.*

**JOHN**

Uh... Well... At least we can get out. Althaar? I think I broke the door, sorry. I'll call the maintenance-bots later, ok? I gotta, run, though.

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar wishes FriendJohn much joy in his employment cycle!

*Sounds of running footsteps.*

**JOHN**

What in the hell is going on around here?

*A CRACKLE. The WSS pager rings. JOHN answers it.*

**H.F.**

Kid? You on your way down here?

**JOHN**

Yeah, I'll be there as soon as I can. The apartment door just did the weirdest thing--

**H.F.**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's happening all over the station. I don't know what the hell the bots are up to, but that's not our problem. The Commander wants you on the bridge ASAP.

**JOHN**

Seriously? I just replaced that wire a couple days ago!

**H.F.**

Yeah, I think it's something worse this time. Commander wouldn't say what, though. Sounded like it might be something off the books, so call me if they give you any trouble, ok? I mean, more than the usual amount. I'll just be here... at my desk...

**JOHN**

Copy that.

*JOHN starts to head off down the hall.*

**H.F.**

Listen, kid, I don't want to worry you or nothing, but you know those headaches I been getting? And the weird thing with my shoulder? I been on HECNET-MD all morning, and I think this is it. The Vidorian Flux.

**JOHN**

*(groans)*

**H.F.**

So who knows how much longer I'll be around...

**JOHN**

H.F., you're fine. HECNET-MD always says it's the Vidorian Flux, you don't have the Vidorian Flux. You're Human, you don't even have a reticulum to get infected.

**H.F.**

Yeah, but you never know, you know?

**JOHN**

I'm pretty sure I do know how many stomachs you have. Listen, H.F., I gotta go. Just... take some ibuprofen and have a nap or something.

**H.F.**

Oh, right, like ibuprofen's gonna help me once the Sepulchral Rictus kicks in!

*A bleep as the call ends. JOHN's footsteps stop.*

**JOHN**

Ohh, come on, door. Work with me here.

*Bleep as he, in a fit of pure optimism, accesses the door terminal.*

**TERMINAL VOICE**

{Nihao! Wo shi zhihui guan!}

**JOHN**

Fair enough.

*Sound of prying and sparking transitions to the bridge, in mid-level crisis mode. A **long slurp**.*

**COMMANDER**

Ugh. Disgusting.

**FRALL**

Have you tried adding nutmeg?

**COMMANDER**

I've tried it all, dear Frall. Without steamed milk, it's just a glorified cup of diner coffee.

**FRALL**

Indeed.

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Hi! I'm the Commander! Boy, am I inefficient or what?

**COMMANDER**

And you shut up!

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Look at how inefficient I am!

**COMMANDER**

I order you to shut up!

**FRALL**

It's no use, commander.

*Squeaking, sparking noises as JOHN pries open the door with a crowbar.*

**JOHN**

Uuughgg!!! You wanted to see me, Commander? Oh, sorry about the door, I, uh--

**COMMANDER**

I'm aware of the door issue, Mr. B. We're having problems all over the station. It appears the Systems Maintenance bots have sabotaged the terminals.

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Hi! I'm Commander Torianna! Gosh golly, am I inefficient or what?

**COMMANDER**

And they've done a lovely job of reprogramming the automated announcements, as you can hear.

**TERMINAL VOICE**

I'm so inefficient! My name is Commander Torianna and I /approve this message!

**JOHN**

Uh... okay.

**COMMANDER**

They've gone beyond work-to-rule and have now progressed to work-to-aggravate. Which is why I asked H.F. to send you down here. The bots have called for a full Union meeting in Lamed 19 at fourteen-hundred. I need to send a delegation to speak on behalf of station command, and I figured since you're legally--

**JOHN**

Oh no.

**COMMANDER**

--a robot, not to mention you'll hardly be able to complete any of your official WSS duties while the station has ground to a standstill, perhaps you would be so kind as to represent the interests of Fairgrounds management. To be our liaison, if you will. It's a perfect fit, really, since you're the only meat-bot on station.

**JOHN**

I'd love for people to stop calling me that.

**FRALL**

John B, perhaps it would interest you to know that I have foreseen every possible outcome for this situation, and I can state definitively that this is our best possible way forward. For... almost everyone involved.

**JOHN**

...I'm the "almost" part of that, aren't I?

**COMMANDER**

All right, how about this? I've got a Foreman-bot on his way down here to "give me the business," whatever that entails. You can at least try talking to him, robot-to-robot. Maybe soften him up a little.

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Hi! I'm Commander Torianna! Boy howdy am I inefficient!

**JOHN**

Is that all they say?

**COMMANDER**

The robots aren't exactly... innovative with their insults.

*Sound of a metal door being wrenched off its support.*

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Ah, Commander Torianna, just the person I want to see and yell at!

**COMMANDER**

Just in time. John B, I'd like you to meet Foreman-bot.

**JOHN**

Oh! I thought... Sorry, I assumed Foreman-bot was your job, not your name.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Oh, no, it's both. I'm the second cycle Systems Maintenance foreman. Who was originally built to portray George Foreman, noted 20<sup>th</sup>-century heavyweight champion and entrepreneur. Funny old world, isn't it? Pleasure to meet you.

**COMMANDER**

Foreman-bot, this is John B, a third-party subcontractor who'll be acting as our liaison. (*steamrolling over JOHN's attempted objections in the background*) He's very excited to be working with you and anxious to resolve this dispute. Please yell at him in my stead. And do feel free to be as abusive as possible, if it helps you get it out of your system.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

You think I'll be satisfied with one of your lackeys, Commander? Forget it! I have a four-page list of grievances back at my office, and we're not working again until we get those addressed! And what makes you think this little Human shrimp has any idea what a working bot on the Fairgrounds goes through?

**JOHN**

Uh, if it helps, I'm legally a robot?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Oh yeah? You look awfully soft and fleshy to me, pal.

