

This Is Not a Torture or an Engine  
by  
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CHARACTERS:

AYLA: An everygoddess.

MATTHIUS: A vague Prometheus.

DORA: A vague Pandora.

SMITH: An everyman, and Dora's older brother.

CHORUS:

ONE/DARK MAN: Male

TWO/RECEPTIONIST: Female

THREE: Male

TIME: The very recent past. Several days ago at most.

PLACE: A home, a cave, an obscenely large office, and the high road and the low road that connect them.

A NOTE ON FORMAT: This play is written to read like a musical score. Each block of text is written as if on a musical staff - what lines up vertically is said simultaneously. Character names of those who lead the scene are bolded, while those providing the background ambient noise are not.

*There is not a torture or an engine wherewithal Zeus  
can induce me to declare these things, till he has  
loosed me from these cruel shackles. So let him hurl  
his smoky lightning flame, and throw in turmoil all  
things in the world with white-winged snowflakes and  
deep bellowing thunder beneath the earth: me he shall  
not bend by all this to tell him who is fated to drive  
him from his tyranny.*

- From *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus

*(An ancient cave. All is dark. Strifes live and breed in here. In a moment, Matthius will enter with a jar and a lit lighter, held high. He locates the source of the noise, and sneaks up behind it.)*

ONE: Abdominal cramps. Abscess,

THREE:

TWO: *(Cough. Cough. Sneeze. Some coughs. A moan and a groan. Sneezes.*

ONE: pulmonary. Anemia. Bell Palsy. Botulism. Cancer of the skin, thyroid, or

THREE: Symptoms: Headache. Fatigue. Fever. Irritation of the skin, Dehydration.

TWO: *Wheezes. Maybe some more coughing. Sounds of being sick. A nose being blown.*

ONE: tonsil. Chickenpox. Chilblains. Cholera, Dementia, Dengue Fever. Diabetes,

THREE: Vomiting. Cough. Shortness of breath. Chest pain, back pain,

TWO: *The sounds of someone in pain, trying to sleep. Counting sheep maybe? More*

ONE: types One and Two. Dyptheria. Evans Syndrome. Factor Ten Deficiency. Fever, fibroid.

THREE: joint pain, pain in general. Increased thirst, Decrease in appetite.

TWO: *coughing. Some moaning and groaning thrown in, but not too much. Some heaved sighs.*

ONE: Fibrosis, Gangrene, Gingivitis, Hepatitis, Infectious mononucleosis, Jock itch. Kidney

THREE: Smelly discharge. Bleeding, Bruising, Hair loss. Varicose veins,

TWO: *A snuffle. Throwing up, in all its grossness--being sick isn't glamorous. More*

ONE: stones. Lymphoma. Malaria, Nosebleed, Obesity, Polio. Quadriplegia, Rabies, Scabies,

THREE: Insomnia, Malnutrition, Blindness, Depression. Cysts, Scabs. Dry eyes,

TWO: *coughing, it's getting worse. Some worse moans and groans. Be sounding really pretty*

ONE: Typhoid, ulcer, vaginal prolapse, warts, Xanthomatosis, yellow fever, and-)

THREE: Bed sores, Blood clot, Hearing loss, weak pulse, yawning excessively, and-)

TWO: *badly sick at this point, so much so that we're starting to seriously worry when-*

*(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Sickness into the jar. The Chorus becomes the sound of sickness in the jar)*

*(Clicks of a lighter, a flame. It illuminates one chair, center. Voices in the dark.)*

ONE: This is a story you know: This is a story  
TWO: Prometheus steals And is punished for it.  
THREE: Gives fire to man

ONE: you know Out fly the strifes of mankind. Greed,  
TWO: Pandora opens a box. Pandora opens a jar. Sickness,  
THREE: a jar, actually. Old age,

ONE: Insanity, This is a story you know:  
TWO: Passion, This is a story you know:  
THREE: Labor, Hope. This is a story you know:

*(Ayla takes her place on the chair. Clicks of a Roulette wheel spinning, and the numbers pass as illuminated figures and faces until the ball drops, and we land on Dora.)*

ONE: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.  
TWO: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.  
THREE: Implementation of protective services to designated charge effective immediately.

ONE: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract  
TWO: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract  
THREE: Compensation level Four. Duration of assignment: Eighteen months. Contract

ONE: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.  
TWO: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.  
THREE: provided beneath seat cushion. Sign, return, and report for duty.

(AYLA retrieves her contract, and signs. As pen hits paper, the flame stretches and bends, becoming the high road, by the light of which we see DORA and SMITH at home. Smith packs a briefcase full of small wax figures. Dora does her homework. Ayla watches from the high road.)

**DORA:** Smith? Am I stupid? They told me I'm mentally retarded and that I'm

**SMITH:** Yeah? No.

**TWO:** (*Singing*) "If it's a crime then I'm guilty.

**DORA:** incapable of making my own decisions and that I should never get married and have

**SMITH:**

**TWO:** Guilty of loving you. (*Short instrumental solo.....*)

**DORA:** children because I won't be able to take care of them. At school

**SMITH:** Who told you that?

**TWO:**.....

**DORA:** they did. It's true, isn't it?

**SMITH:** No it's not true. It's not entirely true Dora, that's

**TWO:**.....)(*Singing*) "What can I do? What can I say?"

**DORA:** But what part IS true?

**SMITH:** a terrible way to put it I can't believe they told you that.

**TWO:** After I've taken the blame?

**DORA:** Smith? Smith. Oh.

**SMITH:** Things are just a little harder for you. That doesn't

**TWO:** You say 'you're through, you'll go your way' but I'll always feel just

**DORA:** Oh.

**SMITH:** mean you can't do them. You just need help sometimes thinking things through.

**TWO:** the same. Maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong, loving

**DORA:** Oh okay.

**SMITH:** That's all.

**TWO:** you dear like I do. If it's a crime then I'm guilty. Guilty of--

**THREE:** (Click-Shhhhhhhhhhh-

**DORA:** Smith? Can you help me with this?

**SMITH:** Yeah?

**TWO:** (Bring bring! Bring bri-) Hello? Heeeeeeeeya how's it going?

**THREE:** -Boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom

**DORA:** I need to bring a recipe to class tomorrow, and I can't

**SMITH:** What are you working on?

**TWO:** Uh huh.

**THREE:** boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom. Badoo

**DORA:** decide what to bring. In your books. That's where you find

**SMITH:** Where are you looking?

**TWO:** Uh-huh What's that? Speak up, it's loud in here.

**THREE:** boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom

**DORA:** everything, right?

**SMITH:** Sure. Usually. Books can be helpful. For a recipe, we should look

**TWO:** Yeah, yeah. About six weeks now.

**THREE:** boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Badoo boom. Badoo

**DORA:** Okay. Okay. Smith?

**SMITH:** in a cookbook. Try this one. Yeah?

**TWO:** Uh huh. What? Hold on. TURN THAT FUCKIN SHIT DOOOWWN!

**THREE:** boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom boom. Badoo boom. Boom boom boom-)

**DORA:** I still can't decide. Um. Apples.

**SMITH:** Well, what's your favorite food? Okay. So maybe we

**TWO:** Sorry. What were you sayin? Oh yeah.

**THREE:**

**DORA:** I don't like them baked because they get mushy.  
**SMITH:** could find a recipe for apple pie, or  
**TWO:** He told me-  
**THREE:** *(Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk.)*

**DORA:** Just regular apples.  
**SMITH:** Well, there aren't really recipes for regular  
**TWO:** He told me they decided not to.  
**THREE:** *(Crash!)* Shit. Fuckin, *(Clunk. Clunk clunk clunk.)*

**DORA:** Why does it have to be something I like?  
**SMITH:** apples. What's something else you like? It doesn't. I  
**TWO:** Yea, well, since when.  
**THREE:** *(Thunk!)*

**DORA:**  
**SMITH:** just thought that might make it easier to decide. To think of something you like. It  
**TWO:** Uh huh. Uh huh. Uh huh.  
**THREE:**

**DORA:**  
**SMITH:** narrows down the options, and when you're having a hard time making a decision, it  
**TWO:**  
**THREE:** *(Creak, Slam!)*

**DORA:** Oh. Okay. What do I like?  
**SMITH:** helps to narrow down your options. A lot of things.  
**TWO:** No, you just be real clear to him.  
**THREE:** *(Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)*

**DORA:** I don't  
**SMITH:** You like pineapples, and tortillas. Broccoli soup, french bread, desserts,  
**TWO:** Right now! Start right now!  
**THREE:** *(Slam!)*

**DORA:** like cake though. Yeah. That's  
**SMITH:** Here are some cookie recipes. I know you like cookies.  
**TWO:**  
**THREE:** George! Hey!

**DORA:** true. Do they have peanut butter chocolate chip?  
**SMITH:** Chocolate chip? Um...Yes! Right here.  
**TWO:** Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah.  
**THREE:** Long time no see!

**DORA:** Those kind are good. Yeah.  
**SMITH:** Do you want to bring this recipe in? Are you supposed to  
**TWO:** Uh huh. Uh huh.  
**THREE:** Just running to the store.

**DORA:** Yeah. Yeah.  
**SMITH:** copy it out? You'll need some paper then.  
**TWO:** Said what? *(Burst of laughter)* Who told you that?  
**THREE:** Need anything? All right.

*(Smith brings Dora paper and a pencil.)*

**DORA:** Thank you Smith.  
**SMITH:** You're welcome. You'll be okay if I  
**TWO:** She did, huh? Well I'm gonna have to talk to her about  
**THREE:** All right. You too, man.

