

YOUNG LEIF

Part 2: Nancy

By Joe Fisher

Young Leif

Part 2: Nancy

A BAR ON TRUSK. A COMMS PANEL RINGS.

DEZ

Muskie... Yeah I speak English... uh-huh... uh-huh... yeah he's here... he's been here for a while, told me to keep it open ended... yeah sure, I can tell him.

A SMALL EXPLOSION SOMEWHERE IN THE BUILDING.

DEZ (CONT'D)

That was an explosion... yeah it happens sometimes, he told us there'd be some noise... honestly not the weirdest thing I've heard up there... okay... sure no problem.

FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS.

DEZ (CONT'D)

Hey Leif... Leif you look a little blown up there. I mean, I don't want to make assumptions but I heard an explosion and now you've come down the stairs looking a little sooty so I feel like-

LEIF

Today's test did not go as planned.

DEZ

Well I hope not because if it was a success then that means you're making a bomb which is strictly against house rules.

LEIF

I was not making a bomb.

DEZ

Okay, good. What are you making?

LEIF

Just working on some things. Won't happen again.

DEZ

Hey, my Dad wants to ask you something, hang on... Pashka?

MUFFLED SOUNDS OF DEZ'S DAD ASKING A QUESTION.

DEZ (CONT'D)

Right. Yeah, he wants to know if you think Miles and Daphne are ever going to get together.

LEIF

Who?

DEZ

You don't watch Frasier?

LEIF

What is Frasier?

DEZ

It's an Earth show.

LEIF

I don't watch it.

MORE MUFFLED QUESTIONS.

DEZ

He wants to know how you can not watch Frasier.

LEIF

Well obviously I've been busy almost killing myself upstairs.

MORE MUFFLED QUESTIONS.

DEZ

He says he wants you to watch it because he wants you to explain what a psychiatrist is.

LEIF

You don't have psychiatrists on Trusk?

DEZ

I don't know, what's a psychiatrist?

LEIF

It's someone you talk to about your problems.

DEZ

Like a friend?

LEIF

Kind of, but you pay them.

DEZ

What kind of friend charges you to talk about your problems?

LEIF

I know, it's weird.

DEZ

And why are they on the radio?

LEIF
They're not all on the radio.

DEZ
How come?

LEIF
I don't know, some people like to be publicly miserable.

DEZ
Your planet's weird, man.

LEIF
I know. Can I get a beer?

DEZ
Yeah, Dad's making Porsk. You want some?

LEIF
What is Porsk?

DEZ
Root pie.

LEIF
How do you guys get so big eating only plants?

DEZ
How big is a cow?

LEIF
Good point.

DEZ
Hey, somebody called for you.

LEIF
What?

DEZ
Somebody named BertBert?

LEIF
Shit.

ALICE
I told you.

DEZ
She said she's been calling you.

ALICE
She has been calling you and you're being rude.

DEZ
You should listen to Alice.

ALICE
Thank you, Dez.

LEIF
Alice is an algorithm, I don't have to listen to her.

ALICE
Hey, I can call myself an algorithm, not you.

LEIF
How the hell did she track me down?

DEZ
I don't know. Did she know you were on Trusk?

LEIF
Yeah.

DEZ
Guess that's how. Is that your lady?

LEIF
No, she's just someone I met.

DEZ
Well, she's on her way.

LEIF
Great.

DEZ
Do you owe her money or something?

LEIF
No. Do you ever avoid calling someone back until you have good news to talk about?

DEZ
No.

LEIF
Well, that's what I'm doing.

DEZ
Looks like it didn't work.

LEIF
She's from Sigius. Do you know anyone from Sigius?

DEZ
Shit, really?

LEIF
Yeah.

DEZ
I don't mess with Sigians, man, they make me uncomfortable.

LEIF
Right?

DEZ
It's like they're always watching me.

LEIF
Thank you.

DEZ
At the same time, if somebody's calling you repeatedly, y'know?

LEIF
I know.

LIGHTS BUZZ AND FLICKER.

LEIF (CONT'D)
... Hey... when the lights flicker like that, what does it mean?

DEZ
I thought you were an engineer.

