

Life with Althaar

Episode 5: The Luck Navigators

Draft 3.0 (recording script), 8/1/19 - BAJ/IWH

Sound bed: JOHN and ALTHAAR's residence. An announcement plays throughout the station:

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS-BOT

(over P.A.)

Citizens of the Fairgrounds! This is your Recreation Director-bot. A reminder about some of the exciting opportunities available to you on the station if your entertainment cycle occurs in the next 9 hours.

At 7:40 pm in the Foster Jenkins Concert Hall, the Casino Splendide will be presenting a selection of Boosekanian flipper fugues, performed by the noted soloist Arturo Melbstsorter. The semifinals of the H.E.C. 3D Cribbage tournament will be continuing throughout second and third shift in the Gimel 17 Public Recreation Center. Velbopp's Frozen Quiescences is having a special on 100-kelvin ice pops for those species able to survive them. And finally, at The Electric Egg, Miss Delilah Mallory will be emceeing their first open-mic night! Participation is available to all species, of all talents, within the bounds of safety ordinances and common decency, as specified in Section 87B of the ICSB Cohabitation Code. That is all.

ALTHAAR

Oh, FriendJohn! There are SO many wonderful things for a Human and his friend to be doing on the station today! Would you have perhaps time to accompany Althaar to hear the great Melbstsorter, or to view the 3D Cribbage tournament, or is FriendJohn once again enswamped with work duties?

JOHN

Actually, Althaar, things have been so slow recently that H.F. gave me the next couple of days off. I'm seeing a holo with that new interstellar cargo specialist in two cycles, but for right now, I can do whatever I want for once.

ALTHAAR

Oh, that is a thing of great happiness! If FriendJohn is not busy, may Althaar suggest then an attendance of Dee's special event at The Electric Egg. Althaar promises not to do the dancing.

JOHN

Sure, that sounds like fun. You know, Althaar, I'm starting to feel a lot better about my life here. I finally feel like I've got the hang of things at work, even if the pay is still crap. I've gone a couple of weeks without any near-fatal incidents, anyway, which is a new personal record. Plus the job does give me a lot of free time, even if I'm stuck spending it on the Fairgrounds. I actually have more of a social life now than I did when I was with Judy. Although I still haven't been able to track down that gorgeous Sanitation Fusilier... but still. I get out a lot more than I did back on Earth. And, unlike on Earth, I get to live in a huge, kickass apartment, even with a roommate who still makes me want to hurl when I make the mistake of looking at him. But, you know, we've mostly figured out how to work around that, so.

ALTHAAR

Althaar is very pleased to more rarely cause the expulsion of liquids from FriendJohn!

JOHN

Yeah, I really think my luck is changing!

*Fast sound and music transition. Sound bed: **The Bridge, a normal day.***

COMMANDER

Station status, Frall?

FRALL

All systems are functioning within acceptable parameters, Commander. For the moment.

COMMANDER

For the moment? Frall, we had a conversation about these ominous forebodings of yours. Crew morale is low enough as it is.

FRALL

Indeed, Commander. My apologies.

COMMANDER

Don't think I don't value your abilities, but you don't seem to appreciate the difference between a five-minutes-from-now problem and a five-centuries-from-now problem. Try to tailor your warnings to a Human time-scale, all right?

FRALL

Understood, Commander. Would a five-seconds-from-now problem merit such a warning?

COMMANDER

Wha-- Yes, of course it would!

FRALL

Then I'm afraid the ominous foreboding must stand.

Alarms and sirens and klaxxons go off. A pre-recorded voice repeats "Collision Alert!" over and over again. Several background voices desperately try to hail the incoming ship on collision course.

BRIDGE CREW MEMBER

Unidentified vessel on collision course, Commander!

COMMANDER

Frall! Where did that thing come from?

FRALL

It seems to be using some kind of eccentric variant of SuLu power that isn't included in our databases, so it didn't ping the sensors as early as it should have.

COMMANDER

Like, before it was about to kill us all?

FRALL

Not all of us, sir.

COMMANDER

We also had a conversation about hair-splitting, Frall!

FRALL

Yes, of course, sir. Well, if your continued existence in this dimension is a priority for you, might I suggest that the best course of action would be for you to relocate to Auxiliary Docking Bay 16 immediately. I will try to use the gravity coils in negative flow to slow the vessel and bring it within range of the docking bay guide arms, and with luck, you and the bay crew will be able to guide it in without a catastrophic hull rupture.

COMMANDER

(as she exits)

Luck? What's luck got to do with it in this godsforsaken place?

Sound of door as COMMANDER exits. Music and sound transition to standard opening.

ANNOUNCER

Gemini CollisionWorks presents

Life with Althaar!

Episode 5:

“The Luck Navigators...”

Sound and music transition to the Docking Bay. There is a quieter, but present, alarm going off.

COMMANDER

Okay, Frall, I've got the docking guides aimed and ready. Can you get that ship into the zone?

FRALL

(over communicator)

It should be entering your range in... 3... 2... 1... NOW.

Sound of tractor beam activation and struggle.

COMMANDER

We've got them, but it doesn't sound happy!

FRALL

Technician Kask, please adjust your X-axis plus 2.3, Y-axis negative 7.1. I'll maintain gravitational pressure to prevent Z-axis regression.

DOCKING CREW MEMBER

Aye aye, sir.

*The tractor beam sound gets a bit more even as there is the sound of a spaceship sliding into dock, with a little more bumps and grinding of metal-on-metal than is usual. Then all comes to a rest. **Some distant applause and cheers from the crew and dockers present.***

COMMANDER

All right, Frall. It wasn't pretty but we landed her. Now I want to talk to whatever careless bastards are inside this thing.

(walking to the ship, muttering)

Here's hoping they'll be able to talk to us. The last thing I need is to spend the rest of the week going through some happy-clappy "greeting ceremony" and filling out First Contact paperwork.

As the COMMANDER approaches, there is the sound of a door opening on the ship (a "whoosh" with perhaps a slightly more mystical tone than the usual human-made doors) and two beings exiting, bringing with them an intermittently bleeping device. They call out as they approach.

BKLRGHCH

Greetings, Human!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You are Human, are you not?

COMMANDER

(under breath)

Oh, that's a stroke of luck...

(normal tone)

Yes, I'm Commander Torianna, of the Human Exhibition Concourse. You've encountered Humans before?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Yes, your people are known to us, but we have not spent a great deal of time among you.

COMMANDER

I can't find any record of your ship or species in our library. You look almost exactly like us.

BKLRGHCH

Yes, sadly, while our exteriors are strikingly similar, we have little in common. We are frequently unsuited to the company of other species, in fact, and rarely linger among them, preferring a nomadic life along the spaceways.

COMMANDER

I'm sorry to hear that. Does that mean you'll be repairing your ship and leaving us as soon as possible? We'll do what we can to assist, but if you'll be with us for over thirty-six hours we'll be required to charge a berth rental fee.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Indeed, we would patch up our hull and depart immediately, but the problem with our ship's navigation appears to lie not within our ship at all, but somewhere in your space station. And there are indications that this station may be host to a phenomenon that has heretofore been known to us only as a theoretical possibility.

COMMANDER

Well, the bots can help with repairing your hull, but you still haven't told me who exactly you are. And what's this about a phenomenon?

BKLRGHCH

We are called by many names throughout the Universe, but to the peoples of this Galaxy we are usually known as... "The Luck Navigators."

COMMANDER

And you two are in charge of this ship?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

In a sense, Commander, as we are its only crew. We are of the caste of our race assigned to scouting and investigation. You could perhaps think of us as scientists.

BKLRGHCH

Or technicians.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Scien-technicians.

BKLRGHCH

You may call me Bklgrhch (*a sound somewhere between a sneeze and a cough*).