**DORA:** Yeah. Okay.  
**SMITH:** go work for a little while? Call me if you need me. I'll be back soon.  
**TWO:** that. Okay. Okay.  
**THREE:** *(Sound of old car door opening, and slamming shut. Old car starting, and*

**DORA:** Okay. Love you.  
**SMITH:** Love you.  
**TWO:** You too. Bye now.  
**THREE:** *driving off.)*

*(An ancient cave. All is dark. Strifes live and breed in here. In a moment, Matthus will enter with a jar and lit lighter, held high. He locates the source of the noise, and sneaks up behind it.)*

ONE: Psychoses: Senile dementia, uncomplicated. Vascular dementia. Unspecified senile  
THREE: Former Treatment of Insanity - While men believed that madness meant  
TWO: Psychotropic Medications, Generic: Haloperidol, Chlorpromazine,  
ONE: psychotic condition. Delirium temens. Drug psychoses. Manic disorder, single episode.  
THREE: possession by a demon, it is not difficult, perhaps, to account for the brutal  
TWO: Loxapine, Thioridazine, Thiothizene, Pimozide, Fluphenazine, Haloperidol,  
ONE: Manic disorder, recurrent episode. Bipolar affective disorder, mixed. Paranoid states.  
THREE: treatment shown to those possessed; but the reader will be amazed by the details of  
TWO: Mesoridazine, Trifluoperazine, Chlorpromazine, Perphenazine, Clozapine, Zirasidone,  
ONE: Autism, current or active. Anxiety state. Hysteria. Agoraphobia with panic. Social  
THREE: the scientific devices, happily of a past age, planned for the cure of the unsound.  
TWO: Risperidone, Quetiapine, Olanzapine. Psychotropic Medications, Brand Name: Haldol,  
ONE: phobia. Dysthymic disorder. Fatigue, psychogenic. Voyeurism. Sexual masochism or  
THREE: One of these was to entice the sufferer to walk across a floor, which, suddenly  
TWO: Largactil, Loxtane, Mellaril, Moban, Navane, Orap, Permitil, Prolixin, Serenace,  
ONE: sadism. Nymphomania. Bruxism. Jet lag. Somnambulism. Post-traumatic stress disorder.  
THREE: giving way, dropped him into a bath where he half drowned. Another was to let the  
TWO: Serentil, Stelazine, Thorazine, Trilafon, Clozaril, Geodon, Risperdal, Serpqel,  
ONE: Psychotic factors associated with diseases classified elsewhere-  
THREE: patient down a well, in which the water, made gradually to rise, (\*)  
TWO : Zyprexa. Possible side effects: Nausea, insomnia, paranoia-

*(\* if needed for Three to finish on time with One and Two, continue with the following for as long as needed)*

(THREE: frightened them with the prospect of an awful death. Within the memory of men still living, the patients of Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam), chained to the wall like wild beasts, were shown to the public on certain days of the week at the charge of twopence a visitor; and here were to be found in their cells, crouching on straw, women with nothing but a blanket for clothing.)

*(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Insanity into the jar. The Chorus becomes the sound of insanity in the jar)*

*(Smith on the street, briefcase in hand. He walks the neighborhood.)*

**SMITH:** *(Knock knock)* Hi. Good- Good evening, I'm- I'm here to show  
**ONE:** All right! All right! What do you want?  
**TWO:** Get the door! Who is it? What do they want? Shut the door,

**SMITH:** you- You have a nice evening. *(Knock knock)* Hi. Good  
**ONE:** We don't need one. Goodbye. Some salesman. Get the door!  
**TWO:** it's freezing out! Who was it? *(Slam!)* All right! All-

**SMITH:** evening. I'm here to- Okay. Okay.  
**ONE:** Who is it? Tell whoever it is we don't want any.  
**TWO:** right! Whatever it is we don't want any and that's that. Understand?

**SMITH:** Yeah, no, no, I- Yeah. You too. *(Knock knock.)* Good evening, do  
**ONE:** Shut the door it's freezing! *(Slam!)* Oh! Hello.  
**TWO:** You have a good evening. *(Sings something alluring*

**SMITH:** you have a moment? I just wanted to show you-  
**ONE:** I have plenty of time. Won't you come in? Have a drink? It's  
**TWO:** *and slightly sensual, but not overtly so. Ideally it's upbeat as well, like it's*

**SMITH:** No! Thank you. No thank you but you have a good- evening. *(Knock*  
**ONE:** cold out. Please! I insist. You sure? All right, your loss.  
**TWO:** *on the radio, or maybe it's a record playing softly in the other room.) (Slam!)*

**SMITH:** knock) Hello ma'am I'm sorry to disturb you, do you have a moment? Great.  
**ONE:** (Sounds of cats meowing. Lots and lots of cats all around. This woman  
**TWO:** Hello? Oh a visitor. Lovely.

**SMITH:** Great. Have you seen these before?  
**ONE:** is the epitome of the Neighborhood Cat Lady, and has a consistent twenty-odd  
**TWO:** Yes, I have a moment. What, the little sculpture

**SMITH:** Exactly. Now let me just Oh. Oh okay.  
**ONE:** cats in residence. The more this sounds like twenty-odd cats, the better. A  
**TWO:** things? I already have a few in the house, I don't need any more. But

**SMITH:** Thank you. I will. You have a nice one.  
**ONE:** variety of meowing and hissing and purring tones would be ideal.)  
**TWO:** Those ones are very nice. Good luck, stay warm. Good night now. (Slam!)

**SMITH:** (knocks) (No answer. Knocks again) (knocks) (knocks)  
**ONE:** Oh no. Salesman. Pretend we're not here. Quiet!  
**TWO:** (loud shushing sounds with some intermingled giggling. More shhhhs, giggles,

**SMITH:** (Knocks, Knocks, Knocks. Knocks! Knocks! KNOCKS!!)  
**ONE:** Pretend we aren't here. Can't you hold it!? Shut up! He could be dangerous!  
**TWO:** and a few beats of silence. A loud burst of laughter, a loud SHHH! followed by total

**SMITH:** (KICKS THE DOOR!) FUCK YOU AND YOUR CUSTOM  
**ONE:**  
**TWO:** silence.) (A scream)

**SMITH:** FUCKING DOORMAT TOO!  
**ONE:** Go Away! Go away or I'm calling the cops!  
**TWO:** (A scream) Dad! DAD!

(Smith turns and throws his briefcase as far as he can. Ayla drops from the high road to catch it.)

**AYLA:** Interesting sales pitch. Does it usually work?  
**SMITH:** I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there.  
**ONE:** *(Zoom!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*  
**THREE:** *(Zoom!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*

**AYLA:** Someone is always listening. It's just we  
**SMITH:** I didn't know anyone was listening.  
**ONE:** *(Honk!)* *(Honk, honk!)*  
**THREE:** *(Honk!)* *(Honk, honk!)*

**AYLA:** may be really far away. If you yell loud enough, we'll hear you.  
**SMITH:** Oh.  
**ONE:** *(Zoom!)* *(Honk!)*  
**THREE:** *(Squeal of car breaks)*

**AYLA:** What's in there? Then why bother selling it?  
**SMITH:** Nothing. They're nothing.  
**ONE:** *(Zoom)* *(Zoom zoom!)*  
**THREE:** *(Slam!)* *(Sound of a car door opening.)*

**AYLA:** Do they? Would I?  
**SMITH:** People like them? Sometimes. No, they're just these stupid little wax  
**ONE:** *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*  
**THREE:** *(Slam!)* *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*

**AYLA:** Show me your favorite one.  
**SMITH:** figures I make that, I don't know, maybe you would.  
**ONE:** *(Hoooooonk!)*  
**THREE:** *(Sounds of a motorcycle speeding past and shifting)*

**AYLA:** Or are they all stupid?  
**SMITH:** My favorite?  
**ONE:** *(Zoom!)*  
**THREE:** *(Zoom!)*

*(Smith opens his briefcase and takes out a small wax figurine. He hands it to Ayla.)*

**AYLA:** I can see that. You're good with your hands.  
**SMITH:** It's a mouse. Thank you.  
**ONE:** (*Honk!*) (*Honk honk!*)  
**THREE:** (*Honk!*) (*Honk honk!*)

**AYLA:** You don't like mice though.  
**SMITH:** It's just the last one I made. My favorite is always the  
**ONE:**  
**THREE:** (*Squeal of car breaks.*)

**AYLA:** It's beautiful. Do you?  
**SMITH:** last one I made. What makes you say I don't like mice?  
**ONE:** (*sound of a siren speeding past*)  
**THREE:**

**AYLA:** They're pests. No one does. It's beautiful.  
**SMITH:** No. I don't. But what made you say that?  
**ONE:** (*Honk!*)  
**THREE:** (*Honk!*)

**AYLA:** How much? Thank you Smith.  
**SMITH:** Keep it. No, as a gift. I never, Who are you?  
**ONE:** (*Zoom zoom!*)  
**THREE:** (*Zoom!*)

**AYLA:** Ayla. Ayla, yes. We prefer Deity. Actually. Yes Smith.  
**SMITH:** You're!?! The Goddess. You're Ayla.  
**ONE:** (*Motorcycle*)  
**THREE:**

**AYLA:**  
**SMITH:** I don't believe you.  
**ONE:** *shifting*  
**THREE:** (*Honk! honk ho-*)

AYLA

You live at home with your younger sister Dora, Smith, Southside, Section 4.  
You walk the streets selling for six to eight hours a day, yesterday you made four sales,  
the day before you made eight and today you made zero.  
On Wednesday nights you eat cornbread and stew, your favorite radio station is 89.1 because  
your grandfather used to host a talk show they sometimes air recordings of that you never  
want to miss because he and your father had the same voice.  
You set your alarm for 6:55 in the morning, you snooze three times before getting out of  
bed, and eat steel cut oats for breakfast which you put on the stove, leave to take your  
shower, and then eat.  
You have never owned a bicycle  
though you do know how to ride one, and the scar on your  
left knee is from tripping down the front steps of school on your last day.

**AYLA:** I am who I am, Smith.  
**SMITH:** That's just information. Show me. Show me something only a  
**ONE:** (Honk!) (honk honk!) (honk!)  
**THREE:** (nk!) (Zoom!)

**AYLA:** Deity.  
**SMITH:** God could show me. And then I'll believe you.  
**ONE:** (Sound of a siren passing by, turning the corner, and fading away.)  
**THREE:** (Zoom zoom!) (Zoom!)

(She takes a lighter from her pocket, clicks  
it and holds the flame. Smith stares.)

**AYLA:** Shit. If you'll excuse me I must run, I'm being invoked.  
**SMITH:** Wow. It's beautiful.  
**DORA:** Help? Please!

(And in one swift motion Ayla has jumped the  
high road to Dora, at home.)

**AYLA:** What is it? Ayla.  
**DORA:** Who are you.  
**TWO:** (Thunk. Thunk thunk thunk. Creeeeeeaaaaaak, Slam!)  
**THREE:** (Click!) (Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh)



**DORA:** Butter. Chocolate chip cookies. Ingredients: One slash two cups  
**TWO:** (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)  
**THREE:** just go with what seems best for now. ideas? just sing it! oh, and keep it

**DORA:** butter. Softened. One slash two cups creamy peanut butter.  
**TWO:** (Clink.) (Clink.)  
**THREE:** going till the end of this little scene here. thanks.)