LEIF
Dez, c'mon.

DEZ
Crappy power grid. When the hydro station has to switch over to backup power it get a little wobbly.

LEIF
Shit... shit.

DEZ
What?

LEIF
That's the problem.

DEZ
I mean, it's not a big problem.

LEIF
I don't have a consistent energy source.

DEZ
What?

LEIF
I need a big battery.

DEZ
How big?

LEIF
I don't know, I don't know how you measure energy on this planet.

DEZ
Like, size wise?

LEIF
Big. As big as my backpack.

DEZ
You can try around the corner, there's a scrapper who's always tearing something apart. He's got stuff all over the place.

LEIF
Perfect, I'll be back.

DEZ
What about your friend?

LEIF
Right, when she gets here just show her up to my room, okay?

DEZ
Okay.

FOOTSTEPS WALKING DOWN THE HALL. SOUND OF WELDING CAN BE HEARD THROUGH THE DOOR. KNOCKING ON THE DOOR. WELDING STOPS.

BERTBERT
Leif?

DOOR SLIDES OPEN.

LEIF
Hey.

BERTBERT
Hello.

LEIF

Fancy meeting you here.

BERTBERT

Yeah, I've been calling you.

LEIF

Sorry, I was in the middle of a project, I get weird in the middle of projects.

BERTBERT

Okay.

LEIF

Just happened to be in the neighborhood, huh?

BERTBERT

Yes. So I thought I would check in.

LEIF

That's sweet of you. No information gathering anymore?

BERTBERT

Leif, I'm serious, I don't have an ulterior motive, I was just checking in.

LEIF

I'm sure. Come in.

BERTBERT

Okay... your place is a mess.

LEIF

It is.

BERTBERT

So are you, what's going on?

LEIF

I told you, I was in the middle of a project.

BERTBERT

Yeah, Leif, I thought you were going to travel around for a while. I thought Trusk was just your first stop.

LEIF

It was going to be.

BERTBERT

What happened? You've been here for months.

LEIF

Have I? That's something I have to figure out. How do you guys keep track of time? If you're hopping from planet to planet, how do you even know when things are happening? Is there a Greenwich Mean Time for The Triad or something?

BERTBERT

No, we just kind of roll with it.

LEIF

Okay. Well, anyway I've been here. Alice, how many Earth months have I been here?

ALICE

Fourteen. Hi, BertBert.

BERTBERT

Hey, Alice.

LEIF

Whoops. I've been here over a year. Alice who won the World Series?

ALICE

The Atlanta Braves.

LEIF

Damn, really? Against who?

ALICE

The Cleveland Indians.

LEIF

Oh okay. I didn't have a dog in that fight.

BERTBERT

Leif-

LEIF

How have you been?

BERTBERT

Fine.

LEIF

How's the spy game?

BERTBERT

I'm not a spy, I'm a journalist.

LEIF

I feel like if you're a journalist but you don't tell people you are when you meet them, that just makes you a spy.

BERTBERT

Agree to disagree. Leif what's going on in here? It's a mess and it looks like the room of a psychopath, you have equations written on the wall.

LEIF

As I said, I've been in the middle of a project.

BERTBERT

Do I want to know what this project is?

A DEVICE CLICKS ON AND HUMS INTO BEING. EVERYTHING IN THE ROOM SEEMS TO SHAKE FOR A MOMENT.

BERTBERT (CONT'D)

Whoa. What's happening? What is this?

LEIF

This is 1 G. Earth gravity.

BERTBERT

... You made a gravity simulator?

LEIF

... When I left you on Sirius and got on that ship, I couldn't stop counting all the things I couldn't understand. The lack of inertia on the ship, what kind of fuel were they using, were they even using fuel, the wormhole, the life support, the list went on and on. I wanted to see a lot of things in these galaxies of yours but I know how I am. I wasn't going to be able to focus on anything until I knew how everything worked.

BERTBERT

Everything?

LEIF

Yeah. Luckily you provided me with a magical rectangle that can bring me all the information I need.

ALICE

That's me!

LEIF

So I got off the ship here on Trusk, rented a room above a bar and I started reading.

BERTBERT

Reading what?