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

And I am known as Aoooaoooaoooaoo (*a high-pitched ululation*).

A beat as the COMMANDER takes in these incredibly stupid names.

COMMANDER

...Welcome aboard. Now, about this phenomenon you mentioned?

BKLRGHCH

Ah, yes. I'm not quite sure how to explain this.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Given the vast differences between our own technology and yours.

BKLRGHCH

It's very difficult to translate accurately--

COMMANDER

We're no strangers to alien technology here at the Fairgrounds. Try me.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Well...

BKLRGHCH

In simple terms, this space station, and all the beings on it, everything associated with it, yes, even you yourself...

COMMANDER

Yes?

BKLRGHCH

Suck.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You just Suck.

Beat.

COMMANDER

Excuse me?

Music and sound transition to the green room backstage at The Electric Egg. The sounds of house music and the bar can be heard, muffled, through bulkheads.

CHIP

Now, Dee, I'm not saying this idea sucks...

DEE

But?

CHIP

But. I *have* tried the open mic thing before. Four times to be exact. At best, it was a business-killing snore-fest, and at worst, it was an epic disaster. I had to close the place down eight full cycles for repairs.

DEE

But those were years ago, right? No one here remembers any of that now. Besides, those other times you didn't have a pair of experienced stage presences such as myself and Xtopps to emcee, yes?

CHIP

(grudgingly)

True... But it doesn't matter how good of a host you are if the acts are garbage. Every time we try this, it's the same thing. All we get is a handful of Humans with guitars they can barely play wailing about how aliens don't want to touch their junk, prog-fleezborp jammers who think a "short set" means anything less than 90 minutes, and maybe the occasional helium freighter crew doing one of those impressively obscene space shanties. Plus that one time, a guy from Hrilbox who could extrude both of his spleens, which was certainly dramatic, but I wouldn't call it entertainment!

DEE

Look, Chip. Xtopps and I are working two cycles out of every three in this joint. Even with breaks and DJs, that's a lot of stage time to fill. Now I've got a solid repertoire of Human and Kakistoine standards, and Xtopps... I'm not sure there's a tune written by any sentient he doesn't know. And sure, we've both got some original material. But most of our numbers are way too species-specific for the kind of interstellar crowd we get in here, so we're stuck doing the same handful of them over and over... We need to mix it up a little, or these folks are going to get tired of us, and soon.

CHIP

I have been seeing a lot of the same faces, or... whatever, hanging out in the Egg recently. A lot more regulars mixed in with the tourists. Which is nice, but... yeah, I can see them splitting if we don't give 'em more variety. Still... I don't know. This isn't just some way for you to get out of work, is it?

DEE

Chip! I am a professional. Believe me, I'd rather be singing, especially with the best damn accompanist in this arm of the galaxy backing me up, but I need time to work out some new material. It's almost impossible to find lyrics that won't offend or terminally confuse *anyone* from *any* sector. I mean, our Cole Porter set was a disaster!

CHIP

Yeah, the Lava Folk of Mebsuta didn't cope very well with the concept of "Too Darn Hot."

DEE

You think? First there were the philosophical debates, and then the protests, which turned into the riots, and last I heard it had caused a full-blown religious schism. Have you heard any news from Mebsuta recently?

CHIP

Oh, uh, yeah actually. It's... bad. It's real bad, Dee.

DEE

(mortified regret sound)

Yeesh... So yeah, the open mic is happening. I already posted it on HECNET, word's gone out to the whole station via Burroughs-bot, and Xtopps is out there manning, or Xybidont-ing I guess, the sign-up sheets as we speak.

CHIP

You put Xtopps on that? Seriously?

DEE

What?

CHIP

Look, Xtopps is the best musician I've ever seen, sober or straight, but you know as well as I do that when it comes to anything else, he's got twelve left feet. You'll be *lucky* to get a spleen-extruding Hrilboxian if he's doing the recruiting.

Analog door opens and closes (letting in a bit of bar noise) as XTOPPS enters.

XTOPPS

Mang, there's a *lot* of undiscovered talent out there, zoods! All I did was hit up a couple of regulars, and the next thing I know, half the flotted Egg is lining up to be in the open mic. Some of them even had charts ready for me. We got enough for two full sets, and a waitlist that could fill a couple more.

DEE

Ha! What did I tell you, Chip? Never bet against a Mallory.

CHIP

I can't believe it. I dunno. Maybe this time it'll work. With any luck.

*Sound and music transition to hallway. The COMMANDER is walking with BKRGLHCH and AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO. There are various background sounds and **conversations** as they pass by, as well as the sound of the small beeping device, getting less intermittent and more insistent during the scene.*

INFORMATION VOICE

(over P.A.)

Attention Fairgrounds residents. Good news from Velbopp's Frozen Quiescences! Due to an unexpected surplus of certain flavors, they'll be giving away free servings of ice cream until they run out. That's a full serving, cup or cone, not a sample size! Flavors available are cilantro, Moxie, lima bean, and tripe. Head on over to the Mem 3 promenade and get 'em while they last!

COMMANDER

All right, what do you mean, we suck?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

I'm sorry, we don't mean to inundate you with technical terms.

BKRGLHCH

Transcendent Stochastics can be very difficult to comprehend for those unfamiliar with the field.

COMMANDER

Uh-huh. What does your technology have to do with it?

BKRGLHCH

Oh, everything, Commander, everything! I'm sure you're aware that not every species in the galaxy uses the same scientific principles to describe reality, yes?

COMMANDER

Of course, but--

BKRGLHCH

In the case of our people, we discovered a means of generating near-limitless power by harnessing two of the most basic forces of the Universe, Beneficence and Non-Beneficence--

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Or "misfortune."

BKRGLHCH

(annoyed by the interruption)

--if you're not being too precise about it. In any case, our scientific terminology for the effects of these forces is "Luck" and "Suck." The entire Universe is filled with an almost infinite--

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Perhaps actually infinite.

BKRGLHCH

--some fringe theorists would argue actually infinite--amount of Luck and Suck. It is a precise balance between these forces that holds everything--EVERYTHING--in the Universe together. However, these forces are not present in equal amounts.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

To begin with, twice the amount of Luck is needed to balance one unit of Suck. Two of what we call "Beneficence Units."

BKRGLHCH

“B.U.s” But although, theoretically, the total amount of Luck in the Universe is twice the amount of Suck... they are not distributed evenly. Some places, therefore, have considerably more Luck, while there are others that primarily--

COMMANDER

Suck. And this area of space Sucks?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You not only Suck, Commander, but something on this station Sucks so hard that in conjunction with the higher background Suck of this sector, it has created what we call a “Suckhole.” A phenomenon that has been the subject of much speculation among our greatest scholars, and has never been reliably documented.

BKRGLHCH

Some--many, even--considered it apocryphal.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

But our ship’s malfunction would seem to constitute definitive proof of its existence. Unfortunately, in entering your Suckhole, the delicate balance of Luck and Suck needed to navigate our vessel has been disturbed.

BKRGLHCH

We can barely maintain the function of this portable luckograph.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

We need to find out what it is here that’s Sucking so hard. Something on this station must be the epicenter of the Suckhole.

COMMANDER

Then I think you’d better liase with our own head... scien-technician on this.

BKRGLHCH

Again, we apologize if our talk of Sucking is beyond your comprehension. We frequently encounter these difficulties in communication.

COMMANDER

(beeping commlink)

Frall? I need you up here on the double. *(a pause as FRALL fails to appear with their usual instantaneous speed)* Frall? *(another awkward pause)* They should only be a moment...

There is the standard sound of FRALL apparating through a bulkhead. Subtly, the luckograph starts making confused beeping noises.

FRALL

Yes, Commander. Sorry for the delay, but I seem to be a bit under the weather, and the bridge has been receiving an increasing number of strange reports from around the station.