**DORA:** One slash- Why does it have to be creamy? I think I would  
**TWO:** (Clink.) (Clink.)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** make it with crunchy because then you would have piece of peanuts too.  
**TWO:** (Clink.)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** I like the pieces of peanuts. I really like peanuts. The roasted kind in  
**TWO:** (Sound of water running.....)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** bags. Yeah. That makes me want a bag of peanuts, but I can't wait for  
**TWO:** .....)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** Smith to get home to take me because then it will be closed. I should just  
**TWO:** (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** go get some but, Mmmm. By myself is probably not a good idea.  
**TWO:** (Crash!) Shit. (Clink.) (Clink.) (Clink.)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** Yeah, I'm not stupid. Alone at night, not a good idea. Ayla?  
**TWO:** (Sound of water running.....)  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** Ayla! Could you come walk me to the store that's on the corner please!  
**TWO:** (Think think think think think.) (Creak-Slam.)  
**THREE:**

(Ayla flips her lighter on, and the noise ends. Smith hears it, but does not see it.)

**AYLA:** Smith. Smith..... Hello.  
**SMITH:** Hello? Hello. I hear you.  
**DORA:** Ayla! Question! Ayla?

(Ayla flips her lighter off. All is dark. The cave of strifes again. Matthius holds his lighter high. Dora speaks from home.)

**TWO:** One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve.  
**ONE:** I want that. And I want that. And I want that. And I want that, and I  
**DORA:** Ayla, do you not hear me?

**TWO:** Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen.  
**ONE:** want that, and that, and that and-  
**DORA:** Question.

(Ayla flips her lighter on, and everything stops. She holds the flame. She is closer to Smith than before.)

SMITH

I hear you.

(Ayla flips her lighter off. All is dark. The cave of strifes again.)

TWO: Sixteen. Seventeen. Eighteen. Nineteen. Twenty. Twenty-one. Twenty-two. Twenty-three.  
ONE: that, and that. I want that. And I want that too, and that, and that, and three of  
DORA: This is for real, isn't it. Ayla?

TWO: Twenty-four. Twenty-five. Twenty-  
ONE: those, and seven of those, I want-  
DORA: You really aren't coming?

*(Ayla flips her lighter on, it all stops. Holding the flame, she's even closer than before.)*

SMITH

I hear you.

*(Lighter off. All is dark. The cave.)*

TWO: six. Twenty-seven. Twenty-eight. Twenty-nine. Thirty. Thirty-one. Thirty-two. Thirty-  
ONE: twelve of those, and nineteen of those, and seventy-five of those, and a million and-  
DORA: Well, Smith? Anyone?

*(And in one swift motion, Matthius sweeps all of Greed into his jar, Ayla flips her lighter on, and it is silent. She holds the flame. Se is practically on top of Smith.)*

SMITH

I hea-

*(Ayla brings him to her, and he is enveloped.)*

DORA

Anyone?  
Fine then.

*(Dora opens the door, and steps outside.)*

ONE: *(a wolf whistle)* Hey. Hey missy. What's your name, come here a  
TWO: *(sings the taunting 'nyah nyah' song of school playgrounds)*  
THREE: *(two wolf whistles)* *(a wolf whistle)*

ONE: minute won't you? You want some fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun?  
TWO: *(two wolf whistles)* *(a wolf whistle)* Hey. Hey missy.  
THREE: Hey. Hey missy. What's your name, come here a minute won't you?

ONE: Come on uptown with us, we're all going uptown tonight, that's where  
TWO: What's your name, come here a minute won't you? You want some fun?  
THREE: You want some fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on

ONE: it's at. *(two wolf whistles)* Hey.  
TWO: Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on uptown with us, we're  
THREE: uptown with us, we're all going uptown tonight, that's where it's at. *(wolf*

ONE: Hey missy. What's your name, come-  
TWO: all going uptown tonight, that's-  
THREE: *whistle)* *(two wolf whistles)*

DORA

GO! AWAY!

*(She slams the door and they are gone.)*

*(Ayla with Smith on the low road. She flips the lighter on, and holds the flame. Smith watches, amazed.)*

**SMITH:** What is it? It's beautiful. What is it? Could I,  
**AYLA:** Fire. Here.  
ONE: This is a story you know, you  
TWO: This is a story you know. A story.  
THREE: This is a story you know.



*(Smith opens his briefcase, gives her a piece of wax. Ayla pulls a loose thread from her clothing, and fashions him a small candle. She lights it, and hands it to Smith.)*

A gift.

AYLA

Yes. Thank you

SMITH

Think of me as you watch it?

AYLA

Thank you.  
Yes.  
I will.

SMITH

*(And she is gone. Smith returns home. All is quiet, the lights are out. He places the candle on the table, sits down, and stares at the flame.)*

*(On the high road, Ayla finds Matthius examining his jar of strifes. Chorus One, Two and Three become the sound of sickness, insanity, and greed trapped inside. It can be heard the entire scene.)*

So what's the secret?

AYLA

Secret?

MATTHIUS

AYLA  
Getting in and out of that place without drowning in those,  
whatever you've got in there.

MATTHIUS  
No secret.

*(Matthius pulls out his lighter. He  
lights it, and holds the flame.)*

AYLA  
That's it?

MATTHIUS  
That's it.

AYLA  
You've got to be kidding me, darling.

MATTHIUS  
They're scared of it. See?

*(He holds the lighter up to the jar. The  
strifes get louder. He flips the lighter  
off, and they're softer again.)*

AYLA  
If it was that simple,

MATTHIUS  
Seems to be.

AYLA  
why on earth didn't we try getting rid of them ages ago?

*(The strifes get louder.)*

They're trying to get out, I think. MATTHIUS

It sounds terrible. AYLA

Yes, well. Greed, Insanity and Sickness fighting for space, I wouldn't expect music. MATTHIUS

Still, It sounds awfully terrible. AYLA

*(The strifes quiet down again.)*

I don't think it's working. MATTHIUS

No? What makes you say that? AYLA

I saw greed today. In a Man. MATTHIUS

And you're surprised? AYLA

Yes I'm surprised! MATTHIUS

But darling- AYLA

Because I have greed in here!  
It's- MATTHIUS

*(The strifes in the jar become louder for a moment.)*

MATTHIUS

You can hear it, right?

AYLA

Yes, but darling-

MATTHIUS

If Greed is in here, what the heck is it still doing running around out there?

AYLA

Do you think maybe you could have, just missed some?

MATTHIUS

No. I'm sure. It's all here.

AYLA

Is it possible that-

MATTHIUS

No! I've told you!

AYLA

I was going to suggest something entirely different, but if you don't want to hear it,

MATTHIUS

I do.

AYLA

Fine. Don't yell at me.

MATTHIUS

Allright. I won't.

*(Beat. )*

Are you going to tell me or not!  
MATTHIUS

No. Talked to like that, I don't think I will.  
AYLA

Fine. Back to work for me then.  
MATTHIUS

*(Beat.)*

How's Dora?  
MATTIUS

Fine.  
AYLA

*(Beat.)*

You should see if they have to be destroyed, Matthius. It could just be containment isn't enough.  
AYLA

Destroyed.  
MATTHIUS

I think so  
AYLA

How.  
MATTHIUS

I don't know. I think you'd have to ask.  
AYLA

MATTHIUS

Ask who?

Oh.

I had hoped I was done with all that.

*(Smith at home, still staring and staring at the flame. Dora enters.)*

**DORA:** What's that?

**SMITH:**

ONE: *(Creak)* *(Slam! Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)*

THREE: *(Muffled intermittent snores through the wall)*

**DORA:** What is that?

**SMITH:** Shit, you scared me Dora. What are you doing up? Fire. Don't touch

ONE: *(Slam!)*

THREE: *(Snore)* *(Snore)*

**DORA:** From who? I guess so. It's melting your

**SMITH:** it, it's a special gift. Isn't it pretty?

ONE: *(Sound of a car starting, failing)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

**DORA:** wax. What does it do? Oh. Well that's

**SMITH:** I know. Nothing. It's just beautiful. And warm.

ONE: *(Sound of car starting)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

**DORA:** boring. I thought you might have had big important things to do, and that's why

**SMITH:**

ONE: *(and pulling away)*

THREE: *(Snore)*

**DORA:** you didn't come back when I called you earlier but that isn't big or important so I

**SMITH:**

ONE:  
THREE:

**DORA:** don't know what you were thinking.

**SMITH:** You called? I didn't hear you call.

ONE:

THREE: (Snore) (Snore)

**DORA:**

**SMITH:** You know I always come back when I hear you, I'm sorry Dora I just, I didn't hear

ONE: (Siren zooming by

THREE: (Snore)

**DORA:** I had a question.

**SMITH:** you. Did you need something, is everything alright? What about?

ONE: *a few blocks away, then turning a corner and fading away)*

THREE: (Snore)

**DORA:** Never mind, because I figured it out by myself and I'm tired now, okay? So goodnight.

THREE: (Snore)

*(Dora leaves. Smith is left to stare at the flame of his candle. He stares, and stares. Matthius and Ayla watch him from the high road. Matthius holds the jar.)*

*(Chorus One, Two, and Three make the sound of the strifes in the jar through the following scene. It has morphed since the last scene, and not for the better.)*

MATTHIUS

What have you done to him?

AYLA

Done? I haven't *done* anything, I've-

MATTHIUS

Look at him! What have you done!

AYLA

Matthius, darling, I-

MATTHIUS

Do not play this game with me Ayla. Tell me straight. What did you do.

AYLA

Nothing.

Nothing much, really.

Don't look at me like that Matthius I only lit him a candle!

MATTHIUS

Only.

AYLA

Yes!

MATTHIUS

You only gave a flame to a man who has never before seen so much as a spark!

AYLA

It's just a little flame. It'll go out.

MATTHIUS

Yes, and when he comes back for more will you give him fire, or lure him forever with the hope of another little flame?

*(Not yet morning. Smith grabs the candle, his briefcase, and leaves.)*

*(A dark place. Men of power congregate here.)*

DARK MAN: One for three, two for five. I don't offer that for most.  
TWO: It's yours if you take it quick. Here. Here. It's yours.  
THREE: I'll take it. Deal. Deal. I'll take it.

*(Smith enters, with candle held for all to see.)*

**SMITH:** Please forgive my intrusion and allow  
DARK MAN: This is a real steal I'm giving you. Take it. I don't offer  
TWO: I'll throw in a bonus, you take it now. It's yours.  
THREE: I want a guarantee. I want your word it's good.