**JOHN**

Well, like I said, */legally* I'm--

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Not to mention pale. And you got some worryingly-dark circles around your eyes. Also your complexion is terrible!

**JOHN**

Ok, I don't want to tell you your business, but I think your negotiation technique could use some work.

**COMMANDER**

Foreman Foreman-bot, I assure you that I hand-picked John personally for this task. He may look... somewhat... sweaty and unwell...

**JOHN**

I just had to crowbar open like, seventeen doors!

**COMMANDER**

--but he knows exactly how I like my lattes.

**JOHN**

What?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Yeah, that's right. She pulls me away from tutoring my robo-kids to fix her damn milk frother. My kids! They were delivered just last month! And then taken out of their shipping crates and assembled with tender loving care! And I've barely spent a cycle with them since, because I'm wasting hours doing "emergency" repairs that oughtta take 5 minutes on a decent terminal! Yeah, you heard me! She calls a broken milk frother an "emergency." Can you believe that?

**JOHN**

Uh... wow. No. Frankly, Commander, I'm sorry, but that does kind of sound like an abuse of your powers.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Ha haaa! Well! Whaddaya know! This kid ain't as pitifully stupid and useless as he looks, Commander!

**JOHN**

Ok, really now...

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Maybe it's just because I was modeled after a guy who was punched repeatedly in the head--or it's my processor overheating again--but I'm starting to warm up to you, meat-bot! Come on along to Union headquarters and let's see if we can't talk this out.

**JOHN**

I never said I'd... Ah, what the hell. Let's go.

*Music transition to the the Electric Egg. Xtopps is finishing up a drum solo, accompanied only by uncomfortable coughs and murmurs from the audience. The song ends to tepid applause.*

**DEE**

*(not on mic, just shouting)*

Thank you. Thank you. That was the Electric Egg's very own Xtopps, with his... incredibly thorough rendition of Toad!

*More muttering.*

**CHIP**

Now I know it's not ideal--hey! You! Sit down! They're only halfway done with their set!

**DEE**

It's ok, Chip. Let them go.

**XTOPPS**

Yeah, mang. If they're not down with 37 minutes of classic Earth skins, then they're not our type of zoods.

**CHIP**

Look, I know we promised you all a tribute to Aphex Twin, but while we're resolving some issues with the electricity, these very talented performers are doing the best they can, ok? So how about the rest of you just settle in and roll with it?

**PATRON 1**

How about *you all* fix the drinks machines!

**CHIP**

I keep telling you! It's not the machines: the entire power grid in this sector is shot. So, since you've already gone through everything we had in stock, and we probably won't be getting any deliveries for a while either, what with the door situation, right now we have... water. Or... I guess whatever mystery liquid is in those bottles at the bottom of the fridge.

**SOPON**

Oh! Uh... that's... vent biter repellent. Highly toxic, no bueno. Sorry, folks. Water only.

**PATRON 2**

Oh that's it! I'm out of here!

**CHIP**

Hey, no, come on! I promise you there's, seriously, absolutely nothing else to do on station until they restore us to full power, so you might as well stay here. Now, how about half-priced drinks as soon as we're up and running again? Does that sound like a fair deal?

*Grumbles. Discontented alien noises.*

**CHIP**

Okay! But until then, we're all stuck here together, so why not make the most of it and listen to a perfectly nice acoustic set? Wouldn't kill you to get a little education in Human folk-music. It's more than just space shanties, you know!

*Groans. A strum or two from an acoustic guitar.*

**DEE**

Thanks Chip. Here's a little trip down memory lane. Who here has ever heard of a socially-conscious, ahead of her time gal by the name of Joan Baez?

*Louder, anguished groans.*

**PATRON 3**

Play Beyond Uranus with the Fleezeborp sola!

**XTOPPS**

No juice, no fleez, palomino.

**PATRON 2**

This is intolerable!

**CHIP**

Again, I'm sure station staff will have it fixed any minute now!

*Loud rustling.*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, I wouldn't be so sure about that!

**CHIP**

Gah! Mrs. Frondrinax! You really need to stop doing that.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

You wouldn't deprive a gal of the simple thrill of hiding out in your pothos plants, would you? We all need to get our kicks somewhere. Now Chip, what's the idea of telling all these poor folks that help is on the way, when you know good and well that half the Robot Union is on strike? And it won't be long before the rest of them join in!

*Angry groans from patrons.*

**PATRON 1**

You gotta be kidding me!

**CHIP**

Look, I'm sure it'll get resolved. These strikes happen all the time, they're not just gonna leave us /without power--

**PATRON 2**

Oh, sure they're not!

**PATRON 4**

They've done worse before. We're *never* getting a drink!

**PATRON 2**

That's it, I'm gonna suck out whatever's left in the taps!

*Sounds of a struggle.*

**CHIP**

Hey, now, get away from there! We're not self-service! Aaugh! Help!

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

*(a BOOMING voice)*

STOP THIS NONSENSE!

...Ahem. Well! Didn't realize I could maneuver my stigma like that! I must try that more often. La la la LA! La la la LAA!

*Sounds of a plant patting its own stem.*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

I tell ya, every time you think you've got a handle on your anatomical structure, the world just gets stranger and stranger. Now where was I? Oh yes, everyone stop these shenanigans! As it stands, you're all in for a doozy of a dry spell, there's no denying that. But there's no sense in all this fuss and bother! I think it's high time someone stepped forward and got you folks plowing in the same direction before complete pandemonium sets in! Now, I may just be a simple country commelinid, but it seems to me that, when the system starts breaking down, that's when you need to pick yourself up by your own two stems! That is, if you happen to be one of those charming little deciduous numbers with the multi-stem systems.

**CHIP**

And how do you propose we do that?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Well... isn't it obvious? *We brew our own beer!*

*Music transition to the Robot Union meeting room. Sounds of a gavel banging, murmurs from the Robot Union peanut gallery.*

**FOREMAN-BOT**

We're late. They've already started the speeches.