COMMANDER

Serious?

FRALL

I don't believe so, only an uptick in the number of small accidents, as well as a few bizarre instances of extreme good fortune.

COMMANDER

Ah! Well, I think we may have the answer to that right here, Lieutenant. These people call themselves th--

FRALL

(interrupting, with distaste)

Oh. "Luck Navigators." Well... that explains it.

BKRGLHCH

(uncomfortable)

Hello.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(same)

A pleasure.

COMMANDER

(picking up on the vibes)

So... Do you... know... each other?

FRALL

(stiffly formal)

I have... encountered their species before. I am sorry to say that we do not seem to be highly compatible.

COMMANDER

Well, please put your personal feelings aside, Lieutenant. I need someone who understands their technology to get their ship up and running, especially now that it's looking like their presence here is starting to interfere with station operations.

FRALL

Yes... their *technology*. I'm afraid we're going have a problem there.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Commander, as we mentioned, the balance of Luck and Suck can be very delicate, and is easily disturbed. Your Lieutenant's proximity, due to their very nature, will render our instruments useless.

FRALL

(pained)

And as the interference from their devices is significantly impeding my ability to interact with four-dimensional space, it would be best for all of us if I remove myself from their vicinity as quickly as possible.

BKRGLHCH

We apologize for any discomfort we may cause you, but if you insist on collapsing probability waveforms in such a fashion, there's simply no way to avoid incompatibilities with the Luck-Suck system.

FRALL

(scoffing)

System. You people haven't the slightest idea of the complexity of the forces you're toying with. Trying to impose a simple binary on a multi-valent potentiality. I've always said you were going to tear a hole in reality someday, and it's starting to look like that day has come. Commander? I should maintain a minimum distance so these schlimazels can repair their peripatetic invitation to catastrophe and speed off to their inevitable doom. With your permission, I'll head back to the bridge and focus on containing the fallout brought about by their presence.

COMMANDER

Agreed, Lieutenant. I'll assist our guests personally.

FRALL

Thank you, Commander. I'll be on the bridge.

Sound of FRALL attempting to move as usual, but struggling.

COMMANDER

Are you ok, Frall?

FRALL

(seething)

I'm fine. We just have to get these particular... *guests*... off the Fairgrounds as soon as possible.

The struggling abates a bit and FRALL is gone.

COMMANDER

Okay, so what I thought was a minor problem for each of us has turned out to be a major problem for all of us. Gentlebeings, I want this solved and solved now.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Of course, Commander. With the departure of... that cloud-creature--

COMMANDER

You mean my second-in-command, Lieutenant Commander Frallen-Br'ar?

BKLGRHCH

Yes, of course, Commander. No offense. It's merely that...

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You understand, a being that can do an end-run around causality does not exactly fit in with our perceptual schema.

COMMANDER

I don't care if Frall doesn't fit your theories. Frall fits in around here just fine, and if they say your technology is a threat to the station, I believe them. In fact, they're probably understating the case, if past experience is any guide. Frankly, I'd just as soon blast you and your ship as far away from us as possible, if I could be sure that wouldn't backfire and punch a hole in space-time or something.

Sound of the rustling of MRS. FRONDRINAX's leaves as she enters the discussion, having been standing right there all along.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, Commander, you know you'll do no such thing!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO and BKLGRHCH react with surprise. The luckograph skips a beat.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Sorry, dearies, didn't mean to surprise you. But you should know that Commander Torianna would never blast anyone! She just gets a little cranky about things that threaten the station. She's normally a perfect host to all the aliens that visit the Fairgrounds.

COMMANDER

Mrs. F., this is well beyond a simple diplomatic problem.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(indulgent)

Oh, yes, yes, it's terribly serious, but we don't have to be a bunch of Andusian Scuppers about it! Why don't we let these charming young sapient use that little bleepy thing and maybe we can all find out where the problem is.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

That's very kind of you, Sin...

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Mrs. Frondrinax, but they call me Mrs. F. around these parts. I'm from Fugulnar, and I know all about you and your Luck and your Suck. Why, we Fugulnari have been studying that stuff since you folks were just a bunch of sprouts! Now, let's see where that doo-dad of yours is telling us to go, and on the way, I can give you a few pointers about getting along with Humans...

COMMANDER

Oh, Rogar preserve me.

Sound of them walking away as Mrs. FRONDRINAX spouts incorrect info about humans to the confused Navigators. Sound and music transition to The Electric Egg. A door opens as JOHN enters.

CHIP

Hey, John!

JOHN

Hi Chip.

CHIP

Your roommate isn't with you is--

ALTHAAR

(yelling from out in the hallway)

Althaar wishes to enter The Electric Egg, Mr. Frinkel!

A few wary sounds from human patrons who have heard this and know what it means.

CHIP

(yelling back)

Thanks, Althaar!

(into a microphone, amplified throughout the club)

Attention all Human patrons, an Iltorian is about to enter the premises. Please avert your eyes!

Sound of some shifting and muttering among the humans as ALTHAAR enters.

ALTHAAR

Thank you, Mr. Frinkel! Greeting to all guests of the Electric Egg!

There are the sounds of various aliens calling out greetings to ALTHAAR as well as one human somewhere puking.

CHIP

(as he rushes from the bar to the puking patron)

Goddammit! Sopon, get the mop bucket. There's always one joker who thinks he's immune...

JOHN

Heya, Dee, Xtopps. Setting up for the open mic?

XTOPPS

Yeah, mang, it's looking flush.

DEE

Even I didn't think we had this much talent hiding under bushels out here, and I'm the one who talked Chip into this. You're not looking to sign up, are you? The whole night's booked solid, but what the frid--for a friend of the band, we can find a spot.

JOHN

Oh, no, no! Any talents I have are of no entertainment value whatsoever. No, I'm just planning to kick back and enjoy whatever kind of unimaginable transport-wreck is going to happen on that stage.

DEE

Ha, ha, Johnny. I think you're going to be pleasantly surprised.

XTOPPS

Straight up, John. I've been soundchecking with some of these reprobates and I don't think I've ever seen a more talented skreb of amateurs anywhere in the galaxy. I gotta say, when Dee brought this up, it put a serious vonch on me. I mean, I got standards, right? But I think we got a real show here.

JOHN

If you say so, Xtopps.

XTOPPS

Hey, Alhaar, buddy, how 'bout you back there? You got any hidden talents to lay on us?

ALTHAAR

Alhaar would be most pleased to share a gentle ballad of Iltor with the community, but as Iltorian singing is known to cause lingering psychiatric incapacitation among many Human listeners, Alhaar thinks it to be ill-advised. Alhaar will attempt to remain unseen behind this structural column, and enjoy with FriendJohn the many talents of the peoples of the Fairgrounds!

DEE

Sounds like a plan.

CHIP

(coming back over)

Hey, we almost ready to start? Crowd's getting excited.

DEE

They can bubble for a few more minutes. I just want to go over the running order one more time.

They do so as the Luck Navigators arrive with Mrs. F and the Commander in tow.

BKLGRHCH

...no, we've triangulated correctly--the epicenter is definitely somewhere within this (*brief pause as they take in their surroundings*) multi-cultural eatery. Hm. This is a very complex environment. Unfortunate.

COMMANDER

What's wrong?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Such a wide variety of sentients and equipment will no doubt delay our efforts to pin down the source of the anomaly. But there's no help for it. Onward, Bklgrhch!

CHIP

Commander Torianna, always a pleasure! Can I get you anything? On the house.

COMMANDER

Actually, I could use a hot triple-caf right about now. Black, two sugars.

CHIP

Coming up! (*sound of stumbling*) Ow! I gotta get that step fixed.