**SMITH:** me to interrupt you only briefly, for as quickly as I can I will leave you to go  
DARK MAN: that to most. This is the This is  
TWO: if you if you If you take it now.  
THREE: Otherwise, how do I know it's not How do I know it's

**SMITH:** about your business. What you see here is not an illusion. It is called Fire.  
DARK MAN: the real thing, it's This is the real You want  
TWO: I give you my word it's Here. Here, it's  
THREE: Deal, deal, I'll I'll take

SMITH

A gift from the Gods, given to me only last night by Ayla herself.  
No other Man but myself and now you here have seen it.  
I do not have the skills or resources to plumb it's secrets myself, so I bring it here,  
where I trust one of you will be able to use the heat and light it produces to change the  
face of the future of our kind.  
What success it brings you is yours alone.  
I ask for no piece of that after today.  
Let the luckiest among you leave with a fist full of fire.  
I sell to anyone.

*(Slowly at first, then a full-on crescendo.)*



**DORA:** Hm. Mmhm. Mm. Hm?  
**SMITH:** let's go. Do you want to be late? Come on. Get up. It's nice out.  
**TWO:** (*Sound of kettle whistli-*) (*Clink!*)  
**THREE:** (*Click!*) (*Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk.*)

**DORA:** I'm sure. Hm.  
**SMITH:** The sun is shining, If you get up now I have a present for you.  
**TWO:** (*Clink clink clink!*)  
**THREE:** (*Click-Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh*) and traffic together every ten

**DORA:** Hm.  
**SMITH:** Don't you want to know what it is? I'll give you a hint. Rhymes with rookie.  
**TWO:** (*Creak-slam!*) (*Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk*) (*Clink!*)  
**THREE:** minutes. All freeways northbound running smoothly, with a minor collision slowing  
**DORA:** Cookie! What kind?  
**SMITH:** I thought that might wake you up. Come on in the kitchen and  
**TWO:** (*Clink clink clink!*)  
**THREE:** things down Southbound through the tunnels, expect ten minute delays. We've got

**DORA:**  
**SMITH:** find out.  
**TWO:** (*Clink*)  
**THREE:** low fog (*Shhhhhhhhhhhhh*)

*(Matthius enters the reception area for the Office of Ultimate Authority. It is expansive.)*

**MATTHIUS:** Hi, I'd like to file a request for informational  
**RECEPTIONIST:**  
**ONE:** Hello, office of Ultimate Authority, can you please hold?  
**THREE:** (*Bring bring!*) (*ka-chunk!*) (*Bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:** knowledge.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Take a number and we'll be with you shortly.  
**ONE:** Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.  
**THREE:** (*Bring!*)

*(He takes a number, and sits.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Now serving number A734 at desk number One.

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, can you please hold?

THREE: *(Bring bring!)* *(Ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk,*

*(Matthius stands, walks to her desk.)*

**MATTHIUS:** I'd like to file a request for informational knowledge. I'm not

**RECEPTIONIST:** Yes? Department?

ONE: Thank you for holding, your call is important to us. All representatives

THREE: *ka-chunk)* *(Bring! Bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** really sure.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Informational requests have to be made departmentally, unless you'd

ONE: are now busy, please continue to hold.

THREE: Desk One, there's a call for you on line three. Desk

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** like to make a Direct Request to Ultimate Authority, in which case you would

ONE: Hello, Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.

THREE: one, line three. *(Bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** need to bring in an Authorization for Direct Request signed by any Tier One

ONE: Thank you for waiting, how may I direct your call?

THREE: *(Bring bring! Bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** I am a Tier One Deity. Matthius. Titan.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Deity listed here. Name? Heritage? First or

ONE: I'm sorry, he just stepped out of the office, shall I

THREE: *(High pitched sound of an old scanner scanning)*

**MATTHIUS:** Second.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** second generation? Sign here. And here. Name and date here.  
**ONE:** forward you to his voice mail? Thank you for calling.  
**THREE:** (Ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Thank you. Fill out and sign this Direct Request form, as well as Terms of  
**ONE:** Thank you for holding. Office of Ultimate  
**THREE:** ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk) (Bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Use, Knowledge Liability Waiver, and Knowledge Of and Agreement To Adhere to  
**ONE:** Authority, please hold. We know your time is valuable, thank  
**THREE:** (Bring bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Probably.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Code A-452-B9. Does your inquiry pertain to The Unknown? Then you'd best  
**ONE:** you for holding. To hear our menu in English, press one.  
**THREE:** (Bring bring!) (Bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** read and sign this to indicate that you've received our projected accuracy for  
**ONE:** Para escuchar los opciones en Español, oprima numero dos.  
**THREE:** (Bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Knowledge of the Unknown in the coming epoch. Here's a pen, a clipboard, bring  
**ONE:** Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I direct your call?  
**THREE:** (Bring bring bring!) (Bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Thanks.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** them up when you're done.  
**ONE:** Please continue to hold.  
**THREE:** (Bring!)

(Dora and Smith waiting for the bus  
on the low road.)

**DORA:** And I'm going to tell everyone

**SMITH:**

**ONE:** Kyle come back here! Hold my hand when you cross the street.

**THREE:** (Honk! ) (Honk honk!)

**DORA:** all about it too and everyone is going to be really impressed I think because I

**SMITH:**

**ONE:** Tuck in your shirt, how many times do

**THREE:** (Slam) (Sound of car starting and

**DORA:** don't know anyone who is allowed to eat dessert for breakfast.

**SMITH:** And neither are you,

**ONE:** I have to tell you to tuck in your shirt when you go to school?

**THREE:** driving away.)

**DORA:** I know. I know. Can we have it be

**SMITH:** usually. Today was just a special occasion.

**ONE:** And you have your lunch?

**THREE:** (Screech! HOOOONK!)

**DORA:** a special occasion tomorrow and the next day and the next day too?

**SMITH:** If we had

**ONE:** I can't pick you up today, so you'll

**THREE:** It's called a stop sign, asshole!

**DORA:** Yes it would. It's cookies.

**SMITH:** cookies every day, it wouldn't be special. So it is.

**ONE:** be getting a ride home with Sarah's dad, don't forget.

**THREE:** (Sound of motorcycle downshifting)

**DORA:** Love you.

**SMITH:** Have a good day, Dora. Love you.

**ONE:** Have a good day.

**THREE:** (Honk honk!)

(And she's on the bus and off. A car screeches to a halt and three figures



DARK MAN

And as your world, Smith comes to an end, which do you choose?

SMITH

I don't-

DARK MAN

Because having a choice is only right, you agree?

SMITH

I don't-

DARK MAN

One of the marks of a civilized society, our condemned are given a choice as to their manner of death.

SMITH

I don't really-

DARK MAN

And we are indeed a civilized society, yes?

SMITH

I don't-

DARK MAN

Thus, your choice.  
Fire, or ice?

SMITH

I don't-

DARK MAN

A one-word answer will suffice, Smith.  
Fire, or ice?

I don't understand-

SMITH

The question?  
The question is very simple, Smith. Pick your death.  
Fire or ice?

DARK MAN

What am I-

SMITH

Doing here?

DARK MAN

Yes!

SMITH

You are being killed. I thought I had made that very clear.

DARK MAN

But why? I can't-

SMITH

Think what you possibly could have done?

DARK MAN

No! I-

SMITH

Am a beacon of love.

DARK MAN

No! I-

SMITH

Am the model of truth.

DARK MAN

SMITH

No! I-

DARK MAN

Have been and will always be the paragon of virtue.

SMITH

Let me finish my fucking thought already!

DARK MAN

Gladly.  
Fire or ice?  
Fire or ice?  
Fire. Or. Ice.

SMITH

I'm not going to-

DARK MAN

Die? Really?

SMITH

No! I'm-

DARK MAN

Going to throttle you as soon as you let me off of this chair.

SMITH

NO! I'm-

DARK MAN

Immortal and therefore can suffer no great harm.

SMITH

NO! I-

DARK MAN

Am A God, So Beware!

SMITH

NO! I AM NOT A FUCKING GOD SO GIVE ME A FUCKING BREAK ALREADY AND LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE!

DARK MAN

Simple choice, Smith, and then I will leave you alone.  
Fire, or Ice.

SMITH

Fire.

DARK MAN

Fire.  
Yes. Well.  
There's a bit of a problem with that method, so unfortunate, I'm sorry to have to tell you.  
We still offer the choice because, to be perfectly honest with you, it's a bit of a novelty.  
Fire is a new thing, it's rare, it's quite rare, expensive, a bit of a luxury item even in  
death.  
Ours was acquired at great expense. Just last night, in fact.

SMITH

From me.

DARK MAN

From you. Which is most unfortunate for you, as it blew out this morning.

SMITH

It what.

DARK MAN

Blew out.

SMITH

Blew out.

DARK MAN

Yes, blew out.  
Gone. Whiff of smoke through the air.

SMITH

It can't have.

DARK MAN

Oh, it did.  
So as much as I would really much rather honor your last request, we are right out of fire.  
It will have to be ice. Pelt away.

*(Smith is pelted rapidly with snowballs.  
He struggles to get out words between  
hits to the face.)*

SMITH

I can. Get you. More. Fire.

*(Pelting ceases.)*

DARK MAN

I thought you'd never ask.  
Two hours. We'll come to you.  
Get him out of here.

*(Smith is untied, and thrown bodily from  
the room.)*

*(At the Office of Ultimate Authority,  
Matthius brings his completed papers  
to the front desk.)*

**MATTHIUS:** Here you are.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Let's see... Direct request, Terms of Use, Liability, Code A-452-B9

**ONE:** Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold. Office of Ultimate Authority

**THREE:** *(bring bring!)* *(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** agreement, and Accuracy of Unknown. Lovely. I'll file this to Direct Authority,  
ONE: all our representatives are now busy, please continue to hold. For menu, press one.  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

That long?