LEIF

Everything... Then after several months of that I needed to build something. So I made this.

BERTBERT

A gravity simulator?

LEIF

Yep.

BERTBERT

From scratch?

LEIF

Wasn't so hard.

BERTBERT

So when you were bragging about being one of the smartest people on your planet...

LEIF

I don't brag, BertBert... What do you think of Earth gravity?

BERTBERT

It's... nice. Bouncy.

LEIF

There's more gravity on your planet?

BERTBERT

Oh yeah. A lot more.

LEIF

That explains that muscular frame of yours.

BERTBERT

What the fuck is "muscular frame" supposed to mean?

LEIF

We should go out tonight. Celebrate. What are you doing tonight?

BERTBERT

I came here because I thought you were dead. I have no other plans.

LEIF

I've been here a year and I don't even know what happens here. What happens on Trusk?

BERTBERT

Uh, shipyards mostly. Truskans are really good at making ships.

LEIF

Ships. I want a ship.

BERTBERT

Leif, you don't know how to pilot a ship.

LEIF

I figured this out didn't I?

BERTBERT

Ships are expensive. And a lot of work.

LEIF

But I could give it a cool name.

BERTBERT

Then there's the licensing and don't even get me started on the TedTube fees.

LEIF

But I could give it a cool name.

DEZ

Hey Leif?

LEIF

Dez, come in! This is BertBert.

DEZ

Yeah, we met downstairs. Leif, everything in the kitchen is hovering.

LEIF

Oh shit. Sorry. Just a few more minutes okay? Feels like home up here. Hey! Dez, we're going out tonight.

DEZ

We are?

LEIF

What do Truskans do for fun around here?

DEZ

Uh, there's a Groogy tonight, we could go to that.

LEIF

What is that?

DEZ
Contestants show up with cannons they make at home.
Then there's eight slabs of marble. Who ever can
shoot through the most slabs of marble with their
home made canon wins.

LEIF
Oh my God.

DEZ
What?

LEIF
It's a potato gun contest?

BERTBERT
What's a potato gun?

LEIF
It's a homemade gun. It shoots potatoes.

DEZ
Why would anyone do that to a potato?

LEIF
How often does this happen?

DEZ
Any time the scrap center has a prize they can give
away.

LEIF
What's the prize?

BERTBERT
Don't say it.

DEZ
A ship.

LEIF
... How much time do I have?

A RAUCOUS CROWD OF TRUSKANS. THE BUZZ OF A PA SYSTEM.

ANNOUNCER
(Alien language.)

DEZ
Do you want to know what he's saying?

BERTBERT
I think I get the gist.

DEZ
This is going to be weird. I don't think an alien's ever competed in a Groogy before.

BERTBERT
They don't do anything bad to the losers do they?

DEZ
We shame them endlessly, I feel like Leif's going to be okay with that.

BERTBERT
Yeah, he'll be fine.

DEZ
... So you seem nice.

BERTBERT
Thanks?

DEZ
Sorry. The Sigians I've met have all been really intense.

BERTBERT
Yeah, I know. We pride ourselves on being difficult.

DEZ
Yeah, why is that?

BERTBERT
It's our thing. Building starships is your thing, being difficult is our thing.

DEZ
We build starships because people need starships. Why do people need you to be difficult?

BERTBERT
People don't need us to be difficult but people need... "The worst things are always hidden." That's what we say on Sigius. Truly evil things are rarely obvious, you have to dig them up. So you have to be a pain in the ass. Don't take things at face value. If you don't, they can get so deep into your life that you can't get rid of them.

DEZ
Okay. See, that makes sense. How come Sigians never just say that?

BERTBERT
Because we're also arrogant pricks.

DEZ

I see.

BERTBERT

So how come you don't work in the ship yards?

DEZ

There's two honorable professions on Trusk. Working in the ship yards or working at the place where everyone goes to drink after working in the ship yards.

BERTBERT

I see.

THE CROWD BEGINS TO CHEER. WE HEAR HUGE METAL WHEELS SQUEAKING.

DEZ

Here comes one.

BERTBERT

That is a huge canon.

DEZ

That's actually average size.