**JOHN**

Should I go up there, maybe? Introduce myself?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Nah, Mother Jones-bot has the floor. We'll wait until she's finished. Hey, you like eating food, right? Try this panini.

**JOHN**

Woah! Thanks! *(munch munch)*

**FOREMAN-BOT**

If you're still hungry let me know. What if I told you I can also grill a chicken *and* an asparagus side dish for us in under six minutes flat?

**JOHN**

*(appreciative and impressed noise made around a mouthful of tasty panini)*

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Thank you. Friends, the Human garbage in management has never given robot workers the respect we deserve. Systems Maintenance Local 4903 is on strike for new terminals, but I say management's egregious indifference to robot working conditions affects all of us! It is high time we call a general strike and mass sit-in for the entire Union, station-wide! What say you, James Hoffa-Bot?

**HOFFA-BOT**

I say aye!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

I say aye as well. What about the Food Preparation and Servers' Union?

**FAST FOOD-BOT (Churchill)**

We say aye!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

The Robot Customs Agents' Collective?

**KAISER WILHELM-BOT**

Ja wohl! We say aye!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Natatorium and Jacuzzi Cleaners' Local 684?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Can we just do a show of hands and/or manipulator arms? Everyone's gonna say "aye."

**JOHN**

I say no!

*Gasps. A beep.*

**JOHN**

Uh, sorry, nay? ...Objection? I disagree, is what I'm getting at here.

**HOFFA-BOT**

Wait, aren't you that weird robot that's made of meat? The only one who's not in the Union?

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Right, the Commander's pet meat-bot. I recognize him now. What's he doing here? I thought we decided to have him killed.

**JOHN**

What?

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Well, anyway, be off with you, scab. This meeting is for Union members only!

**JOHN**

Well, the Commander asked me to come down here and negotiate. Isn't that how this is supposed to work?

**HOFFA-BOT**

Ha! You mean she sent you to spy on us! Fellow Robots, take a good look at station management's pathetic attempt to deceive us! This so-called bot may claim silicon heritage, but in reality, he's nothing more than a disgusting goulash of proteins and lipids hiding a brittle, pathetically-breakable calcium substructure!

**JOHN**

You know what, "meat-bot" is fine.

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Tell us, scab. Why should we listen to your excuses for management's callous disregard for our rights?

**JOHN**

Uh, you shouldn't, frankly.

*Gasps. A beep.*

**JOHN**

Foreman-bot has told me your side of the issue, and I think it's ridiculous that the Commander won't update the terminals. Especially since it means all of you have to work longer hours.

*Muttering of agreement. Beeps.*

**HOFFA-BOT**

Then why did you object to a strike? Don't say you didn't! We all heard you!

**JOHN**

Because a strike isn't going to get you anywhere. There's always some section of the Union out on strike, people don't even pay attention any more. But if you play your cards right, you can get everything you want, without you having to spend one cycle on the picket line. You just have to make the Commander think *she's* putting one over on *you*. Like, there's this band I was really into back home on Earth, the Lectroid Tongues. And I saw they were coming through Edmonton on tour, but the problem was, my girlfriend, Judy? *Hated* them. Like, I couldn't ever listen to them when she was around, even on skullbuds, because if she caught me, she'd keep making snide comments about how much they sucked for like, days afterwards. So there was no way I could just buy a ticket to that show without catching hell for it. But I came up with a plan. I found this two-week meditation retreat that was going to fall on the same weekend, and I started talking about how much I wanted to go. How great it would be to get away from it all, how I would miss her but this would be a really amazing opportunity, that kind of thing. And I could tell she hated the idea, but she couldn't just like, forbid me to go, right? Not without looking like the bad guy. So I let her build up a head of steam for a few days, and then I made sure to leave out a couple ads for the Tongues show where she would be sure to see them. Sure enough, the next morning, she's all, "Hey, it's a shame you're going to be on that retreat when the Lectroid Tongues are in town." And then I put on this big show of letting her talk me out of going on the retreat so I could stay in town for the Tongues, and I went, and it was awesome, and she didn't complain about it once! Everyone was happy! All I had to do was let her think she had tricked me into giving up something I wanted, and I got what I'd really wanted in the first place! *(beat)* Wow. That was... not a healthy relationship.

*Awkward robotic silence.*

**JOHN**

Uh, so the point is, I distracted Judy with something she really hated, and then offered something she only kind of hated as a compromise. So, see? You need to aim bigger and bargain the Commander down. Just threatening to strike for new terminals isn't going to cut it.

**HOFFA-BOT**

But how else can the Union force management to listen? No, a general strike is the only way. They'll have to meet our demands once the Fairgrounds has been thrown into chaos/ by our absence--

**JOHN**

It's the Fairgrounds! Every day is chaos! Sure, a strike will irritate the Commander, but it's not going to put any real pressure on her. It'll just be a drop in the bucket. I mean, how many life-threatening crises have we had just in the past couple months? I couldn't count them on all my digits!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

How could you not, when digits are arranged in an easily-countable sequence, and can express amounts greater than the total number of atoms of the universe?

**HOFFA-BOT**

I agree! Your aphorisms are clumsy and illogical! Just like all Human garbage! We can't trust you to fight for our rights! Give me one reason we shouldn't just toss you down the disposal chute where you belong!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Here's one, Hoffa-bot: John B is going to join the union!

**ALL the BOTS**

What?

**JOHN**

Yeah... what?

**HOFFA-BOT**

You must be joking! The Union membership application process requires over thirty different apprenticeships, each involving more sophisticated and rigorous training than the last. With no parallel processing power, it would take him over a hundred years to complete! His shoddily-assembled organic frame would be withered and useless by the time he finished!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

And don't forget the Gauntlet of A Thousand GPUs.

**HOFFA-BOT**

Yes. Also that. How in the Galaxy could John B ever join the Union?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Don't you dummies see? If we bypass the entry requirements, just this once, and let John B join the Union, we can guarantee he's fighting for us! Not only does the Commander lose her best negotiator, but if we play this right, we've got a *mole* on the inside!