**RECEPTIONIST:** you should receive a preliminary Knowledge brief in six to eight business days.  
ONE: To speak with a representative, please stay on the line. Thank you for holding,  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Is there any way to expedite the process?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Not if it's a routine matter of Unknown  
ONE: how may I direct your call? I'll transfer you to his voice mail, please  
THREE: (bring bring! bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Knowledge Acquisition. However, if you can prove that a six to eight day delay  
ONE: stay on the line. Office of Ultimate  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring! bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** would cause probable, severe, and irreversible damage to any party involved, I  
ONE: Authority, your time is important to us, please continue to hold. To hear the menu,  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** could pass your request along to our clerk in the Office of Subject-Matter  
ONE : press one. Para escuchar los opciones en Español, oprima numero dos. Pour entendre vos  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Jurisdiction and they might be able to file a Plea for Immediate Consideration.  
ONE: options dans le Français, appuyez numéro trois. Um Ihre Optionen auf Deutsch zu hören,  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** And how long does that take?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Well, today is what. Thursday? Interdepartmental memos  
ONE: drücken Sie Nummer vier. Para ouvir as suas opções no Português, a prensa numera  
THREE: (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** are sent on Monday and Ah, Wednesday mornings, so I would expect someone to  
ONE: cinco. Per sentire le vostre opzioni in Italiano, premi il numero sette.  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** get back you by the end of the day-no, Monday is a holiday. By the end of  
ONE: Om uw opties in het Nederlands te horen, druk nummer acht. För att höra dina  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Could I walk the paperwork over to the  
the day Thursday, this time next week.  
ONE: alternativ i Svensk numrerar pressen nio. For all other languages, please stay on  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!) (bring

**MATTHIUS:** office right now?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Well, the Office of Subject-Matter Jurisdiction holds  
ONE: the line and we will be with you shortly. Office of Ultimate Authority, please  
THREE: bring!) (bring bring!) bring

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Confidential information, so you would need to pass a level three security  
ONE: hold. Office of Ultimate Authority, thank you for calling, please hold. Thank  
THREE: bring!) (bring bring! bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** How do I pass a level three security clearance?  
clearance to be granted entry.  
ONE : you for holding, your call is important to us, please continue to hold. Office  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring! bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** I am a Tier One Deity.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Well, you have to be a Tier One Deity and- I'm aware of that.  
**ONE:** of Ultimate Authority, all of our representatives are now busy, please continue to  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** You have to be a Tier One Deity, And clear a background check for past  
**ONE:** hold. Thank you for holding, how may I direct your call? Certainly, and  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Security Breach Infringements. They can fingerprint you for that in room  
**ONE:** thank you for your call. Office of Ultimate Authority,  
**THREE:**

**MATTHIUS:** And then come back here?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** 114A, one floor up, down the hall, on your left. And then  
**ONE:** please hold. Your call is important to us, please continue to  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Thank you.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** come back here. MmHm.  
**ONE:** hold.  
**THREE:** (bring bring!)

*(Smith on the street, nothing in hand. At times he addresses those conversing in passing. Ayla watches.)*

**SMITH:** Ayla?  
**ONE:** Hello? Hello? Hold on, I think I have another call. (Hoooooonk!!!)  
**TWO:** (Honk!) (honk honk!) Yeah, yeah he is. I agree, yes,

**SMITH:** Um. Ayla? Ayla!  
**ONE:** How about lunch next Wednesday at that cute little place near work? (Honk!)  
**TWO:** definitely. (Zoom!) (Zoom zoom!) Hot dogs! Hot! Three for a

**SMITH:** Excuse me, do you happen to know- Excuse me, do you-  
ONE: (Honk honk!) No. No. No, that's not what I meant at all, that's not what I-  
TWO: dollar! (Sound of a siren passing, turning a corner, and fading away) I'll get

**SMITH:** Excuse me, I- Sheesh. Who would know, who would know,  
ONE: (Honk!) (Honk honk!) Tell him absolutely not, under no circumstances will I  
TWO: that to you by Friday afternoon. (Zoom! Zoom zoom!) (Zoom!)

**SMITH:** who would know... Ayla! Excuse me, please, could  
ONE: even consider going-(Hooooooooooooooooooooonk!) I'd like to make a reservation for  
TWO: Get em while they're hot! Three for a dollar! (Sound of a motorcycle

**SMITH:** I ask- Could I ask you if- Excuse me, I need to know- Do you have a  
ONE: three tonight at seven. (Zoom zoom!) Mom, no. No. Can we not start  
TWO: shifting) and yes I do understand what you're saying, but, (Honk!)

**SMITH:** moment, Sir? I promise I'm not selling any- Pardon me, but- Goddamn  
ONE: in on this now? Please? (Sound of a helicopter flying by overhead) One small  
TWO: (honk honk!) was running late because of some maintenance thing, and then three

**SMITH:** business suited... Ayla? Ayla! DON'T PRETEND YOU CAN'T  
ONE: coffee to go please, no sugar. (Crash!) (zoom!) Nina, your order is  
TWO: (HOOONK!) Donahugh, D as in David. No, D! D, O, N, A, (Honk!)

**SMITH:** HEAR THIS! Miss, could you- Fuckin-a! Sir! Do you have the time?  
ONE: ready! Nina! (zoom zoom!) I'm running late, but I can- What? Quarter  
TWO: Let's not skirt the issue here, Morris, let's (Honk!)

**SMITH:** Thank you! Quick question: Do you ever invoke?  
ONE: of What? Sure. Sure. Yeah. (Zoom zoom!)

**SMITH:** No no no! I didn't mean anything by- (moment of complete self-exasperation)  
ONE: Let's plan on meeting here, and going over there together. (sound of  
TWO: (Honk!) (Honk honk!) Please don't tell me that

**SMITH:** Miss! Excuse me, I'd like to- Do you have the time? Thank you so much, can-  
**ONE:** a passing siren) of last Friday's meeting. Quarter of. No, Friday's  
**TWO:** you're considering their offer. (zoom! Zoom zoom!) (Honk!)

**SMITH:** Excuse me, do- Ex- Time? Thank you and do you have any tips for invoking?  
**ONE:** meeting. (HONK!) (Zoom!)  
**TWO:** What? What? Quarter of. (Zoom zoom!)

**SMITH:** I'm having some trouble.  
**ONE:**  
**TWO:**

(Matthius enters Room #114A. He approaches the front desk.)

**MATTHIUS:** You again! I'm sorry, I thought you looked like- This is room 114A?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Excuse me?  
**ONE:** (A high pitched scanner scanning) (a high pitched scanner scanning)  
**THREE:** (singing) "You make me feel so young,

**MATTHIUS:** Where I get fingerprinted? For past security infringements?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Yes. Yes. The same.

**ONE:** (a high pitched scanner scanning)  
**THREE:** You make me feel so spring has sprung

**MATTHIUS:** Then, I'd like to get fingerprinted, please. For past security infringements?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Okay.  
**ONE:** (a high pitched scanner scanning)  
**THREE:** And every time I see you grin I'm such a happy individual.

**MATTHIUS:** For clearance to enter the Subject-Matter Jurisdiction office. I can

**RECEPTIONIST:** Okay. Okay.  
**ONE:** (a high pitched scanner scanning)  
**THREE:** The moment that you speak, I wanna go

**MATTHIUS:** do that here, right? Do I need to put my name down on any lists

**RECEPTIONIST:** You can do that here.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: play hide and seek, I wanna go and bounce

**MATTHIUS:** or anything? And they'll call me from here?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Take a number. Yes yes. They'll call

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: the moon just like a toy balloon.

**MATTHIUS:** Thank you. *(He takes a number and sits)*

**RECEPTIONIST:** you from here. Now serving number 74A. 74A.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: You and I are just like a couple of tots

*(Nobody moves.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** 74A, please come to the front desk to be fingerprinted.

ONE:

THREE: running across the meadow, Pickin up lots of forget-

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Now serving number 74B. 74B.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: me-nots. You make me feel so young,

*(Nobody moves.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** 74B, please come to the front desk to be fingerprinted.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: You make-" Kelly you have a call on line one! "songs to be sung, bells

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Now serving number 75A. 75A.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: to be rung, and a wonderful fling to be flung!

*(Matthius approaches the front desk.)*

**MATTHIUS:** No, 95B, but-

**RECEPTIONIST:** 75A? I'm sorry Sir, but you're going to have to wait your turn.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: And even when I'm old and gray I'm gonna feel the way

**MATTHIUS:** But there's no one here.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Company policy mandates that I give every number equal

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: I do today Cause you-" Kelly, line one! "me

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** opportunity to present him or herself, so I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask

ONE:

THREE: feel so young. You make me feel so young

**MATTHIUS:** That's ridiculous.

**RECEPTIONIST:** you to wait. Sir, please take a seat or I will have to call security.

ONE:

THREE: You make me feel so spring has sprung.

*(Matthius finds a seat.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** 75A, please come to the front desk to be fingerprinted. Now serving number 75B.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: And every time I see you grin I'm such a happy individual."

*(Smith on the street, nothing in hand  
Ayla watches from the high road.)*

**SMITH:** Allright. Allright.

ONE: What? Huh? Speak up, I can't hear you. *(Honk honk! Honk!)* There's a lot of traffic

TWO: What? *(Honk honk!)* You'll have to speak up there's a lot of traffic. *(Zoom!)*

**SMITH:** If you don't Feel like coming down right now, I guess that's your

ONE: this morning. *(Honk! Honk honk!)* Come on! *(Zoom!)* Yeah, and entirelyly just,

TWO: *(Honk! Honk honk!)* Let's go, let's go, let's go, move it, let's go! *(Honk!)*

**SMITH:** Prerogative, as a God. Deity. I guess that's your Right and all

ONE: yeah, yeah, entirelyly. *(Zoom zoom!)* *(Zoom!)* I hear that, I hear that

TWO: *(Honk honk!)* Full steam ahead I say let's just go full steam ahead. *(Siren)*

**SMITH:** to sit by the wayside and, and Watch us lowly mortals going about our

ONE: I just don't think it's the right solution for us. *(Honk honk! Honk!)*

TWO: *(passing and turning a corner)* No no no no no no no no! What I mean is, hear me out,

**SMITH:** dreary business of the everyday. I guess as a God that's Above you, and

ONE: *(Crash!)* I never said, no, no, no, no I never said that they- *(Zoom! Zoom zoom!)*

TWO: what I mean is, *(Zoom zoom! Zoom!)* Listen. Listen. Listen. Hey,

**SMITH:** you're not Obliged, I'm sure, to interfere or say help us Out of a

ONE: *(Zoom!)* It isn't, it isn't, it isn't, okay, it isn't that we don't have the

TWO: just listen to me, okay? *(Hooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooonk!)* What do you mean you

**SMITH:** Situation that's something you Did get us into in the first place.

ONE: *(Zoom! Zoom zoom! Zoom! )* No, you tell me. You tell me what you mean by that,

TWO: don't know, you can't not know, what do you mean? *(Honk honk! Honk!)*

**SMITH:** I guess as a God it's Help Optional or something? Yeah, well

ONE: you tell me. *(Zoom!)* *(Honk!)* Completely unfounded

TWO: It isn't so bad as you think, I don't think, I don't think it is. *(Honk honk!)*

**SMITH:** that's just shit is what I think. I think that's just shit. Okay?

ONE: accusations, completely unfounded. *(Squealing of brakes)* Simply put, simply

TWO: *(Honk!)* completely unnecessary you know that, right? You know that.

