

## Even the Gods Make Mistakes

Teleplay adapted from my story, "Triage Camp Whiskey-Tango-Foxtrot".

By Tim Macauley © 2019

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"Mankind is poised midway between the gods and the beasts."

—Plotinus

### **Intro:**

Scene opens with a squad of five on a ridgeline thick with jungle vegetation, akin to the Peruvian highlands (think Herzog/Malick). The jungle is rife with the sounds of life, especially birds and primates. It is humanity's first foray into this sector.

QUEST: ERECT THE ATMO AGITATOR

EXT. SMALL CLEARING ON THE ABSOLUTE EDGE OF A JUNGLE RIDGELINE - MESSY TRIAGE CAMP

BASTILLE

Ladies, what have I always said to do when life deals you a lousy hand?

NGUYEN

Chin up, soldier on...

GARCIA

Make each day anew!

MACHIABELLI

We pick ourselv—

BASTILLE

What?! NO. I've said you reach out, grab life's wrist, and you lob that dealer's hand off right above the joint!

A beat passes as everyone looks confused.

NGUYEN

I get it...it's a metaphor, boss.

BASTILLE

No, Ed, it's a gorram COMMANDMENT. Because I'm BASTILLE RASNEESH, Majordomo to House Kenyon and what I says, goes. And you're Nguyen Ed Carthwright of Indigo Industries, 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Halkoenig, and what you say goes as well. And you....

He points at Garcia.

You're Garcia, 17<sup>th</sup> of his name, hailing proudly from the backwater moon Eupheme. You bootstrapped your way up from a life of squalor to a spot on my crew, and that means what YOU say goes as well. Life doesn't get to dictate to you, YOU get to dictate to life!

He turns and points at the mule-shaped droid, Centaur.

And you.... You're...

Centaur glances anxiously at the different crew members.

You're....

Centaur makes an artificial swallowing sound.

Well you are certainly a conundrum. Maybe life does have a say on you, I'm not certain. We'll come back to you. My point is... we don't accept that anything is fixed in this world unless WE'RE the fixers. You got that? You read me, *muchachos*? Now just because we find ourselves here in a pickle doesn't mean we can't work our way out of it. We can most definitely turn this around, we just gotta get creative. Lemme noodle on this for a span.

CENTAUR

My powercell is only good for 48 hours.

NGUYEN

Well, in that case, maybe quit talking. You'll want to conserve your energy.

CENTAUR

However, my outer shell won't begin to rust for 12 years. Take your time.

BASTILLE

OK, let me see if I have this all square. We're deep in the weeds. We've no support from Bogota Actual. No comms, no re-up drops. And we've been tasked with erecting this tall science-y antenna. Thingy.

GARCIA

It's an atmo agitator. A radio frequency transmitter that operates in the high frequency band. It temporarily excites a limited area of the ionosphere.

NGUYEN

*Wahoo!* Look at the brain on Gar!

BASTILLE

That's all fine. Only the one person who could fulfill our mission, the geo-engineer, is dead. And not even from rebels! Best as we can tell, he was killed by local fauna. Some kind of lizard, more than like. Mach, did you confirm if those were reptiles or not?

MACHIAVELLI

I told you, Capt'n. Bring me a corpse or bring me some poop. So far, I've had neither.

NGUYEN

Oh, I'll bring you some poop.

BASTILLE

OK, so on the good news front, we do have one empty clone sleeve. The mobile repatterning unit still looks to be functional, so we can infuse this sleeve with a new soul. On the bad news side, though, we just don't know what we're gonna get.

GARCIA

—with precision.

BASTILLE

Yes, with precision. Without connectivity, we're kinda rolling the dice, aren't we. We might get the geo-engineer that we sorely need.

GARCIA

We might....

BASTILLE

But we might also get a barista.

GARCIA

Right. Or...a tax accountant.

Or...a masseuse.

Everyone responds enthusiastically in unison for a possible masseuse.

BASTILLE

No, that's true. That's true. We could do worse than a masseuse. Well, I reckon we oughta roll the dice. Yeah? All in agreement?

OK, positions everyone. Let's bring this meat sack online. And today, our lucky winner's name is....Ananias. That's all it says here. Ananias.