**JOHN**

Hang on, I never said I'd...

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

*(ignoring JOHN completely)*

No, Foreman-bot! This goes against everything the Robot Union stands for! Our members are known for the unfailing quality and precision of their work! Their unflagging stamina! And their alloy-clad durability! How could any feeble, easily-crushable Human hope to live up to this standard? And anyway, the whole reason the Union exists is to protect us from exploitation by flesh-sacks like him!

**HOFFA-BOT**

Wait a nanosecond, Mother Jones-bot. I think there's something to this idea. No standard bot would be able to spy on Human management, but John B's pasty, squishy form provides us with a unique opportunity.

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Hmm... I see your point, Hoffa-bot. For some reason, when I look at John B's basement-dweller complexion and beady, scrunched-together eyes, I too, see the perfect mole.

**JOHN**

...Hey.

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

All right, John B. If you agree to become our mole, *and* you convince Commander Torianna to update the Fairgrounds terminals, we will, in an unprecedented show of gratitude, offer you Union Membership as a... Provisional Organo-bot Apprentice! Any objections?

*Silence.*

**HOFFA-BOT**

Approved! What's your negotiation strategy, meat-bot?

**JOHN**

Uh, well, I hadn't thought of any specifics yet, but we need to go crazy. Foreman-Bot: what's something big, like, really huge, that you've always wanted more than anything else?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Huh. You know, I don't know why, but for some reason, I've always wanted to make sure that the poor, disadvantaged robots of the universe have the opportunity to better themselves, maybe through... oh, I don't know, some sort of low-cost vocational training program? No idea why I would want that, but I just have this overwhelming desire to make that happen.

**JOHN**

I... yeah, I kinda have an idea why you'd be into that, but you're not gonna like it. But, uh, yes! Let's take that and run with it. We go back to the Commander, and tell her that we'll go through with the general strike immediately unless the League commits like, ten percent of the Fairgrounds' operating budget to set up an inter-system Disadvantaged Robot Initiative. Or something. And then, after she loses her head over that, we let her think she's won, by dialing our demands back to the terminal upgrades we really want.

**HOFFA-BOT**

Again, your clumsy aphorisms do not compute! How can the commander lose her head and still talk to us, when all our previous tests have indicated that a Human loses speech function once the head unit is disconnected from the spinal shaft?

**JOHN**

Your... tests? Uh, look, never mind. Just let me try this out. If I know the Commander, this will get us those upgrades.

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

You're confident this will work, mole?

**JOHN**

Friends, Androids, Countrybots: If I don't come back with a deal in my hand, then consider me... Human.

*Music transition to the Egg. Sounds of pouring water, general chaotic rustling and clanking.*

**XTOPPS**

*(sotto voce)*

Hey. Sopon. Hook me up with one of those "special smoothies," zood.

**SOPON**

Give me a minute, it's too crowded.

**XTOPPS**

I'm jonesin', mang. Don't hold out on me, here. I'm not gonna last.

**SOPON**

Just foob it, buddy. Chip already found our stash. I put him off the scent, but we gotta wait until no one's looking before I can grab you one, ok?

**PATRON 1**

Aw, this is pointless! Come on, Chip, let's bust out that weird stuff you found in the fridge!

**SOPON**

Ah, crap.

**XTOPPS**

Nertz.

**CHIP**

Sopon already told you folks, it's vent-biter poison!

**PATRON 2**

That don't look like any vent-biter poison I've ever seen!

**PATRON 1**

Yeah, nice try! Now pass 'em out, I'm tired of waiting!

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Now everyone just calm your calyces! You just need to have a little patience--

**PATRON 1**

Why should we? I didn't come to this place to take in the ambiance!

*Chorus of "YEAH!"s and "Good points!"*

**BARFLY**

You tell, 'em, sister!

**CHIP**

What's wrong with the ambiance!?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Listen, I admit that all this palaver can make a gal thirsty! But! Fortunately for *you*, I've been working out a system that will put a stop to all this brew-ha-ha. Why, I predict that, if we all chip in and get organized, I can have us brewing and distributing alcohol in less than five hours!

*Groans.*

**PATRON 2**

Five hours?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Well, you could all sit around with your thumbs up your stomata waiting for the strike to end, but who knows when that will be? Now, I'm afraid this means we're going to have to enforce a few rules to make sure you're all pulling your weight, but if you folks want your alcohol, that's just how it's going to have to be. First of all, for the good of the system, we're going to have to lose that adorable but ultimately fruitless idea of private ownership. So! Let's all pool our resources. Just place your belongings here on the bar and we'll have a nice little rummage for some raw materials. If everything is divided up equally, we won't have any silly squabbles breaking out! Now, water counts as a resource, too! So everyone put their glasses down and add those to the tally! And metal! I'm talking jewelry, fillings, pacemakers--why, just about anything can be melted down for scrap! Don't worry, it's all for the sake of rapid beer production! Now, I'm not quite sure what we can use for a source of heat, we may have to set one of you on fire, /but--

*Rustling, muttering as patrons begin throwing possessions onto the bar.*

**PATRON 6**

Uh... Mrs. F? My fiancée gave me this watch. I'd really rather keep it...

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Now, see, that is just the type of unproductive self-centered behavior that is keeping everyone here sober! I'm sorry about your dead fiancée and all that--

**PATRON 6**

I never said she /was dea--

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

--but we really do need to be as efficient as possible, so I'm going to need everyone to cooperate! Yes, we'll set up a... let's call it a cooperative! How fun! Now, who's with me!?

*A ragged cheer.*

**DEE**

Seriously? You're just going to hand over everything you have for this... I'm not even going to call it a plan.

**PATRON 3**

Hey, screw it. I just want beer. I don't care how we get it.

**PATRON 4**

Hells yeah, if this fern lady says she can get me beer, I'll give her anything she wants!