Beeping from the luckograph as the Navigators start to move around the bar checking out the patrons and furnishings.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, Johnny dear! It's lucky I ran into you. I just got a delivery of some of those salted-licorice snacks you Humans like so much. I'll bring some over to Suite C the next time I get a chance--don't you let me forget, now!

JOHN

Oh, uh... thanks, Mrs. F. That's very... thoughtful of you.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Think nothing of it, sweetheart, I just love to bring a little sunshine into someone's day, that's what life is all about, isn't it? Oh! Excuse me dears... Derbal! Derbal sweetie! How are your larvae doing, the precious little things? They must be getting ready to cocoon any day now! You just let me know if you need a sitter once they're out, I just adore children... (*etc. fading into the distance*)

DEE

Salted licorice? Those things taste like Althaar looks.

JOHN

Yeah, but there's no stopping Mrs. F once she gets an idea into her head. Or... stem. Root...cluster? I'm not sure where Fugulnari keep their brains. Anyway, she keeps giving me huge bags of that stuff. I've been stashing it under the kitchen sink until I can find someone to take it off my hands.

XTOPPS

Can't you just, like, hurf it down the disposal chute?

JOHN

I tried that a couple weeks ago, but we got hit with a "toxic waste processing fee" and a stern lecture from Sanitation. Althaar paid the fine, but I'm not pissing off those folks again.

XTOPPS

No shness, you don't mess around with Sanitation.

DEE

Oh, I don't know about that. There's one member of Sanitation ol' Johnny here would love to mess around with. You find out her name yet?

JOHN

No. Maybe I should hurf more licorice down the chute.

Luckograph beeping gets weirder as Althaar approaches the Navigators.

BKLGRHCH

Ah! Look at this, Aoooaoaaaoooo! A spike in the 30-hap band!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Interesting, but insufficient to explain our present difficulty...

ALTHAAR

Please excuse Althaar, gentlebeings! Is Althaar correct that you are not Humans, but Luck Navigators?

BKLGRHCH

Indeed we are, friend Iltorian! What an unexpected pleasure to encounter one of your people in this sector of space!

ALTHAAR

The pleasure is entirely to Althaar, friends! And please allow Althaar to say [*hooting and blorting of formal greeting in Luck Navigator language*]!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You are most gracious, Althaar.

BKLGRHCH

And your accent is impeccable!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

I am Aoooaoaaaoooo, and this is my colleague, Bklgrhch. We would be delighted to exchange further pleasantries with you, but alas, we are on a mission of some urgency at the moment.

ALTHAAR

Of course! Althaar will cease his interruptions. Best of fortune to you, gentlebeings!

Luckograph beeping stabilizes and fades back into the background as ALTHAAR rejoins the others at the bar. From somewhere in the crowd: “Ow, my toe!” (this occurs a few more times during the scene).

XTOPPS

Hey, Althaar. Those Humans looked right at you and didn't hork. What gives?

ALTHAAR

Oh no, Sin Xtopps. Althaar has not yet solved the problem of the Human horking! These are not Humans, but Luck Navigators. Their exteriors are many ways similar to Human, but they may look upon an Iltorian without distress.

DEE

The resemblance *is* uncanny.

CHIP

How come we've never heard of these guys?

ALTHAAR

Luck Navigators are very few! And have no settled planets. They live on their luck-ships only! Aoooooaaooooooo and Bklgrhch are the first Althaar has had the chance to meet, but Althaar remembered his studies, and was successful in extending appropriate Luck Navigator greetings!

JOHN

Those are some... interesting names.

ALTHAAR

Luck Navigator culture is of much fascination! Chance is most important in all aspects of life. When the birth of a Luck Navigator is, they throw the... what are the small cubes of accident called, please, FriendJohn?

JOHN

Dice?

ALTHAAR

Yes! Thanking you. They throw the dice. But these dice have not numbers, but phonemes! The name of the new Luck Navigator from those letters is built. There is some prejudice, sadly, against those whose names do not fit easily in the vocal apparatus. These new visitors probably do not high positions hold among their people.

DEE

Wait, so your status depends on how easy your name is to pronounce?

ALTHAAR

Dee is correct! The belief of the Luck Navigators is that a child with a lucky roll of the naming dice will be lucky in all things. Many stories still they tell of the great High Commander Ed.

The luckograph, which has been approaching the group, suddenly goes crazy.

JOHN

What the--?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Bklgrhch, look!

BKLGRHCH

Something else must be causing interference. These readings make no sense.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(muttering quietly)

We'll have to recalibrate again.

BKLGRHCH

(ditto)

We've recalibrated three times! It has to be something else. Try a zero distance assessment.

They poke JOHN with the luckograph (where indicated below).

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Still reading Full Suck. It *has* to be a calibration error.

BKLGRHCH

I'm not so sure about that.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You mean-- Can it be? We've actually found...

BKLGRHCH

There's no other explanation.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(awed)

Incredible.

During the above:

JOHN

What is that thing? It's not going to... blow up or something, is it? It doesn't sound happy. *(one of the Navigators pokes JOHN with the luckograph, which gives out an agitated bloop)* Hey, watch it!

COMMANDER

Don't worry, Mr. B, it's just some kind of measuring device. These sentients are trying to find the source of a problem that's affecting their ship.

JOHN

Well, it can't be working right. I haven't been anywhere near their ship!

ALTHAAR

Do not fear, FriendJohn! You may place trust in the Luck Navigators.

BKLGRHCH

We're experienced scien-technicians, and implausible though it may seem, it appears that you do indeed have something to do with our problem.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

In fact, you may be the primary source of our problem.

BKLGRHCH

A problem that could soon engulf this station and everyone on it.

JOHN

How could I possibly be responsible for that? All I did today was come down here for a drink!

COMMANDER

I have the feeling it has to do with how much you Suck.

JOHN

What the hell?

BKLGRHCH

Almost fully!

XTOPPS

Whoa...

DEE

Now, hold on...

CHIP

Look, Commander, John may not be a paragon of humanity, but he's our friend! And he's not *that* bad.

JOHN

Yeah! Hey, wait--!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

No, your Commander's supposition is accurate. You do indeed Suck a great deal.

BKLGRHCH

It is of course understandable that these technical terms may be too esoteric for your comprehension. Allow us to explain.

JOHN

Oh, I think I understand you, buddy!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Perhaps you have some dim grasp of the situation, but you are ill equipped to comprehend the level of Suck our instruments are detecting in your vicinity.

JOHN

Level of Suck?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

There is a delicate balance of Luck and Suck in the Universe.

ALTHAAR

The science of the Luck Navigators is of great cleverness, FriendJohn.

BKLGRHCH

And we have a precise mathematical formula which we can use to calculate levels of what you might superstitiously term "happenstance".

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Sucks-2BU.

JOHN

...You want to unpack that?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

A simple equation. The background luck radiation of the Universe is 2 Beneficence Units to each one of Suck.

BKLGRHCH

Or as some prefer, Anti-Luck, or U-B-Negative--

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Yes, Suck can also be understood as merely a negative value on the Luck continuum.

DEE

Guess that's all it is, John. You can't deny it. Sucks-2BU.

*DEE and CHIP snigger a bit over this, barely holding it in; maybe even the
COMMANDER only just keeps it together.*

JOHN

Give me a break, Dee.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(a bit confused)

You find our mathematics amusing?

BKLGRHCH

But this is very serious! Your friend here is an almost perfect Suckhole.

DEE and CHIP lose it.

JOHN

Fine! I Suck! I Suck!

ALTHAAR

FriendJohn is very quick in understanding!

JOHN

So why is my Sucking suddenly everyone else's problem?

BKLGRHCH

Well, your Sucking might not have been a problem in and of itself, John, but when combined with the ambient levels of Suck found in this station, everyone on it, and indeed this whole sector of space... I would not have thought it possible, but absolutely everything in the vicinity Sucks.