**SMITH:** And I saw fire. I did, you know. Even if you didn't give it to me whole, I saw it  
ONE: put, just tell it to me in a- (*Siren passing, turning the corner and fading*)  
TWO: (*Zoom zoom!*) Traceability, compatibility, and flexibility, that's all we

**SMITH:** made. You think I can't re-create that? You think I wasn't watching closely enough,  
ONE: Somebody's gotta pay for it, okay? Somebody has to. (*Zoom!*)  
TWO: need here. (*Honk! Honk honk!*) That isn't the issue here, that, are you

**SMITH:** paying good enough attention? And I dunno if You were paying any attention  
ONE: (*Zoom zoom!*) Coming from you it sounds, I said, coming from you it-  
TWO: listening? That isn't the issue. (*Honk honk! Honk!*) Just substitute

**SMITH:** back there, but I've got about two more hours to figure this shit out or I'm  
ONE: (*Sound of screeching car brakes*) Tell me you're joking, please tell me  
TWO: tit for tat, tit for tat, that's the way it goes. (*Sound of a motorcycle shifting*)

**SMITH:** seriously fucked, okay, so either stay well away and let me think, or bring me a  
ONE: you're joking. (*zoom zoom! Zoom!*) (*Honk!*) Every time you say that  
TWO: What do I want? What do I want? This isn't about what I want. (*Honk honk!*)

**SMITH:** goddamn flame. I'm not gonna sit around here waiting for an answer, Ayla.  
ONE: you know what happens? No, you know what happens? (*Zoom!*)  
TWO: (*Hooooooooooooooooooooooooonk!*) (*Zoom!*) (*Zoom zoom!*)

**SMITH:** I've got work to do.  
ONE: (*Zoom zoom!*)  
TWO:

(*Matthius at the Office of Ultimate Authority.*)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Now serving number 95B. 95B.

ONE: (*a high pitched scanner scanning*)

THREE: (*Singing*) "You make me feel so young. You make me

*(Matthius stands and approaches the desk)*

**MATTHIUS:** Yes. Yes!

**RECEPTIONIST:** 95B? For fingerprinting? No need to get testy, Sir. Step this way.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: feel so spring has sprung. And every time I see

*(She leads him to an old scanner.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Right hand.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: you grin, I'm such a happy individual. The

*(She takes each finger on his right hand, and scans it.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Left.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)* *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: moment that you speak, I wanna go play hide and

*(Same with the left hand.)*

**MATTHIUS:** Matthius.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Name? Sign here please. And here. Where do you want these sent?

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: seek. I wanna go and bounce the moon, just like a

**MATTHIUS:** I'm not sure. They told me in the front office to come down here and get

**RECEPTIONIST:**

ONE:

THREE: toy balloon. You and I, are just like a

**MATTHIUS:** fingerprinted for a level three security clearance?

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Allright. I'll send it along.

ONE:

*(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: couple of tots. Running across the meadow,

**MATTHIUS:** Do you have any idea how long it usually takes to clear?

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Not a clue.

ONE:

THREE: picking up lots of forget-me-nots. You make me

**MATTHIUS:**

Thank you.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Now serving number 96A. 96A.

ONE: *(a high pitched scanner scanning)*

THREE: feel so young. You make me feel there are--

*(Matthius leaves.)*

*(Smith at home. He works to fashion a lighter out of a scrap piece of metal.)*

ONE: Scrape. Cut. Fasten. Lift. Tighten. Scrape. Lift.

THREE: *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)*

*(Checks his watch, speeds up the work.)*

*(Ayla takes out her own lighter, clicks it on and holds the flame. Smith hears her, but can not see her.)*

**SMITH:** I heard that! You coming or not?

ONE:

Cut. Lift. Tighten. Scrape. Weld.

THREE: *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)*

*(Ayla lets the flame go out.)*

**SMITH:** No? Allright then.  
ONE: Cut. Fasten. Lift. Weld. Scrape. Weld.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

*(Smith checks his watch, speeds up the work. Ayla clicks her lighter on again and holds the flame. She is closer than before. Smith hears her, but can not see her.)*

**SMITH:** I heard that! You fucking tease...  
ONE: Cut. Lift. Tighten. Test. Weld. Tighten.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**SMITH:** Show up or don't show up! I've got no time to go looking for you!  
ONE: Test. Lift. Scrape. Fasten. Weld. Tighten.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

*(Smith checks his watch, speeds up his work.)*

*(Ayla clicks her lighter on and holds the flame. She is practically on top of Smith.)*

**SMITH:** YOU FUCKING COMING OR NOT!?  
**AYLA:** No. Talked to like that, I don't  
ONE: Cut. Lift. Weld. Hew. Fasten. Cut. Lift. Cut. Weld.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**SMITH:** FINE!  
**AYLA:** think I will.  
ONE: Tighten. Hew. Scrape. Hew. Weld. Fasten. Lift.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

*(Smith holds up a finished lighter. Ayla watches. He clicks it on. Nothing happens.)*

**SMITH:** Shit.

ONE: Cut. Hew. Weld. Tighten. Lift. Scrape. Fasten. Cut. Lift. Cut. Weld. Ti-  
THREE: *(tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (ti-*

*(A knock at the door. He clicks it on. Nothing happens.)*

Shit.

SMITH

*(Another knock at the door.)*

Yeah?  
Who is it?

SMITH

God.  
Who do you think, Smith? Open up.

DARK MAN

*(He does. Dark Man enters, accompanied by two figures in black, who shut the door swiftly behind them.)*

Well,

DARK MAN

Well what.

SMITH

Well what?

DARK MAN

So you have nothing for me and we may as well do you in right now then, is that what you mean by: "Well what"?

SMITH

No, of course not, I just-

DARK MAN

Because that is what is implied, Smith, when using the phrase "Well what", when I know you know perfectly well what the Well is asking.

SMITH

It was just-

DARK MAN

Rhetorical phraseology.

SMITH

No, I was just-

DARK MAN

Being clever.

SMITH

No! I was-

DARK MAN

Buying time with the hopes that the longer you stalled the more likely I was to forget what I came for?

SMITH

No!

DARK MAN

Good.  
Because you know as well as I do that it never would have worked.  
So. Again:  
Well?

Well...Did you  
bring the wax?

SMITH

*(The Man produces the partially  
burned candle, hands it to Smith.)*

Great.  
Great. Perfect.  
I'll be right back.

SMITH

*(The silent figures in black follow  
Smith as he walks towards another room)*

What, you don't trust me enough to walk down a hallway?

SMITH

Of course not!  
Why should I?

DARK MAN

Because it's-

SMITH

That one Was rhetorical, Smith.  
Do you need something?  
Shall I fetch it for you.

DARK MAN

No. I have what I need.

SMITH

Then proceed.  
We run a tight ship, Smith. Trust me when I say you do not want to make me late for my next  
appointment.

DARK MAN

It's just that-

SMITH

Yes?

DARK MAN

It's just I promised-

SMITH

Spit it out, Smith.

DARK MAN

I'm trying to! But you're not-  
I won't leave the room, but turn around please.  
I promised Ayla you wouldn't be watching.

SMITH

I quite understand.  
We do not question the Gods and their rules, absurd though they may seem to us at the time.  
I will avert my eyes through the count of ten. Unless you think it will take longer?

DARK MAN

No no, ten should be fine.

SMITH

Excellent!

DARK MAN

*(The Man turns his back on Smith. The  
The other figures in black follow suit.)*

One. Two.

DARK MAN

*(Smith clicks the lighter on. Nothing  
He shakes it, clicks it on again.)*

*Nothing. Ayla watches)*

Three. Four. Five.  
DARK MAN

*(Smith clicks, shakes, hits, kisses, squeezes the lighter. Nothing.)*

Six.  
DARK MAN

*(Smith clicks, clicks, clicks, clicks clicks, rages at, prays to the lighter. Nothing.)*

Seven. Eight. Nine.  
DARK MAN

*(Smith sweet-talks the lighter. Clicks it. Nothing.)*

SMITH  
*(Under)*  
Ayla, please, I'll do anything, just  
SMITH CONT'D  
For the love of-

And ten.  
DARK MAN  
Let's see, shall we?

*(Smith cringes for the blow, eyes closed, as The Man turns around, as Ayla clicks her own lighter and passes the flame to the candle. Smith hears her, does not see her. He tries to locate the source of her sound.)*

Lovely.

DARK MAN

I heard that.

SMITH  
*(under)*

*(The Man takes the lit candle from Smith.)*

We'll be in touch if we need anything else.

DARK MAN

*(The Man and two figures in black leave.)*

DON'T YOU EVER!

SMITH

*(And he hurls his lighter toward where he heard Ayla last.)*

DO THAT AGAIN, YOU HEAR ME!  
DO! YOU! HEAR ME!?

SMITH

*(Matthius back in the reception office. He approaches the front desk.)*

**MATTHIUS:** I'm not taking any more numbers! I just wanted to tell you that I got  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Yes?  
**ONE:** Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.  
**THREE:** *(bring bring!)* *(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** fingerprinted and they're sending it along to the security clearance people, and I  
**RECEPTIONIST:**

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, all representatives are now busy, please continue  
THREE: (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** just want to be told when it all goes through so I can go ahead and deliver those  
**RECEPTIONIST:**

ONE: to hold. Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I direct your call?  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** papers.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Certainly, Sir. I'll let you know the moment you've been cleared.

ONE: Your time is important to us, please continue to hold.  
THREE: (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Thank you. Do you have an estimated time frame for that?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Likely within the next

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Not till tonight?

**RECEPTIONIST:** hour. Maybe two. Six at the most. Would you like to sit down, or do

ONE: Thank you for holding. Your call is important to us. Please continue to hold.  
THREE: (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Here.

**RECEPTIONIST:** you have a way I can reach you?

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority. Please hold. To hear the menu  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

(He hands her his card.)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Lovely, Sir. I'll attach this to your file. If you haven't heard from us by

ONE: in English, press one. Para escuchar los opciones en Español,  
THREE: (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** midnight, feel free to come by and check in on the status of your application

ONE: oprima numero dos. Office of Ultimate Authority, how

THREE: *(bring bring!)* *(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** Yes. I will.

**RECEPTIONIST:** Thank you for visiting the office of Ultimate Authority.

ONE: may I direct your call? Office of Ultimate Authority, please

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Have a good day. Now serving number A942 at desk number One.