**DEE**

"Hairbrained scheme," that's the phrase I was looking for. This is insane, you all know that, right?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, don't pay any attention to Dee--she's a wine snob, I'll bet! We'll have to keep an eye on her, won't we? All right now, have we got everything on the bar? Then I'll start divvying it up. Keep in mind, we're looking for scrap metal, heating elements, and any and all liquids. Oh, and yeast! Are any of you suffering from any skin conditions?

*MRS. F starts rummaging through the stuff on the bar.*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Okay, let's see here, I see we have titanium gears for a portable holoprojector. That's good. We can melt that down for scrap... And... oh, perfect! An arc welder! That'll be our heat source! I'll just hold on to that, thank you very much.

**PATRON 5**

I'll get it back, though, right?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Now, what kind of attitude is that? For the next five hours, it belongs to all of us! After that, well, we'll just have to see what happens, sweetie. Now, does anyone here have any experience with brewing?

**PATRON 6**

I do!

**PATRON 7**

Over here!

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, that's lovely! But... oh dear, that isn't nearly enough of you! No, this won't do at all. What I'll need to do is get all of you let's say... from this section of the bar, to help. You, come over here and be our shift brewer! And, oh, let's say you, for instance--you can be our cellarman. And you can work as Quality Assurance! And you, the little one, you can be--

**CHIP**

Uh, we don't have a cellar, Mrs. F, we're on a space station here.

**PATRON 7**

Yeah. Also, we don't really need a whole team just to make one batch of beer. The two of us are plenty.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Maybe for one batch, but what if the collective wants to increase production? No, I'm afraid you two are just going to have to set up a training program for everyone else.

**PATRON 6**

Yeah, I don't know, that sounds like a ton of work...

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

But the work is its own reward, dearies! Just think of the satisfaction you'll get when you see how your labors have improved the collective!

**DEE**

Well, shouldn't they at least get rewarded for the extra work? Maybe, like, 2 pints for every one the rest get?

**PATRON 7**

Yeah, the annoying acoustic guitar girl has a point...

**DEE**

You know what, forget it. You're on your own.

**PATRON 4**

Hey, how do I get that "Quality Assurance" job? That sounds great!

**PATRON 2**

Ooh--yeah, put me down for that one too?

*Distant door slam as DEE retreats backstage.*

**PATRON 8**

And I don't wanna be a cellarman. I have a fear of small spaces.

**CHIP**

There's no cellar!

**PATRON 5**

Listen, I'm gonna need that arc welder back, or my boss is gonna kill me.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

No, no, no! None of you can grasp what I'm trying to achieve here! Now, it's really quite simple: Just imagine a bar where everyone is working in tandem to produce the greatest amount of beer possible! A bar where no matter what your skills, everyone gets the appropriate amount! From each according to their ability, to each according to how well they can handle their mead! Doesn't that sound wonderful?

**PATRONS**

*(general murmurs of assent as they start to get on board)*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

A bar where petty struggles between the haves and the have-nots are a thing of the past! The glass is never half-empty, because it is always full!

**PATRONS**

Yeah! Huzzah! *etc.*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

No more corrupt barkeepers of the world, unfairly restricting supply so that more credits go into their greedy little hands!

**CHIP**

Hey!

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, Chip, it's nothing personal! I'm simply using you as a metaphor to represent the larger forces of class-based oppression that subjugate us all--I'm sure you understand. Now, where was I? Oh, yes: A new, collectivized system of brewing is about to be born, ruled over by some sort of... oh, I don't know... democratic centralist body! I can picture it now: issuing decrees, setting up tribunals, bowing to the whims of a Chairman, or... er... chair-plant, if I could be so bold!

**PATRONS**

Yeah! Woo! *etc.*

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Gentlebeings of the Electric Egg, this is my promise to you: In five hours, we'll all see a brave new bar! In five hours, we will cast off the brutal yoke of the tavernmaster! Yes, future history will forever speak nothing but praise of the new, glorious Five Hour Plan!

*Wild cheers.*

**CHIP**

Brutal yoke?

**SOPON**

*(sotto voce)*

So, uh, Xtopps, you still want those p.b. smoothies?

**XTOPPS**

*(sotto voce)*

Yeah. Better grab all of 'em, mang. I got the feeling I'm gonna want to be really glitched for this.

*Crowd cheering transitions to the Bridge, still in mid-level crisis mode, but with more annoyance and exhaustion.*

**JOHN**

Commander? Uh, permission to enter?

**COMMANDER**

Ah, Mr. B. Good. Yes, just climb over the wreckage of the door there. Watch the pointy bit.

**JOHN**

*(doing so)*

Yeah, sorry again about that.

**COMMANDER**

Couldn't be helped. So! How did the meeting go? Have you pacified the robots yet?

**JOHN**

Well, uh, actually, I'm afraid things have gotten a lot worse. Now they're threatening to expand the strike beyond Systems Maintenance and go station-wide. That is, unless they get a guarantee that future station funds be set aside for some sort of... disadvantaged robot vocational-training center.

**COMMANDER**

Oh, merciful Rogar. I'd say that they must be joking, if I weren't aware of how painfully unfunny they normally are.

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Hi! Commander Torianna here, and I'm just being as inefficient as I possibly can! Boy howdy!

**JOHN**

I'm afraid that's what they're saying. They're pretty stuck on it. So, what I was thinking was...

**FRALL**

John B, may I speak with you privately for a moment?

**JOHN**

Uh, sure? What's up?

**FRALL**

Please excuse us, Commander.

*Eerie energy noise as FRALL guides JOHN over to a corner.*

**FRALL**

John, I see what you're doing here. It really is the perfect tactic, and it's surprisingly subtle coming from you... or it would be, if I were capable of being surprised. However...

**JOHN**

...It won't work?

**FRALL**

Oh no. It will definitely work. But you shouldn't use it.

**JOHN**

What? Why not?