JOHN

Hah! It's not just me. Suck on that.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Yes, the Suck is on that, and this, and everyone here.

COMMANDER

That's the Fairgrounds for you.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

But somehow your presence here has tipped the balance so far that you have disabled our ship, which is powered by riding minor shifts in the Luck-Suck Parity, and that difficulty has increased our own Suck levels, causing a feedback loop that has now overloaded this station's Suck field.

CHIP

What does that mean for us?

BKLGRHCH

Rapid oscillations in the amount of Luck and Suck. Strange events occurring at an ever-increasing rate until a total breakdown of any normal semblance of cause and effect.

DEE

Sounds like a normal day on the Fairgrounds.

A comm sound.

FRALL

(over speaker)

Commander? Frallen-Br'ar here.

COMMANDER

What is it, Frall?

FRALL

I assume our *guests* have not yet solved their problem?

COMMANDER

No, Frall, although we may be making some progress. Any more unusual reports coming in?

FRALL

Hm. Perhaps so, from a Human perspective. Let's see... The Velbopp's stand has lost its entire stock of quiescently frozen desserts in an apparent incident of spontaneous combustion; Sanitation reports an unprecedentedly low level of vent-biter activity; pineapple juice is flowing through all the Human toilets; the Robot Union has threatened to strike unless all members receive a 40% pay cut by the end of the week; and approximately 85% of the beings on the station have stubbed their toe painfully in the last 15 minutes. Would you consider those events unusual, Commander?

COMMANDER

I would, Frall. I'll be on the bridge shortly.

FRALL

(over speaker)

Very well, Commander, although I must advise you that unless we can eliminate the source of the interference in local causality, these disturbances will only become more numerous and bizarre. Anything else can only be a stop-gap solution. Bridge out.

Bleep of comm shutting off.

COMMANDER

Okay, Bklgrhch and Aoooooaaaaoooo, figure out how to stop this Sucking before it gets any worse or I *will* blast you and your ship out into open space.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

I assure you, Commander, now that the local Luck-Suck balance has been so badly destabilized, even that wouldn't be enough to solve the problem. It's John that Sucks so much.

COMMANDER

Then fix this or I'll blast *him* out into open space!

JOHN

What?!

COMMANDER

I'm sorry, Mr. B, but I'm responsible for the safety of every sentient on this station. If I have to decide between you and all of them, my choice is clear. I'd suggest you offer these scien-technicians whatever help you can. Bklgrhch and Aoooooaaaaoooo, contact me on the bridge immediately if you find a solution.

Sound of COMMANDER exiting (door open/close), audibly stubbing her toe and cursing, as conversation continues.

JOHN

Ok. I don't want to put the station in danger, but I also definitely don't want to be blasted out an airlock. These are not good options.

ALTHAAR

Althaar would be very sad at the blasting of FriendJohn.

JOHN

Can we change how much I Suck?

BKLGRHCH

That is almost certainly impossible.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

But... there are some anomalies in these measurements that we don't understand. We should try to get a more precise reading on your Suck levels.

BKLGRHCH

Is there someplace more quiet we can examine you?

ALTHAAR

Our suite has very much of the quiet! Althaar and John are room-mates. And FriendJohn is very very special to Althaar! Althaar will do all he can to prevent any blastings!

JOHN

Thank you, Althaar. Follow us, uh...
(*decides to not try to say their names*)
...people.

JOHN, ALTHAAR, and the Luck Navigators exit the bar.

CHIP

Right, so if we've gotten all the suck out of the room, think we can start the show? The crowd is *more* than bubbling now, I'd say they were at a high boil.

XTOPPS

(*moving away*)
Everyone's dougal-root and waiting in the green room, Chorp, don't flip your gizz...

DEE

(*also moving away*)
I'll start warming up the crowd...

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(*calling after her*)
You know, Dee, if you need another act, I have a solid ten that kills!

CHIP

Mrs. F? You do standup comedy?

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, I wouldn't call it your normal standup routine, per se, more a kind of observational humor. But I've taken it around all the Ladies' Husbandry Clubs of Fulgunar, and it's always gone over like sunlight.

CHIP

(*dubious but trying to be nice*)
Oh, well... You know, that kind of routine doesn't always translate well across species. Usually slapstick is the only type of humor that's got any interstellar appeal.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Well, you know best dear, but if a spot opens up, I'm more than willing to give it a whirl!

DEE

(*on the mic*)
Hey everybody! Is everyone here ready for the Electric Egg's first-ever Open Mic Night?

Cheers, applause, encouragement, and other normal comments and heckling from the Egg crowd.

DEE

We have been overwhelmed by the talent that's come our way, and we've got a very special evening planned for you!

XTOPPS

(whispering off to the side)

Dee! Dee!

DEE

One second, folks...

(off mic)

What? What's up?

XTOPPS

The acts?

DEE

Yes?

XTOPPS

They all split.

DEE

What!

XTOPPS

Most of them are stuck in the can with a sudden case of the Victorian flux, a couple got stage fright, three of 'em got religion, and the acrobats all stubbed their toes.

DEE

None of them can go on?

XTOPPS

(passing her a piece of paper)

We still got the waitlist.

DEE

Right. Ok, we'll start at the top and work our way down. Start rounding them up...

(back on mic to the audience, while reading over XTOPPS's new setlist)

Well... looks like we're going to have to improvise a little bit here... So... to start our evening we have... some gentlefolk who just flew in on the helium freighter *The Noble Snort*, and they're going to favor us with a rendition of their favorite traditional space shanty... Let's give them a big Electric Egg welcome!

CHIP

Oh no.

HELIUM FREIGHTER CREW

(at least three, singing in ultra-deep voices together on the mic)

Around the rings of Saturn
There lived a gaseous slattern
Whose dorsal vent would leave you bent
Into a pleasing pattern

CHIP

(muttering to himself)

Oh, we are so frilled.

Fade out on the chanty as we transition to J & A's apartment:

HELIUM FREIGHTER CREW

[The first mate's name was Rosseter
Her family tried to closet 'er,
But she'd get caught in ev'ry port
Sucking an ovipositor]

'Round the rings of Saturn,
'Round the rings of Saturn,
'Round the rings of Saturn,
And up Uranus way!

Door opens and JOHN, ALTHAAR and the Luck Navigators enter. The luckograph continues to bleep, reading JOHN's Luck/Suck.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Ah, yes, these surroundings are much less chaotic. Now we can get a clean reading on how much you Suck.

JOHN

Do you have to keep saying that?

BKLGRHCH

I'm sorry, we do try not to lapse into professional jargon, but we are scien-technicians, after all.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Is there some reason you need to stand in the corner like that with your face against the wall?

JOHN

It's... sort of a system Althaar and I have; it keeps me from accidentally seeing him before he gets behind the privacy curtain.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

If we want a pure base-level reading--

BKLGRHCH

Yes, the Iltorian should--

ALTHAAR

Althaar will retreat to his own quarters and listen from there to the base reading of FriendJohn!

Whoosh of door opening/closing as ALTHAAR exits. The Luckograph makes a different noise.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Bklgrhch! Look at this fluctuation in the readings!

BKLRGHCH

But... his Luck potentiality..?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Has dropped significantly with the removal of the Iltorian!

JOHN

Wait, I Suck more now?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

No, no, not exactly. This is what we were seeing in the bar. While, without a doubt, the luckograph is clear that the level of your Actual Luck is the lowest ever recorded by our species, we have at the same time been seeing abnormally high indicators of Potential Luck in your readings.

JOHN

So... there's a chance I might not always be so unlucky?