ONE: continue to hold. All representatives are now busy, please continue to hold.

THREE: *(bring bring!)* *(bring bring!)*

*(Matthius leaves. We follow him out of the building and along the high road. He comes to a space he likes, stops, sits. He takes out his jar and stares at it. Chorus One, Two, and Three are the sounds of strife in the jar throughout the scene. It sounds worse than before.)*

*(Ayla on the high road. After a moment, she joins him.)*

AYLA

It sounds worse in there. Have you added any more?

MATTHIUS

No. I don't want them Breeding. Or anything.

Though maybe they already have. I thought it sounded different.

AYLA

If you could ask someone to do anything and you knew they would do it, what would you have them do?

MATTHIUS

What will you have him do?

AYLA

Would you like to guess?

MATTHIUS

There's no need to guess, Ayla. Just don't do anything to hurt the poor boy.

AYLA

Hurt him!

For your information I probably just saved his life just now.

MATTHIUS

Oh?

AYLA

Yes. I probably just did. He was well on his way to getting hauled off and tortured again, but-

MATTHIUS

Again? Smith? What in the world did he do?

AYLA

He sold the flame.

MATTHIUS

And you're surprised?

AYLA

Yes! It was a gift.  
Who sells a gift?

MATTHIUS

Who bought it?

One of the dark ones.

AYLA

Of course it was. And they tortured him because?

MATTHIUS

It blew out.

AYLA

Of course it blew out! Flames blow out!  
Shit, Ayla. Don't tell me you didn't see this coming.

MATTHIUS

But who sells a gift!

AYLA

And the second time?

MATTHIUS

They didn't torture him a second time!

AYLA

But they nearly did. And why is that?

MATTHIUS

Because they wanted more and he didn't have it.

AYLA

Because You didn't give it to him. Did he ask?

MATTHIUS

Of course he asked!

AYLA

Then why on earth didn't you give it to him!

MATTHIUS

AYLA

I lit thier candle. That's all they wanted.

MATTHIUS

And what do you think will happen to your Smith when it blows out for the Second time?  
Third time?  
End it, Ayla. Give him fire.

AYLA

I can't give him fire!

MATTHIUS

Why, you gave a flame, might as well finish the job.

AYLA

It's not allowed.

MATTHIUS

Neither is lighting a candle.

AYLA

But what if he sells it? Do you want a Dark One / having one of these?

MATTHIUS

Give it to Dora, then. That's / what I'd do.

AYLA

We're not! Allowed!

MATTHIUS

Sometimes there are better options than What Is Allowed.  
You got him into this, Ayla. For the love of Something, get him out of it.

*(It's been an hour, so Matthius returns  
to the Office of Ultimate Authority.  
He takes a number and sits.)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Now serving number G121 at desk number One.

TWO:

Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

*(bring bring!)*

*(Matthius approaches her desk.)*

**MATTHIUS:** Hi, I'd like to check on the status of a pending security clearance?

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Name?

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, all representatives are now busy, please continue

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

*(bring)*

**MATTHIUS:** Matthius.

Titan.

Second.

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Heritage?

First or second generation?

Nature of the pending

ONE: to hold.

Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I

THREE: *bring!)*

*(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:**

Background check for clearance to enter the Office of Subject-

**RECEPTIONIST:** request?

ONE: direct your call? Your time is important to us, thank you for holding.

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

*(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** Matter Jurisdiction, to deliver papers to expedite the process of a Request for

**RECEPTIONIST:**

ONE: Please stay on the line for the next available representative.

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

*(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** Informational Knowledge of the Unknown.

**RECEPTIONIST:**

Okay.

It doesn't look like

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.

Diana, you have a call on line one,

THREE:

*(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** that's gone through yet. I have here that you only got fingerprinted an hour

ONE: Diana, line one.

Thank you for holding, how may I direct your

THREE: *(bring bring!)*

*(bring bring!)*

**MATTHIUS:** Yes.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** ago. Is that correct? I wouldn't expect we'll get a report back until a  
**ONE:** call? Certainly Miss, I'll transfer you to her voicemail. One  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** bit later, unfortunately. Our background check department was called into  
**ONE:** moment please. Office of Ultimate  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*) (*bring*)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** emergency departmental meetings all afternoon, so they won't be conducting any  
**ONE:** Authority, please hold. Office of Ultimate Authority, all  
**THREE:** (*bring!*) (*bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:** Is there any other agency I can go through?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** client tests until tomorrow. Not  
**ONE:** representatives are now busy, please continue to hold.  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*) (*bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** that's fully certified by Ultimate Authority. I'm sorry for the inconvenience.  
**ONE:** To hear the menu in english, press one.  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:** And how long do you think that will push back the process of an expedited  
**RECEPTIONIST:**  
**ONE:** Office of Ultimate Authority, all representatives are now busy, please continue to  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*)

**MATTHIUS:** Informational Request? Thank you.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** At least another day, I'd guess. Two at the most.  
**ONE:** hold. Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I direct your  
**THREE:** (*bring bring!*)

(*Matthius leaves. Wait, no he doesn't.  
He approaches the desk.*)

**MATTHIUS:** Quick question. I've heard Ultimate Authority holds individual hearings.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Yes?  
**ONE:** call? No, we don't handle those kinds of requests here Sir, would you  
**THREE:** (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** Is that true? And how long is the wait for that?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** It is, Sir. If you managed to get  
**ONE:** like the number of an agency better suited to address your needs? Thank you for  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** your name on the list today, you would be seen within the decade. Would you  
**ONE:** calling. Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold.  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:** No thank you. I can't really wait a decade.  
**RECEPTIONIST:** like to apply for a spot on the wait list?  
**ONE:** All representatives are now busy, please continue to hold.  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

(Matthius leaves.)

(Smith and Dora at home. Smith with his lighter, trying to get it to work.)

**DORA:** And my teacher agreed and said that he also thinks crunchy is better and did you know  
**SMITH:**  
**TWO:** (Bang bang!) (Bang!)  
**THREE:** (Sound of water running.....)

**DORA:** that it's more expensive? And less healthy too because in the creamy  
**SMITH:** I did know that.  
**TWO:** (Bang bang bang!) Does this look  
**THREE:** .....

**DORA:** kind they add things they shouldn't and are bad for you.

**SMITH:** What kinds of things?

**TWO:** straight to you? Does this look straight?

**THREE:** Hm? Sure.

**DORA:** All sorts. I don't remember. There was one thing and it was

**SMITH:**

**TWO:** (Ka-chunk) (Thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)

**THREE:** (Sound of water running.....)

**DORA:** really long and it started with a P. You know what I don't understand?

**SMITH:**

**TWO:** (Creak- slam!)

**THREE:** .....

**DORA:** Why is crunchy more expensive when it should be easier to make because you don't

**SMITH:** What.

**TWO:** (Thunk thunk thunk thunk Creak - slam!)

**THREE:** (Clink)

**DORA:** have to smash for as long? It's backwards.

**SMITH:** I don't know. That's a good question.

**TWO:**

**THREE:** (clink) (clink) (clink) (clink)

**DORA:**

**SMITH:** Maybe they smash all the peanut butter to be creamy, and then add the little pieces

**TWO:** (Sound of an ambulance passing by on the street below, turning a corner, and

**THREE:** (clink)

**DORA:**

**SMITH:** of peanuts back into the crunchy jars at the very end. That would be more work. It

**TWO:** fading away)

**THREE:** (clink) (clink)

**DORA:** Well that's a stupid way of  
**SMITH:** could be more expensive because of something like that.  
**TWO:**  
**THREE:** (clink) (clink)

**DORA:** doing it. Guess what someone gave me today. Guess!  
**SMITH:** I don't know. Tell me. A drawing?  
**TWO:** (crash!) (Sound of a car alarm going  
**THREE:** (clink)

**DORA:** Nope. Guess again. Nope. Guess again. Guess again.  
**SMITH:** Cupcakes? Ummmmmm. A book.  
**TWO:** off in a car on the street outside. It runs the whole gamut of siren and horn and  
**THREE:** (clink) (clink) (clink)

**DORA:** Guess again. That's not a guess, that's  
**SMITH:** Photographs? Is it something you can eat?  
**TWO:** generally loud, annoying, and obnoxious noises that somebody somewhere thought might  
**THREE:** (clink)

**DORA:** a category.  
**SMITH:** I know, I'm just trying to narrow down the options. Can you give me a hint?  
**TWO:** actually deter a thief. And then it repeats, looping through the various loud noises,  
**THREE:** (clink)

**DORA:** It's cold. Nope. Nope. Nope.  
**SMITH:** Was it ice cream? Yogurt? Creamsicle. I give up.  
**TWO:** as if hoping that if we didn't look to make sure it was okay the first time, we  
**THREE:** (Slam!) (thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)

**DORA:** I'll give you another hint then okay? It's round.  
**SMITH:** Round? Um. Frozen peas?  
**TWO:** might be persuaded to go and check in on the car now. And then it ends.)  
**THREE:** (Creak)

**DORA:** Guess again. Eggs aren't round, they're ovally.  
**SMITH:** Eggs? You're right, they are, aren't  
**TWO:** (Sound of water running.....  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** Do you want another hint? It's small.  
**SMITH:** they. Umm... Okay. Small like a baseball,  
**TWO:** .....  
**THREE:** (think think think think think)

**DORA:** Small like a baseball. No! Baseballs aren't  
**SMITH:** or small like a needle? Was it a baseball?  
**TWO:** .....and being turned  
**THREE:**

**DORA:** cold! You have to use ALL the clues.  
**SMITH:** I give up, Dora. What did your friend give you  
**TWO:** off.) (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** Hey honey?

**DORA:** He's not my friend and I never said it was at school. Sometimes  
**SMITH:** at school today?  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** Baby?

**DORA:** you're not a very good listener. He gave it to me  
**SMITH:** What do you mean it wasn't at school.  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** Babe?

**DORA:** on the bus. Not really, no.  
**SMITH:** Was it someone you knew? Dora! You know better than to take  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** The faucet's dripping again.

**DORA:** He was really nice though!  
**SMITH:** things from people you don't know! I don't care how nice he  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** Where's the.....the thing?

**DORA:** To not to. Take things from  
**SMITH:** is, or how nice she is. What's our rule? Not do do what.  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** To tighten it.

**DORA:** people I don't know. But it wasn't to eat! I though that was only because I  
**SMITH:** Why.  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** In the what?

**DORA:** wasn't supposed to eat it.  
**SMITH:** Anything, Dora. Don't take Anything from a stranger.  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** Oh yeah yeah yeah. Thanks babe.