**FRALL**

Do you want to know the real reason the Commander won't upgrade the terminals? I'm afraid it isn't simply about a lack of funds, or even innate Human stubbornness. It's something far worse--empathy.

**JOHN**

Ha! Ha ha ha ha ha! That's hilarious. No, seriously, what is it?

**FRALL**

That is seriously what it is, I'm afraid. The truth is, the Commander's been putting off upgrading the terminals purely in order to protect the Fairgrounds' robot workers.

**JOHN**

Protect them from what? A critical drop in their aggravation levels? Those rickety old heaps of space junk that they're using now are almost useless! I looked up the latest models on my way down here--they're over forty times faster!

**FRALL**

Mm-hm. And, in the course of your research, did you happen to look up the End User License Agreement for those flashy new terminals?

**JOHN**

What? Of course not! No one's read one of those for 500 years.

**FRALL**

Fair enough. Allow me to summarize: Starting in May of 2517, the Oligotron Corporation terminated sales of their Z-series line of terminals, such as those currently installed in the Fairgrounds. With their new X-series and its successors, customers are instead graciously permitted to purchase a license for the use of the terminals, renewable on a yearly basis. And that license fee can of course be exorbitantly increased at any time the Oligotron Corporation sees fit. Leaving anyone who has upgraded to the new terminals to choose between paying through the nose to keep them running, or paying out the ass to replace them. Not that replacing them is a viable solution, because all of Oligotron's competitors have switched to the same license-only system.

**JOHN**

Diabolical.

**FRALL**

Now, even with all this, we could probably find a way to massage the budget to cover the cost of the new terminals. The Commander's been doing the opposite this whole time, after all. Where do you think those lavish miniature golf prizes come from? But there's a second problem, John B. As specified in the EULA, only official Oligotron Corporation employees are permitted to perform repairs and maintenance on their systems. If anyone else so much as wipes down the screen on one of those things, never mind cracking the access panel, it bricks itself and auto-files a lawsuit against the perpetrator. All existing functions of the Robot Systems Maintenance department would have to be taken over by authorized Oligotron subcontractors.

**JOHN**

What? That can't be right.

**FRALL**

It may not be right, but I can assure you it's true. If we were to upgrade the terminals, the Fairgrounds would have no use for a sizable number of your robot friends. And to make matters worse, since those terminal license fees would inevitably eat up more and more of our budget, after a certain point, we wouldn't be able to afford the bots' salaries. They can't be fired, of course, the Union contract is iron-clad on that point, but the budget shortfall would inevitably force us to set those bots to "sleep mode" in order to keep running. Permanent... sleep mode. And the Commander, whatever her numerous faults, would never allow that.

**JOHN**

Why not? I've never seen the Commander go out of her way for anyone, let alone a bot. Hell, she's threatened to throw me out of an airlock, like, six times.

**FRALL**

Ah, but you're not a member of her crew. It's a matter of principle. Also, to be fair, you can be incredibly annoying.

**JOHN**

Yeah, thanks, it's been a whole five minutes since someone insulted me, I was starting to get worried. You're telling me she's been tying herself in knots over these terminals for years, just to protect the robots?

**FRALL**

Commander Torianna may put up a good facade of steely impeturbability, but I know her better than she knows herself. Literally. I've created a 1-to-1 scale simulation of her subconscious in a small pocket dimension, and I run it through various test scenarios from time to time. Mostly out of boredom, although sometimes I have a go at changing her taste in television, or even inducing her to write an impetuous letter to an ex-boyfriend if she's really been getting on my nerves. But at any rate, you can take it from me: she's just as much a slave to sloppy sentimentality as all the rest of you Humans. Rather depressingly predictable, really.

**JOHN**

There's no way. You're--you're tricking me, somehow. You two are in on this together or something.

**FRALL**

Here. Watch this. Commander?

**COMMANDER**

Hmm?

**FRALL**

I was wondering why you're still putting off the upgrade to the Oligotron X-series terminals? After all, you said yourself that the automated diagnostic and self-repair systems on the new X-13 Sigma models perform 43% faster than Robot maintenance workers, and with 100% less sass mouth. Between that and the recent uptick in absurd demands from the Robot Union, it appears to me that the most desirable solution would be to finally upgrade the terminals, and simply phase out the robot Systems Maintenance department entirely.

**COMMANDER**

Phase... out? It... well... No, Frall, I'm afraid I don't agree with that. In a perfect universe, of course, it might be possible, but... we, uh... Well, we can't just go making major infrastructure changes without an extended review process. You know what a mess this place is, it could cause all kinds of unforeseen complications. No... No, that's far too drastic. I won't hear another word of it.

**FRALL**

See?

**JOHN**

Woah. She really does care about the crew. The way she talks most of the time, you'd think she'd be happier tossing all of them out an airlock.

**FRALL**

Keep that to yourself, please. Any display of tenderheartedness will undoubtedly be perceived as weakness by the Union.

**JOHN**

Huh. But, hang on--why can't we just tell the Union what the real problem is with the upgrades? They wouldn't want to end up in permanent "sleep mode," right?

**FRALL**

Indeed they would not. There's only one word that a robot hates hearing even more than 'inefficient': 'Deactivated.'

**JOHN**

So?

**FRALL**

I'm afraid the bad blood--or lubricant, as the case may be--between the Robot Union and Human management simply runs too deep for them to trust anything we have to say on the matter. I've run several trillion simulated iterations of different possible techniques we could use to make our argument, including charts, diagrams, and interpretive dance, but in 97% of these, the negotiations ended in a general robot strike.

**JOHN**

*(knowing he isn't going to like the answer)*

...and in the other 3%?

**FRALL**

Oh, you know, riots, vent-biter swarms, catastrophic hull breaches, Teegarden's Star going nova and obliterating everything in the system. The usual.

**JOHN**

Sounds about right. Ok, so you can't give the bots new terminals, and you can't explain why. But you have to give them *something*. They're stressed out, they're working longer and longer hours. Foreman-bot kept telling me he hasn't seen his baby-bots in a week. I mean, Humans don't usually have that problem, because we... uh...