BERTBERT

You make these for fun?

DEZ

It's tradition.

ANNOUNCER

(Alien language.)

THE ANNOUNCER COUNTS DOWN FROM THREE IN TRUSKAN AND THEN THE CANON FIRES A HUGE ROUND. THE CROWD GOES WILD.

BERTBERT

That was so loud!

DEZ

That was a good one, he went through three slabs.

BERTBERT

How do you win?

DEZ

Someone's got to beat three slabs.

THE CROWD SUDDENLY GOES QUIET.

BERTBERT

What's happening?

DEZ

I think our guy is up.

SMALL WHEELS SQUEAK ACROSS THE FLOOR.

DEZ (CONT'D)

There he is.

BERTBERT

That's what he built?

DEZ

Looks a little on the small end.

BERTBERT

This is ridiculous.

DEZ

No, Leif don't grab the mic, don't grab the mic.

MIC FEEDBACK.

LEIF

(Into the microphone.)

Hey everyone. Great to be here. Thanks for letting me complete tonight. This has been a lot of fun.

THE CROWD STARTS LAUGHING AT HIM.

BERTBERT

Oh no.

DEZ

This is a little embarrassing.

LEIF

Okay, here I go.

LEIF'S CANNON BEGINS TO FIRE UP. THE POWER CONTINUES TO INCREASE EXPONENTIALLY AND IT BEGINS TO TRANSFORM INTO A MUCH BIGGER CANNON.

DEZ

What the hell?

BERTBERT

What is that?

LEIF'S CANNON UNLEASHES A MASSIVE BEAM OF ENERGY, OBLITERATING ALL OF THE MARBLE SLABS. THE CROWD IS STUNNED.

DEZ
Well, now.

BERTBERT
Holy shit.

LEIF
Did I win?

THE CROWD GOES WILD. THE SOUND OF THE CROWD FADES OUT AND
THEN WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A METAL DOOR CREAKING OPEN AND
ECHOING THROUGH AN EMPTY SHIP.

LEIF (CONT'D)
Okay. Here it is.

BERTBERT
Lovely.

DEZ
I suppose I should've mentioned that that ship you
win may not be a working ship.

LEIF
It's fine.

BERTBERT
It's a total wreck, Leif.

LEIF
It's a diamond in the rough.

DEZ
In its day this was a really nice light cruiser.
They don't make them like this anymore.

BERTBERT
Yeah, it's a real marvel of engineering.

LEIF
What should I do first?

DEZ
Not to be anticlimactic but I should probably go
get a broom. It's a mess in here.

LEIF
Good thinking.

BERTBERT
I'm getting a very strong sense that something may
be living in here.

LEIF
Something is living in here.

BERTBERT
You can't live in here.

LEIF
Oh I am definitely living in here.

BERTBERT
Leif.

LEIF
Hey, remember when you told me The Triad was going to eat me alive? How'm I doing? I made gravity today. I won a spaceship in a homemade cannon competition. I feel like I'm doing pretty well.

BERTBERT
... Fine. Take your Tangle and put it in that slot on the control panel.

LEIF
Why?

BERTBERT
Because that's how it works.

LEIF
Okay.

PARTS OF THE SHIP SLOWLY COME TO LIFE.

ALICE
Um. I feel dirty.

BERTBERT
Guess what, Alice? Leif got a new ship.

ALICE
Can we talk about the word "new"?

LEIF
What do you think, Alice?

ALICE
It's a great ship.

LEIF
See?

ALICE
...Is what they would've said 50 years ago about this ship.

BERTBERT
See?

LEIF
Come on. Give me some good news.

ALICE
The good news is, it's already in a scrap yard so you don't have to take it to a scrap yard.

LEIF
Alice, can you just tell me what the hell this ship is, please?

ALICE
This WAS a Truskan Selig. A now discontinued class of star cruiser designed for small occupancy and long distances, complete with mini kitchen and small sleeping quarters.

LEIF
Sleeping quarters?! Where?!

ALICE
In the back.

LEIF RUNS TO THE BACK.

LEIF
(From the back.)
Fuck yes!

LEIF (CONT'D)
It's a camper van. it's a space faring camper van. This is amazing.