BKLRGHCH

Oh! Oh, no! No, your Suckiness is definite and eternal. But all those who Suck, even as much as you Suck, manifest some form of Potential Luck as well.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

It usually remains dormant and has no direct effects, merely contributing to the general Luck field of the surrounding area. But never have we seen such Potential Luck around someone who comes so close to Sucking The Big One.

JOHN

Oh, come on!

BKLRGHCH

Again, we apologize for getting technical. You see, Suck levels are expressed as a quantity between one and zero; as they increase, they approach the theoretical maximum possible Suck, or as we call it, The Big One. If The Big One were to actually occur... anywhere in the galaxy...

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(shuddering)

It's terrifying to even consider.

JOHN

What? Something so unlucky, no one could survive?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Worse. A total breakdown of Luck and Suck. The barrier between Beneficence and non-Beneficence completely destroyed. The pure chaos that lies behind everything and is only barely kept in check through our manipulations would become a universal totality in all places and times.

BKLRGHCH

But that's all just theory, you understand. Right now, we need to figure out the cause of these peculiar readings if we're to have any hope of restoring balance to the Fairgrounds. Though you Suck more than any being yet recorded, your level of Potential Luck is also abnormally high. Indeed, it would be unusual even in a being of much less Suckitude.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

And that level of potential is even higher in the presence of Althaar.

ALTHAAR

(over speaker)

Althaar is very pleased to be a source of Potential Luck for FriendJohn!

JOHN

You know, actually, I have to admit that ever since I've met Althaar, even with the vomiting, my life has been going a lot better than usual.

BKLRGHCH

Fascinating!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Althaar? Would you mind coming back in here for a moment?

ALTHAAR

(over speaker)

If it is OK with FriendJohn?

JOHN

Just let me prepare myself.

(takes breath; steadies)

Okay, Althaar, come on in!

*Door opens and ALTHAAR enters. JOHN of course isn't looking at him but has a **slight reflex reaction** nonetheless. The luckograph beeps stronger.*

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Yes, that's it. Just a simple increase in proximity has caused an exponential leap in your Luck Potential!

ALTHAAR

ALTHAAR IS HELPING! *(happy noise)*

JOHN

(holding it together)

Good job, buddy.

BKLGRHCH

Althaar, would you kindly approach John?

JOHN

Don't you have enough data already? That can get... really unpleasant.

ALTHAAR

Althaar does not wish to disturb FriendJohn.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Getting a fix on the upper limit of John's Luck Potential may be the key to solving this puzzle.

JOHN

And keep me from being spaced, yeah, yeah, okay. Althaar you can... come closer...

*Sounds of ALTHAAR (who is always making unpleasant-to-human noises in any case) moving closer to JOHN, **who makes more sounds of discomfort that he holds back, but can barely control.** The luckograph beeps are practically becoming a solid tone.*

BKLGRHCH

Amazing! Look at these readings!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

This is unprecedented!

ALTHAAR

Yes! Never before has an Iltorian approached a Human so closely without causing a mass disruption of bodily functions! Surely the friendship of John and Althaar will be the cause of much celebrations!

JOHN

(having a harder time holding it together)

...Okay.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

I think we're getting something we can work with here...

BKLGRHCH

Let's bring the distance variable down to zero! Althaar?

JOHN

Zero distance variable? Does that mean what I think it means?

ALTHAAR

Althaar is very sorry, Navigator-friends! But it is never for an Iltorian to touch a Human! It has been done, as accident, few times in our shared history and the consequences were of much unhappiness! FriendJohn will be certain to expel bodily fluids!

BKLGRHCH

It's for science!

JOHN

Well Science isn't going to be the one puking its guts out! No! No touching!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Please, be of good courage, Human! We know this is difficult, but it may be vital to not only your own future, but the future of this entire sector!

JOHN

...You really think you need to do this?

BKLGRHCH

I give you my word as a scien-technician.

JOHN

(to himself)

Dammit. Dammit dammit dammit.

(to the others)

Ok. Do it.

BKLGRHCH

Excellent. Althaar?

ALTHAAR

But Althaar does not wish to do harm to FriendJohn! It is a great sadness! *(sad noises, which are also gross)*

JOHN

It's ok, Althaar. Really. If it keeps me on this side of the airlock, it'll be worth it.

ALTHAAR

Althaar is humbled by the bravery of FriendJohn! ...Is FriendJohn ready?

JOHN

As I'll ever be.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

All right, gentlebeings. On three. One... two... three.

ALTHAAR touches JOHN. JOHN loses control of all bodily functions as ALTHAAR makes more sad noises.

BKLGRHCH

Success!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You've almost pinned the meters! This has to be it! Come, Bklgrhch, we must feed these readings into the ship's computer at once! Thank you, John and Althaar! Thank you!

JOHN groans weakly as the Navigators whoosh out.

ALTHAAR

Althaar will fetch the supplies of cleaning... Would FriendJohn appreciate a hot choc-o-late?

JOHN

Please just... be somewhere else, ok Althaar?

ALTHAAR

Of course, dear Human friend. Althaar is leaving...

Door whoosh.

ALTHAAR

ALTHAAR IS ENTERING THE CORRIDOR!

Panicked shout from someone in the corridor. Apartment door whooshes shut. Music transition to the bridge. Fade in on sounds of various crew members dealing with reports coming in from all over the station. The COMMANDER enters.

COMMANDER

("what the hell is going on here?")

Frall..!? Status report -- and don't say "I told you so!"

FRALL

Of course not, Commander, that would be rude. Not to mention incompatible with the way that I perceive time. However...

COMMANDER

However?

FRALL

I am aware that a version of myself informed you of the likelihood of these consequences at a point that you would perceive as prior to this eventuality occurring.

COMMANDER

Yes, that's *much* better. Right. Station status..?

FRALL

Well, as you have no doubt correctly assumed, most of the current activity on the bridge is due to reports of an extreme number of unusual events, fortunate, unfortunate, and occasionally both, that are coming in from all over the Fairgrounds.

COMMANDER

Most? What's the rest?

FRALL

The rest is due to fluctuations in the personal luck levels of the command staff that are interfering with their attempts to respond to these reports...

They listen as we hear, overlapping in the background, the bridge crew indeed having good and bad luck -- some falling over or being shocked by consoles, others receiving marriage proposals or inheritances from home.

COMMANDER

All right. Is there anything especially dire or station-threatening in all of this?

FRALL

That changes moment by moment, and the mere action of recounting any of these incidents could completely change the outcome before I had finished doing so, so with your permission, I'll stick to a selection of the highlights.

COMMANDER

Fine.

FRALL

The Casino Splendide has complained that all their slot machines are paying out with nonstop jackpots.

COMMANDER

Well, I've always suspected they had them gaffed to prevent anyone winning, so I'm fine with casino management having the bad luck for a change.

FRALL

On the other hand, every time a machine pays out, it somehow falls over and crushes the person playing it.

COMMANDER

Oh. Any fatalities?

FRALL

Not as yet, but the medical centers have almost run through their entire supply of casts, slings, and traction field stabilizers.

COMMANDER

How many people have been playing the slot machines?!

FRALL

Quite a few, but they're responsible for only a small portion of the injuries. The number of bones being broken in small accidents all around the station has gone up approximately 5,000 percent.

COMMANDER

(exasperated exclamation)

Oh, great Jones and his mighty claws!

FRALL

On the other hand, Medical is reporting an almost equal increase in spontaneous and inexplicable remissions of allergies, rashes, fungal disorders, and hemorrhoids among residents and visitors.

COMMANDER

Well hell, I'd trade a minor fracture for that.

FRALL

Then there's the vent-biter situation...

COMMANDER

Oh, no.

FRALL

Somehow the Sanitation department computer realigned their shift schedule so that all staff were sent on a simultaneous rest cycle, and the vents went unmonitored for almost an hour before the error was noticed.