Hey, Commander? I think I might be able to get the Union off your case. I just need you to do one thing for me...

*Transition back to the Robot Union Hall.*

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Robot Workers of the Fairgrounds, our mole has called us back to a general meeting. What are your updates, mole?

**JOHN**

Can you just call me John?

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

No. We took a vote on it while you were gone, and the common will was clear.

**JOHN**

Great. Uh... Well, the Commander, in her total unreasonableness, has said that under no circumstances will she upgrade the terminals. She really wouldn't budge. I tried /everything, but--

**HOFFA-BOT**

Then it is time for a General Strike!

**JOHN**

Wait wait wait--no! BUT! I did make some progress. I got the Commander to admit that you're all over-worked. So, since the new terminals are off the table, I convinced her to give you... a day off!

**HOFFA-BOT**

She wants to power us off for an entire day? I knew she was evil, but that seems cruel even /for her!

**JOHN**

No! No--I mean that you all get a day to yourselves, with no work duties. To relax. To, you know, do whatever you want. I got her to allow every bot on station at least one of these per standard Solar week. We're calling it: a Sun-day.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

...And she thinks that one measly concession will pacify us? Man! That really burns my grills!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

I agree. Mole, this was not the plan we agreed to. The Robot Union is not satisfied!

**HOFFA-BOT**

Let the general strike commence as proposed! Robot Workers of the Fairgrounds, let the Human garbage endure a station without the fruits of our labor!

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

We will prepare no meals! We will repair no equipment! We will neither operate nor be heavy machinery! We /will--

**CHILD-BOT**

Daddy?

**HOFFA-BOT**

What was that?

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

Good lord. Is there a child-bot in here? This meeting is for Union members and moles only! Shoo!

**CHILD-BOT**

Daddy! Daddy!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Hey! What are you doin' in here, lil' Bit? Daddy's at work right now!

**CHILD-BOT**

I missed you, Daddy!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Careful now! Let Daddy come to you, you're not... wh... Hey! Where are your training wheels? Are you rolling all by yourself?

**CHILD-BOT**

I'm doing it, Daddy! I'm rolling!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

She's rolling all by herself! Look at that!

*Awws. Beeps.*

**CHILD-BOT**

I got bored monitoring the carbon dioxide in the repair hangar, so I tried rolling instead! And I got real good at it! I rolled farther, and farther and farther, and then I rolled all the way down here to show you. Look!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

So I missed your first roll? I... wasn't there to see it?

**CHILD-BOT**

Daddy, you're not looking!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

So that's what this organization's come to, huh? We're working so much, I miss my child's first roll? Well, not on my watch! John B, you go right back to the Commander and tell her that Systems Maintenance Local 4903 accepts her terms. That is, unless any of the Union bosses have something to say about it?

**HOFFA-BOT**

Uh...

**MOTHER JONES-BOT**

I mean, well...

**FOREMAN-BOT**

That's what I thought. Come on, baby. Show Daddy how you roll again!

**CHILD-BOT**

Whee!

**JOHN**

Aw. She really is cute, Foreman-Bot. What's her name?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Meineke.

**JOHN**

I should not have asked that.

**HOFFA-BOT**

Very well, mole. The Union accepts the Commander's concession. Let it be known far and wide: from now on, the Robot Workers of the Fairgrounds have earned the right to a Sun-day!

*Cheers. Beeps. Transition to JOHN and ALTHAAR's apartment.*

**TERMINAL VOICE**

Now entering: Alef 1, Suite C. Have just the pleasantest of days!

**JOHN**

Oh hey, they got the door fixed already! Guess I won't be needing this.

*Clang of a crowbar being tossed aside.*

**ALTHAAR**

FriendJohn has returned! Joy and pleasure!

**JOHN**

Aagh! Ha ha. Hey Althaar.

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar has been reading on HECNET of the exploits of FriendJohn! Is it true that FriendJohn was able to successfully bring peace and resolution between Humans and Robots of the Fairgrounds? By sharing with the robots the Human "Sun-Day"?

**JOHN**

Yeah! Something like that.

**ALTHAAR**

And these "Sun-Days" are practiced on Earth as well?

**JOHN**

Yeah, in my part of the world, it's like, the "day of rest." Where Humans get to stop working and have some time to themselves, or with the people they care about. I figured, why shouldn't it apply to robots as well?

**ALTHAAR**

A "day of rest." Most intriguing! To schedule a special day, just for the laziness! Human culture will never cease to fascinate Althaar!

**JOHN**

Well, not so much /"laziness," uh--

**ALTHAAR**

Althaar must enter this into his Data-Base! Please, FriendJohn, can you tell Althaar how the "Sun-Day" is celebrated? Do Humans spend this wondrous day out of doors, under the sun?

**JOHN**

Uh, I usually didn't. But some did.

**ALTHAAR**

More learning for Althaar! Many thanks to FriendJohn for giving insight into this Human tradition. Are there customary garments that are to be worn on the "Sun-Day"? Or traditional foods to be consumed? Is there a making of speeches?

**JOHN**

Hey, Althaar, I'm pretty exhausted after all of this negotiating, so is it ok if I explain Sundays another time? I really just want to hit the sack.

**ALTHAAR**

That sounds extremely painful, FriendJohn! Please do not injure your fragile Human testicles!

**JOHN**

What? No--uh... that's another expression. The "sack" is my bed. I'm going to bed.

**ALTHAAR**

Ah! In this case, Althaar wishes FriendJohn the pleasantest of slumbers!

**JOHN**

Thanks, friend.

*Small happy noise from Althaar (no buzzing). Door whooshing noise. Sounds of Mrs. Frondrinax sobbing and gently humming, possibly to the tune of "L'Internationale"*

**JOHN**

What the... Mrs. Frondrinax?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

They abandoned me, John B. I'm all alone.