BACK TO:

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - MESSY TRIAGE CAMP

NGUYEN looks up at MACHIAVELLI, shrugs, and activates the mobile repatterning unit. An array of lights indicate that the clone is being needlecast (infused) with the packets of a subject named Ananias. MACHIAVELLI and NGUYEN hold the arms of the clone to his side during the process. GARCIA, rummaging through a supply crate, finds a small transistor radio and begins to fiddle with it, a relic from another age. It suddenly springs to life, with a voice from some forgotten century. GARCIA looks visibly pleased with himself.

TRANSISTOR RADIO

*"I believe in miracles, where you from, you sexy thing"*

GARCIA

*Mãe de Deus*, what a craptacular scene for your first day. At least I got good tunes spinning again. Look at this pigsty. Can you imagine waking up to this?

NGUYEN

I know, right? Last thing I'd want to see is your mug first.

Here he comes. Stay quiet, maybe he'll see Machiavelli instead.

GARCIA

[chortles]

The eyes on the clone suddenly open wide.

NGUYEN

*Gooooood* afternoon Mr. Ananias, we're delighted you've decided to join us! Ananias...Ananias...follow my light please? Can you track my light?

KARL

Ananias? No...no that doesn't sound right. <fatigued> I'm Karl. Karl Achemeier.

BASTILLE

Of course you are. Tell us Karl... what's your trade? Any chance you're in the field of terraforming? We were hoping for a geo-engineer. Or an electrical engineer. Or a civil engineer. Really, just...an engineer of any kind. Even an entry-level technician would be helpful.

KARL

Sorry, I'm...I feel quite quesy. I'm very confused how I even got here.

TRANSISTOR RADIO

*"I believe in miracles, since you came along, you sexy thing"*

BASTILLE

We're on Miranda, in the Te'cena outback. Doesn't really matter. The elevator pitch: we're on our own, there's some nasty beasts nearby, the jungle is too dense for an extraction. So we gotta hump it out by foot, but not before we accomplish our primary task. Which is erecting some kind of device here to excite the ionosphere.

GARCIA

The hope is that it creates localized atmospheric upcurrents that disrupt or "bend" the jet stream and influence regional weather patterns.

BASTILLE

Anyhow, now we're at the point where you tell us that you know how to do these kind of constructs in your sleep. You've done 'em a million times. You've.... You... You don't understand a thing we're talking about, do you?

KARL

Not a lick, I'm afraid. I'm actually a man of culture.

GARCIA

*Merda sagrada!* <laughs out loud>

MACHIAVELLI

As we clearly all are.

NYUGEN

I dare say, my good man. You are in very good company indeed!

BASTILLE

What, uh... what does "man of culture" mean?

KARL

Why, I'm in the performance arts. A high tenor altino in the Andromeda Astral Voices. Or at least I was. Oh dear. If I was in a clone database for repatterning, I fear something just dreadful must have happened.

GARCIA

They sent us THIS! <laughing in disbelief> They sent us a tenor altino! Please God, I'd have taken the tax accountant over this!

TRANSITOR RADIO

*"Where did you come from, angel? How did you know I'd be the one?"*

BASTILLE

Well, Karl, not gonna lie. You weren't really the guy we were hoping for. But I'm sure you feel the same. This mixup seems on par with everything else that the Federation has been doing of late. Don't worry, we won't leave you here—

NGUYEN

—We won't?

BASTILLE

We'll get you back to your "culture"...it just might take awhile.

I'm Bastille. My work focuses on growth pattern predictions, effects on surrounding environments; a chaotician, if you will. Machiavelli there is a game theorist. He's fascinated with animal group behavior. Garcia is our resident reptile specialist.

GARCIA

I'm a herpetologist.

NGUYEN

They really need a different name for that.

BASTILLE

Besides our primary objective, Command is also eager to expand in this sector and one or two "infrastructure" changes like the agitator may go a long way toward making this region habitable.

Our secondary objectives though are what we're more qualified for. Collect small flora and fauna samples. Observe herd migrations. Develop models

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to show the impact of large-scale projects, like the re-routing of rivers, etc.

And these two are our muscle. Nguyen, play nice, say "hi" to the new guy.

NGUYEN

Hi to the new guy.

BASTILLE

Yep, she never disappoints. And this shiny walkin' pommel horse here is our other heavy. We call her Mule.

CENTAUR

That isn't true. They call me Centaur.

BASTILLE

Well she kicks like a mule. And about as handsome. Welcome to our motley lot, Karl. Tell me....can you sing Steve Perry?

TRANSISTOR RADIO

*"I believe in miracles, where you from, you sexy thing..."*

END SCENE

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