COMMANDER

Frall, are you telling me we've had inhabited sectors exposed to infestation by lethal vermin for almost an hour?

FRALL

So far there have been no attacks in heavily populated areas. But there have been a handful of fatalities in some of the darker corners of the station, I'm afraid.

COMMANDER

You think you're afraid? You don't have any hamstrings for those things to gnaw on! Initiate Emergency Sanitation Protocol H-23!

FRALL

That may not be necessary, Commander. All of them appear to have returned to the vents of their own volition, apart from one remaining in the kitchen of the K'Chillibont luncheonette on Yod 14.

COMMANDER

Poppy's? Oh... I liked that joint. Did any of the kitchen staff make it out, or have they all been slaughtered?

FRALL

To the contrary, the creature appears to have settled in comfortably and become something of a mascot to the workers there. They have named it "Sparky" and are feeding it Tritonian eels and a selection of fine sweetmeats.

COMMANDER

...Frall, can I assume these incidents are only going to get worse the longer the Luck Navigators remain on station?

FRALL

I can foresee no other possible outcome, Commander.

COMMANDER

Then we can't waste any more time. We need to get John B and the Luck Navigators down here and put a stop to this thing, one way or another. Get the Head of Security on the line.

FRALL

Unfortunately, sir, the Head of Security resigned 22 minutes ago, after winning 2.7 billion credits on a holographic scratch card. I believe he announced his intention to "blow this popsicle stand" at the first available opportunity.

COMMANDER

His second, then.

FRALL

She's in traction in the Dalet 3 MedCenter due to an incident on a malfunctioning escalator.

COMMANDER

Seriously?

FRALL

They're actually more dangerous than turbolifts, you know.

COMMANDER

Any member of Security, then. You! Corporal!

DORMER

Uh, yessir?

COMMANDER

Get up to Alef 1 and bring me John B and the two aliens calling themselves Luck Navigators. By force, if necessary.

DORMER

(perking up)

Ooh! Permission to use the new Mark V neuro-dampers?

COMMANDER

Permission denied.

DORMER

Awww.

COMMANDER

The way things are going right now, you'll end up zapping your own brains out through your ears. Now move it!

*Music transition back to The Electric Egg. **Laughter and applause** as MRS. FRONDRINAX continues her standup routine, which is obviously going well.*

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(on mic, to the crowd)

...and he said, "That's not corn smut!" **(big laugh)** So, how many of you here tonight breathe oxygen? **(smattering of applause and cheers)** Oh, that's lovely, that's lovely. I mean, oxygen's great, right, if you like slowly catching on fire internally every day until you die!

Big happy crowd reaction, especially from the non-oxygen breathers.

ALIEN BARFLY

You tell 'em, sister!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

I mean us plants breathe like this-- *(silence for a few moments, soft crowd giggles)* --and you Humans breathe like this-- *(does an imitation of a human breathing hard, shaking her branches vigorously)*

"Oh, I don't feel so good!"

Well, I don't wonder, you just filled up your air-sacs with something that can eat through iron!

Big laugh.

ANOTHER ALIEN

It's funny 'cause it's true!

Soundscape moves over to the bar area as MRS. FRONDRINAX continues working the appreciative crowd in the background.

MRS. FRONDRINAX

And as if that wasn't enough--you don't even have any stomata to breathe with! No, you have to get all that oxygen into you through three little holes, right next to each other! Well, that makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? That's not asking for trouble at all! "Why would I need more than that? It's not like anyone could just come along and cover my face-holes for three to five minutes!" *(big laugh)* But we all love Humans, don't we? We do, we do. People like that are so very important--we can learn so much from their mistakes! *(big laugh, applause)* Thank you! Thank you so much, you've been a wonderful crowd, and I hope to see all of you in the Fugulnari Ascendancy some day!

Meanwhile:

CHIP

Never would have thought it, but...

DEE

Mrs. F is *killing* up there.

XTOPPS

Lady knows her way around a punchline. It's a great set.

CHIP

It's been a great evening! Man, I never thought people would sit still for over 200 verses of "The Rings of Saturn," but I'll be damned if those helium huffers didn't sell it.

XTOPPS

I know more tunes than just about any club-hopper and I swear I learned about 50 new verses.

DEE

And the rest of us learned about 50 new perversions. I think she's finishing up, I better go take over.

And as DEE moves off to the stage we can indeed hear MRS. FRONDRINAX winding up her set and saying goodnight as the crowd cheers and applauds. As this is happening:

CHIP

Gotta say though, I didn't expect Mrs. F's humor to be so... hostile, you know what I mean?

XTOPPS

All great comedy comes from great anger, mang.

DEE

(on mic)

Mrs. Frondrinax, folks, give it up again for those humor stylings straight from Fugulnar!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

(returning to the bar)

Oh, my! How did I do? I was a little rusty up there, but it felt good.

CHIP

You were amazing, Mrs. F! Lemme get you some of the top-shelf distilled H2O and a triple superphosphate, on the house!

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, Chip, you're too kind.

CHIP

(while spritzing her with water)

Hey, if you wanted to make a regular gig of it here...

MRS. FRONDRINAX

Oh, no! That's terribly sweet of you, dear, but honestly, you couldn't afford me! *(laughs a bit)* But I will say, if you keep it up with these open mic thingies, I'm sure I'll drop in for a set every now and then.

CHIP

Oh, we'll definitely be doing this again! This has gotta be one of the luckiest nights in the history of the Egg.

DEE

(on mic)

Okay, sorry for the delay folks, looks like we have only one last act tonight, and he's being a little mysterious about just what his act is, so let's hear it for our tight-lipped friend, who's here all the way from Hrilbox!

CHIP

Wait what.

HRILBOXIAN

Thank you, thanks so much. So, I'm sure a few of you've heard about what some folk from my species can do with their spleens, but that's not what I'm going to be doing for you tonight.

CHIP

Oh, thank Jones.

HRILBOXIAN

No, I want to move beyond the classic spleen-splort routine. For there are many more wonders to the Hrilboxian anatomy! So for the first time in a public space, watch! As I extrude all *three* of my duodenums!

Horrible horrible sound as he does just that. Sounds of the crowd panicking, screaming, puking, and in a few sparse cases laughing, cheering, or golf clapping. Fade from this chaos back to the Bridge. More incoming reports of disturbances and alert noises going off.

FRALL

The disturbances are increasing as predicted, Commander.

COMMANDER

Is there really no way to use your powers to stop this, Frall?

FRALL

Not while the Luck Navigators' ship remains on the station, I'm afraid. And of course, if we had a way to solve that problem, my further intervention would be unnecessary.

JOHN is hauled, struggling, onto the bridge by two members of Security.

JOHN

...I mean, let's all keep our heads, here, guys, what's a little bad luck really?

Minor explosion somewhere on the bridge.

JOHN

Ok, that wasn't me! That was *not* me!

COMMANDER

(sarcastic)

Thank you for joining us, Mr. B. *(to the security officer)* What took so long, Corporal? Where are the others?

DORMER

Uh, there was only this guy there, Commander. And we kinda had to... clean him up first.

COMMANDER

Mr. B, I know you're not directly under my command, but I thought I made it pretty clear that your continued access to the Fairgrounds' oxygen supply was contingent on you getting those Luck Navigators the hell off my station!

JOHN

I was! I am! They got a bunch of readings with that luckograph thing of theirs, got really excited, and ran off! I think they were going to use the computer on their ship?

COMMANDER

Then why didn't you go with them? Their investigation into your weird Suck-hole may be our only chance of stopping this!

JOHN

Look. They had to get readings with... zero distance between me and Althaar. I wasn't in any shape to follow them after that.

COMMANDER

Good lord. That's... I'm sorry. *(beat)* Well then. Let's hope your sacrifice was not in vain. Swenson! Get me the Luck Navigator ship on comms.