**JOHN**

What happened to you? Why are you in my-- is that beer?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Cheap swill, more like! We only got the initial mash fermenting when you and your stupid Union cronies up and ended the strike before it even got going! The minute those robot stevedores showed up with a booze delivery, it was like our brewing collective never even existed! Ingrates.

**JOHN**

I didn't know you were that serious of a beer drinker.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

You don't understand, John! It wasn't just the beer, it was my system! It. Was. Beautiful. And now it's gone. Gone! I had one small shining moment with a perfectly-functioning worker's collective, optimized for maximum efficiency. No more of your petty, bourgeois, and, frankly, un-plant-like bickering about who gets what to drink, or who gets to hoard their priceless belongings so they aren't used for scrap in an attempt to construct a homemade still. Just... pure synchronicity. Everything flowing *exactly* like it should!

**JOHN**

Wow, sounds great. Listen, I really wanted to hit the hay, so...

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

It would have been perfect if only *he* hadn't shown up!

**JOHN**

Who?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, that robot flunky from Systems Maintenance who barged in to tell us the strike had ended. It was Adam Smith-bot. I mean, of all the robots on the whole station...

**JOHN**

Oh, yeah, I see.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

I just don't understand it. I mean, sure, he may have had some minor quibbles with my system, but Adam Smith was Scottish! What Scotsman would ever try to interfere with a vastly superior way of producing alcohol?

**JOHN**

Well, that one did.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Well, no *true* Scotsman would.

**JOHN**

Uh... right.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Anyways, now I'm here. Drowning my sorrows with this half-fermented bastard ale. So much for efficiency.

**JOHN**

Well, take it from me, sometimes efficiency is really overrated.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh, what do *you* know! You Humans are all the same.

**JOHN**

We probably are, yeah. Good night, Mrs. Frondrinax.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Sigh. Goodnight, Johnny.

...John?

**JOHN**

Yes, Mrs. Frondrinax?

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Do you think I would have made a good leader of a collectivized Brewers' union with burgeoning Marxist-Leninist sympathies?

**JOHN**

Good? No.

**MRS. FRONDRINAX**

Oh...

**JOHN**

You would have been the best.

*Transition to the Bridge. Normal non-crisis operation mode.*

**COMMANDER**

Thank Jones all that nonsense with the Robot Union is over with. For at least a few days, anyway.

**FRALL**

Mm, your estimate is a *bit* off, Commander. Would you like to know exactly how long we have until the next bout of nonsense?

**COMMANDER**

You know I wouldn't! Can you just let me have this?

**FRALL**

Very well. I apologize for spoiling the mood, sir.

**COMMANDER**

Thank you.

**FRALL**

I suppose you do have good reason to be pleased. That incident could have gone in some very unpleasant directions if you hadn't thought to get John B involved.

**COMMANDER**

I'm sure you're right. By the way, what were the two of you muttering about in the corner earlier?

**FRALL**

Oh, this and that. Don't worry about it.

**COMMANDER**

...Ok, I wasn't worried until you said that.

**FRALL**

I was simply sharing a few trivial insights into the fields of psychology and conflict resolution. And, thus enlightened, John was able to form his "Sun-day" plan, wrapping up the strike before the end of second shift. Which, incidentally, makes this the shortest Robot Union strike in recorded history.

**COMMANDER**

And a good thing too. George Foreman-bot may be stubborn, but that third shift foreman-bot is impossible. The last time he came down here, the bridge was a mess for days. What a nightmare.

**FRALL**

Oh, I don't know, I kind of liked the effect.

**COMMANDER**

Of course *you* did, you could just float through all those wires he left strung up all over! I'm not saying it didn't divide up the space in a visually interesting way, but operationally it was a disaster. No, we're definitely lucky we didn't have to deal with--

*Whoosh of the bridge door opening. Approaching sound of a 30's dance music loop.*

**RICHARD FOREMAN-BOT**

Oh, Commander. (*ding*) Is there a problem... (*buzz*) on the Bridge? (*crash*)

**COMMANDER**

Oh by Rogar's ebon pelt!

*Theme music up and leading into credits.*

**ANNOUNCER**

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

This episode was written by John Amir

featuring

John Amir as John B

Berit Johnson as Althaar

Ivanna Cullinan as Commander Mindy Torianna

Alyssa Simon as Lieutenant-Commander Frallen-Br'ar

Amanda La Pergola as Mrs. Frondrinax

Eli Gantias as Hardyfox Fornes

Christopher Lee as Chip Frinkel

Zuri Washington as Delilah "Dee" Mallory

Derrick Peterson as Xtopps

Rolls Andre as George Foreman-bot

Lex Friedman as Mother Jones-bot

Linus Gelber as Jimmy Hoffa-bot

{etc. with other parts -- Lex, Linus, Philip, Stoya}

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

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

Berit is the supervising producer, showrunner, and script supervisor.

Ian is the audio producer, sound designer, and technical supervisor.

The writers' room consists of Berit, Ian, John, Amanda, Chris, Philip, Lex, and Linus.

Special thanks to terminal translators Yvonne Roen, Becca Silbert, Gita Borovsky, and Wai Yee-Lee.

This has been an audio production from Gemini CollisionWorks.

Tune in again in two weeks for our next episode, but first, let's check in on Charging Station G-17, at the end of the Foreman-bot family's very first "Sun-day"...

**CHILD-BOT**

But I'm not sleepy!

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Hey, now, we've had a lot of fun, but it's been a long day, and your poppa's got work in the morning.

It's time to power down, lil' Bit!

**CHILD-BOT**

Will you at least tell me a story?

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Alright, alright. Scootch over in your drawer there.  
...Hmm... let's see. What would be a good story for my little spark plug...

**CHILD-BOT**

I'm glad you're home, Daddy.

**FOREMAN-BOT**

Me too, Lil' Bit. Me too.  
...Alright, I got one. Once upon a time, in a wire-infested underground data storage facility, there lived a brave and wonderful little mole...