BERTBERT
Leif, you're taking a hard right into "Space Dirtbag" territory.

LEIF
Nonsense. Alice, give me a work up, how much to get it flying?

BERTBERT
You don't know how to fly it, Leif.

LEIF
Alice?

ALICE

Well, there are multiple leaks in the hull, the drive core is at 30% and dropping, environmental control is nonexistent, and life support is functioning but definitely needs to be flushed because it will have a smell to it that can only be described as: farts. On top of all that the sensor web is badly damaged so there could be a whole other list of problems that I can't detect.

LEIF

That sounds like no problem.

BERTBERT

Okay, I give up.

LEIF

It's going to be great.

BERTBERT

Leif, do you know why they discontinued this class of ship? I mean, aside from the fact that space travel is much more economical in large groups?

LEIF

Why?

BERTBERT

Because it only carries a few people, and when you're out there in the void, things go wrong. And when things go wrong you need other people around.

LEIF

Okay. You coming with me, then?

BERTBERT

No.

LEIF

Then I guess I'll just have to make do. Sorry, the potential is just too amazing.

BERTBERT

Okay.

LEIF

Look, I appreciate you stopping by, but I really want to get to work on this so unless you want to hand me tools-

BERTBERT

I think I found someone else from Earth.

LEIF
... What do you mean?

BERTBERT
Darren Delvy.

LEIF
I know that name.

BERTBERT
He's from a place called New Zealand.

LEIF
Yeah. Aerospace guy, right?

BERTBERT
He was. Now he's living on a really nice plot of land on Nesso.

LEIF
What's Nesso?

BERTBERT
Leisure planet. Lots of resorts and spas.

LEIF
An entire planet of resorts and spas?

BERTBERT
There's a lot of people out there, they all need a vacation. Do you remember what he was working on?

LEIF
A fission rocket, I think. Jesus, did he build it?

BERTBERT
There's no record of a fission rocket on earth.

LEIF
...huh.

BERTBERT
A fission engine would change everything on Earth.

LEIF
Yeah, would've been nice to see one.

BERTBERT
Leif, you just won a fission engine in a contest.

LEIF
Oh. Right. Lucky me.

BERTBERT

... You don't think it's a coincidence-

LEIF

Jesus Christ, you're not here to check in on me on at all, are you?

DEZ

Hey, I found an old bottle of Thoom. What do you call it, when you hit the bottle on the side of the ship?

BERTBERT

I'm going to track him down, why don't you come with me?

LEIF

Why would I do that?

BERTBERT

You don't want to talk to another Earthling?

LEIF

I've talked to plenty of Earthlings.

BERTBERT

Then do me a favor.

LEIF

Why would I do THAT?

BERTBERT

Because I'm your friend.

LEIF

I've met you twice now. Both times you were lying to me. That doesn't get you in the friend category.

BERTBERT

Leif, what are you doing here? How did you get here? What's your deal with The Teds? What's going on?

LEIF

...

BERTBERT

When I track this guy down, he's going to say the same thing, isn't he? He has a deal with The Teds that he can't talk about. How much do you want to bet?

LEIF

...

BERTBERT

Why are The Teds messing with Earth, Leif? What do they have to gain?

LEIF

I don't care.

BERTBERT

You don't care that they're fucking with your planet?

LEIF

No, I don't care. I don't live there anymore. I'm up here now... I think you should go.

BERTBERT

Fine. Good luck with your pile of junk.

LEIF

If we ever see each other again, just be honest with me. If you're not it's going to be the last time I ever see you.

BERTBERT

Same goes for you. Goodbye, Leif.

LEIF

See ya.

DEZ

... Sigians, man.

LEIF

Right?

DEZ

What was she talking about, with The Teds?

LEIF

Don't worry about it.

DEZ

You shouldn't do deals with The Teds, man.

LEIF

Don't worry about it. I'm fine. Besides, once I get this thing up and running, nobody will be able to catch me.

DEZ

Okay... Well the rule on Trusk is: You buy it, you name it. You got a name for it?

LEIF

(Laughing.)
... Yeah, I do.

END OF PART TWO.