BRIDGE CREW MEMBER

Yessir!

Comms bloop as a channel to the Navigators is opened.

BKLGRHCH

(over comms)

Commander Torianna!

COMMANDER

Bklgrhch! Please tell me you've found a way to repair your ship.

BKLGRHCH

Not... as such, Commander. Our apologies.

COMMANDER

But I thought you'd found something in John's luck readings. Can't your computers do anything with that data?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(also over comms)

Oh, a great many things, Commander! The study of these anomalous fluctuations in John's Luck and Suck levels, both Actual and Potential, could lead to dozens of breakthroughs in Transcendent Stochastics! Truly, this data would be a treasure trove that could well lead to a paradigm shift in the field--

BKLGRHCH

--if only we had some way to get it out of here.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Indeed. That is the crux of it. Intriguing and ground-breaking though this data may be, we can find no way to apply it to the practical matter of repairing our ship's navigational abilities. My apologies, Commander. It seems we have doomed both ourselves and your station to inevitable disaster.

FRALL

(to themselves, in the background)

Called it.

COMMANDER

Then it appears I have no choice. John B, I'm afraid that, for the good of the station--

FRALL

There would be no purpose in spacing Mr. B, Commander. Though it may at one point have been possible to halt these effects by expelling him from the Fairgrounds, that point has definitively passed. We may as well allow him to accompany us on our descent into chaos in relative comfort.

JOHN

Oh. Thanks, I guess.

COMMANDER

Well. That's that then. You know, I always promised myself I wasn't going to die on this godsforsaken heap. I break a lot of promises.

FRALL

If it's any consolation, Commander, with these wild fluctuations in probability, there's a chance this process may not kill you.

COMMANDER

Really?

FRALL

Yes. It may result in something much, much weirder. Equally unpleasant, of course.

COMMANDER

Of course.

*The alarms are becoming quite strident by this point. Perhaps ominous creakings of impending structural failure as well. Door whoosh as Althaar enters, **making agitated noises. Some of the Human crew successfully avoid looking at him; at least one pukes.***

ALTHAAR

FriendJohn! Althaar had such worry! Commander, Althaar can not allow the spacing of his dearest friend and room-mate John! Althaar will file a formal protest with the Iltorian Commonality! And an ICSB lawsuit of wrongful death! Althaar will... Althaar will JUMP OUT FROM BEHIND CORNERS!

JOHN

Althaar! It's ok. They're not going to space me.

ALTHAAR

Oh, a news of great relief, FriendJohn! Althaar is deeply sorry for the making of threats, Human friends. (*distant barfing*) Althaar would like to make amends in such way as seems appropriate to you.

COMMANDER

Well, you'll have to make your amends quickly, Althaar. The Luck Navigators are out of ideas, and the Fairgrounds is about to collapse into pure chaos.

ALTHAAR

...Althaar's relief is diminished.

BKLGRHCH

(*still over comms*)

It is we who should beg your forgiveness, Humans. We can only express our great sorrow that our efforts to avert this crisis were ultimately insufficient. It's clear now that we will all be Sucking the Big One.

A beat as they all consider their impending doom.

JOHN

You know, it's funny really. If it weren't for the whole collapsing-reality thing, you Luck Navigators would actually be... really lucky to be here.

BKLGRHCH

I'm afraid you still fail to comprehend the nature of a Suck-hole, John.

JOHN

No, think about it. You got all this amazing new data off me, right? A scientific treasure trove? If we only had a way of surviving this, the Fairgrounds is really the luckiest place you could be.

Subtle change in the background noises as the Luck field begins to shift.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(*audible from the back of their ship over the comms*)

Hang on...

BKLGRHCH

If we could survive this, yes. But as we have explained to you...

JOHN

I mean, you said yourself that none of you have ever had a chance to study this level of Suck before. If you had a way to stay here and study me, I bet you'd be able to make some incredible scientific discoveries for your people. You'd probably get some kind of huge reward for it or something.

The Luck shift continues. Alarms are being silenced. The panicked calls from around the station have almost stopped.

BKLGRHCH

They might let us re-roll our names!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(still in the back, to BKLGRHCH)

Bklgrhch! Look at these numbers!

JOHN

Exactly! You'd be celebrities! Heroes, even! Who knows, you could have ended up the most famous Luck Navigators that ever lived! If you could only stay here and--

The BWOOM of the Navigators' ships engines firing up is audible over the comms.

JOHN

What was that? Was that reality collapsing?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

(now at the ship's mic)

It was our engines, John! They've come online!

BKLGRHCH

(now shouting from the back of the ship)

Power restored to all systems! Navigation console has resumed full functionality!

COMMANDER

Bridge to Docking Bay 16! Initiate departure protocol! Now!

DOCKING CREW MEMBER

(over comms)

Aye aye, Commander! Deploying guidance systems... Trajectors locked and operational! Departure protocol is in progress.

Cheers and celebration from the bridge crew. Sounds of the Navigators' ship departing over the comms.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

You've done it, John B! You've saved us all! A stroke of genius!

JOHN

Thanks! Uh... how?

BKLGRHCH

(back at the mic)

As we approached the Big One, your insight into our predicament caused your Potential Luck to interact with the Suckhole to cause a Luck-Suck Reversion!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

It's only been documented on a handful of occasions, and never at anything approaching these levels of Suckiness!

BKLGRHCH

You managed to invert the polarities of our own Benificence levels, actually bringing the Fairgrounds' latent Suckiness to bear in our favor! Astonishing!

JOHN

So, now you can leave because that Sucks worse than staying?

BKLGRHCH and AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO laugh indulgently.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

A crude way of phrasing it, but very roughly accurate, yes.

BKLGRHCH

This will make a fine paper for The Potulgan Journal of Suckometry, Aoooooaaooooo.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Indeed, Bklgrhch! Once we are well away, we must begin collating our findings. You know, if this discovery proves as significant as the data suggest, we may even be able to bring on the illustrious Professor Debbie as a co-author!

BKLGRHCH

Oh, what serendipity! You have our hearty thanks, John B. And you as well, Commander, and all the inhabitants of the Fairgrounds. Have no fear, we will add this sector of space to our interdicted lists immediately. You need fear no further interference from the Luck Navigators!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Farewell, Humans! Farewell, and Good Luck!

Theme music up and leading into credits.

ANNOUNCER

You've been listening to *Life with Althaar*, episode five.
This episode was written by Berit Johnson and Ian W. Hill
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 Ganas as Hardyfox Fornes
Christopher Lee as Chip Frinkel
Zuri Washington as Delilah "Dee" Mallory
Derrick Peterson as Xtopps
Lex Friedman an Bklgrhch
Philip Cruise as Aoooooaaooooo
{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 suck mathematician Sean Rockoff.
This has been an audio production from Gemini CollisionWorks.
Tune in again in two weeks for our next episode, but until then, let's listen in as The Luck Navigators surf the luck currents leading away from the Fairgrounds...

Sound transition to the interior of the Luck Navigators' ship as BKLGRHCH and AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO depart.

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Well, Bklgrhch, we did it. We actually entered a Suckhole and lived to return and tell the tale.

BKLGRHCH

Not only to tell the tale, Aoooooaaooooo, but to publish more empirical data on Suckitude than any of our scholars have ever produced!

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Do you think we should have shared our conclusions about the Human and the Iltorian, though?

BKLGRHCH

You mean, the possibility that the integrity of this sector of space, and perhaps even of the entire galaxy, depends on the continued proximity of John B and Althaar?

AOOOAOOOAOOOAOOO

Yes, that.

BKLGRHCH

I'm sure they'll figure it out eventually. If they have any Luck..!

They laugh stupidly at their dumb joke as the spaceship zooms away and the music comes up and out.