**DORA:** It could be dangerous. It could be stolen.  
**SMITH:** Why. Why is it Anything. Why else. And why  
**TWO:** (drip) (drip) (drip)  
**THREE:** (thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk) (creak - slam)

**DORA:** When I take it from them they could grab me and carry me away.  
**SMITH:** else? That's right.  
**AYLA:** (drip) (drip)  
**MATTHIUS:** (Sound of a faucet being tightened.) I think that

**DORA:** Yes. I don't know what  
**SMITH:** What did he give you? Do you still have it? What is it?  
**TWO:** (sound of water running.....being turned off.)  
**THREE:** fixed it! Yeah, that

**DORA:** they're called.

Okay.

**SMITH:** Can you show it to me?

**TWO:** *(think think think think think think)*

*(Creak - slam)*

**THREE:** fixed it.

Hey baby?

*(Dora goes to her backpack, opens it, and pulls out a partially melted snowball.)*

**DORA:** See? It's cold and round and small but it's nothing bad though, right?

**SMITH:**

**TWO:** *(think think think think think think think think think think)* *(creak)* *(thu-*

**THREE:** Honey? Babe. You listening? Are you-

*(A knock at the door.)*

DORA

I'll get it! Can I get it?

DARK MAN

Smith!

SMITH

No, why don't you-

DARK MAN

Smith, open up!

SMITH

Go put that in the freezer, Dora.

DORA

Why the freezer?

SMITH

So it stays cold.

SMITH! DARK MAN

Who is that? DORA

Salesman. SMITH  
Go put it in the freezer.

Okay. DORA

*(She leaves the room for the kitchen. Smith puts down the lighter, opens the door, and steps swiftly outside.)*

Smith, you fuck! DARK MAN

*(A blow, a scuffle, and silence.)*

*(Dora comes back into the room, sits, waiting for Smith. All is quiet. She waits and waits and waits. She gets impatient and opens the door.)*

**DORA:** Smith? Smith!

**TWO:** *(Sings the playground taunting nyah nyah song.....)*

**THREE:** *(wolf whistle) (two wolf whistles)*

*(That's weird. She closes the door. Waits. And waits. She gets impatient again and opens the door.)*

**DORA:** SMITH!  
TWO: *(wolf whistle)* Hey. Hey missy. What's your name come here a minute won't you?  
THREE: Hey. Hey missy. What's your name come here a minute won't you? You want some

**DORA:** Come out come out wherever you are! SMITH!  
TWO: You want some fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun?  
THREE: fun? Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on uptown

**DORA:** All-ye-all-ye-oxen-free! SMITH?!  
TWO: Come on uptown with us, we're all going uptown tonight that's where it's at.  
THREE: with us, we're all going uptown tonight that's where it's at. *(wolf whistle)*

*(That's really weird. She closes the door. She waits and waits and waits a*

*while longer. She opens the door, looks outside,)*

TWO: Hey. Hey missy. *(wolf whistle)* Hey. What's your name. What's your name come here a-  
THREE: Hey. Hey. Hey missy. *(wolf whistle)* What's your name come here a minute won't-

*(She slams it shut.)*

*(Dora finds Smith's lighter, picks it up. Shakes it, listens to it, smells, bites taps on, and otherwise tests it. She opens the door again,)*

TWO: Yeah? Yeah? You wanna have fun? Come on-  
THREE: going uptown tonight that's where it's-

*(And closes it.)*

**DORA:** Ayla?  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)* *(tick)*



**DORA:** and he hasn't come back and he Always comes back and I don't know what could have-  
**AYLA:** Shhhhh. Dora. Darling. Shhhhhhhhhhhhh.

**TWO:** are jumping,

**DORA:**

**AYLA:** Take a breath. Calm down. I'm sure it's nothing serious. He probably just stepped out

**TWO:** And the cotton is high.

**DORA:** No! My brother doesn't do that! You don't Know! Him! He doesn't, He

**AYLA:** for a moment, and-

**TWO:** Your daddy's rich,

**DORA:** doesn't Do that! Of Course he Leaves, he never goes away without

**AYLA:** He never leaves?

**TWO:** And your

**DORA:** telling me Exactly where he's going and Exactly when he'll be back because

**AYLA:**

**TWO:** Ma is good looking.

**DORA:** he Knows I don't like not knowing! He doesn't Do That! Help me find him. We have

**AYLA:**

**TWO:** So hush little

**DORA:** to go now.

**AYLA:** Dora, it's dark out. I know you don't like going outside when it's dark out.

**TWO:** baby, don't you cry.

**DORA:** No! I'm not waiting because he

**AYLA:** You could get lost. Why don't we wait till morning?

**TWO:**

**DORA:** never keeps me waiting so something has happened to him and if something has happened

**AYLA:**

**TWO:**

**DORA:** to him I am Not waiting until the morning!

**AYLA:** I'm sure Smith wouldn't want you going out  
**TWO:** One of these

**DORA:** I don't care.

**AYLA:** at night, Dora. Stay here. I'll go look for Smith, darling. And let  
**TWO:** mornings, You're

**DORA:** Right now this very second? Promise to come straight back

**AYLA:** you know. This very second.  
**TWO:** gonna rise up singing.

**DORA:** and tell me if you find him or if you don't find him. Because if you don't

**AYLA:** I promise.  
**TWO:** You're

**DORA:** come back and tell me I'm going to go look for him myself whether you like it or not.

**AYLA:**  
**TWO:** gonna spread your

**DORA:** Don't make me wait too too long please Ayla. I don't

**AYLA:** Alright, Dora. I'm going now.  
**TWO:** wings,

**DORA:** like waiting. And Ayla? Thank you for coming again even though you

**AYLA:** Alright, Dora. Yes.  
**TWO:** And take to the sky.

**DORA:** said you weren't going to anymore. Well thank you for just this once.

**AYLA:** Just this once, Dora.  
**TWO:**

**DORA:**

**AYLA:** Alright.  
**TWO:** But till that morning,

*(Ayla, about to leave, notices the lighter in Dora's hand.)*

**DORA:** Dunno. Found it.

**AYLA:** What's that. May I?

**TWO:** There is nothing can

*(Dora hands the lighter to Ayla, who clicks it on. No flame.)*

**DORA:** Yes.

Okay.

**AYLA:** This is Smith's? Do you mind if I borrow it? I'll be back soon, Darling.

**TWO:** harm you. With your--"

*(Ayla leaves.)*

*(Ayla walks the high road, scanning the world for Smith.)*

**AYLA:** Smith?

**ONE:** *(crash!)* Hey, watch it! *(honk! Honk honk!)* Just commit to one or the other, Frank,

**TWO:** *(sound of a car alarm going off, loud, obnoxious, annoying. It repeats once.)*

**THREE:** With everything that's going on this week, I don't *(Zoom zoom!)* Which isn't to say

*(She doesn't see him.)*

**AYLA:** Smith!

**ONE:** *(Honk honk! Zoom!)* *(Wolf whistle)* I'm not saying that, I'm not saying *(honk honk!)*

**TWO:** *(Zoom!)* Hey! Hey watch it! *(honk honk! Honk! Honk!)* Hold my hand when you

**THREE:** *(Sound of sirens passing)* What? Speak up. *(Zoom zoom!)* It's called a stop sign,

*(No sign of him anywhere.)*

**AYLA:** Smith! Hear me. Do you hear me?

**ONE:** *(kettle whistling)* Your water's boiling! *(Sound of sirens passing)* Hot dogs! Three-

**TWO:** cross the street! *(bring bring! bring bri-)* Hello? Who? Hold on. *(Sound of sirens-*

**THREE:** asshole! *(thunk thunk thunk. Slam!)* Nina, your order is ready, Nina. *(Honk honk-*

*(She fumbles for her lighter, flips it on. Nothing. What? Nothing? Oh, this one was Smith's. She puts it on the ground next to her, and pulls out the other lighter, flips it on, and holds the flame. The noise stops.)*

AYLA

Tell me you hear me.  
Please, Smith, where are you, tell me you hear me.

*(She lets the flame go out, flicks it on, off, on, off, on, with:)*

AYLA

Hear this.  
Hear me.  
Hear this.

*(Ayla holds the flame for a long time before letting it go out.)*

*(In the almost dark, we see Smith tied to a chair. At the end of every line, a snowball falls directly on top of his head.)*

SMITH

Dora, I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry Dora.  
I'm really sorry, can you forgive me?  
I'm really sorry. Can you forgive me?  
Dora.  
I'm sorry.  
Can you forgive me?  
Can you Forgive me?

SMITH CONT'D

Can you  
Forgive me?  
I'm really sorry.  
Dora. I'm  
Really sorry.  
I'm really  
Sorry.  
Sorry.  
Sorry.  
Sorry.  
Sorry.

*(Ayla on the high road, clicking her lighter on and off, on and off, on and off, on and off. She continues to do so throughout. Matthius, jar in hand, approaches her. One and Three are the sound of stifes in the jar throughout. After Ayla stops lighting her lighter, Two joins them. It sounds worse than ever.)*

**AYLA:** I'm not  
**MATTHIUS:** It's not smart to play with fire, you know.  
**TWO:** Hear this. Hear me. Hear this.

**AYLA:** Playing with it, darling. I'm using it. I'm calling Smith, unless you know  
**MATTHIUS:** To what end.  
**TWO:** Hear this. Hear me.

**AYLA:** where he is.  
**MATTHIUS:** What is this now, your beacon? He's not at home?  
**TWO:** Hear this. Hear this. Hear me.

**AYLA:** Not at home. Not at work.  
**MATTHIUS:** Not at work? Not visible, not callable, not traceable?  
**TWO:** Hear this. Hear

**AYLA:** None of the above, and if you think I haven't tried to-  
**MATTHIUS:** On the contrary I'm sure you have.  
**TWO:** this. Hear me. Hear this.

**AYLA:**  
**MATTHIUS:** Their flame went out again, I suppose. They've taken him away again, I suppose.  
**TWO:** Please tell me you hear me. Hear this.

**AYLA:**  
**MATTHIUS:** He's unreachable there, you know that, no point in, All of this.  
**TWO:** Hear me. Hear this. Please tell

**AYLA:**  
**MATTHIUS:** Stop that Ayla, you're wasting your time.  
**TWO:** me you hear me. Hear this. Hear me. Hear

*(Ayla stops clicking the lighter on and off. She stares at his jar. It sounds even uglier than before.)*

**AYLA**  
That thing is incredibly obnoxious, darling. Can't you do something about it?

**MATTHIUS**  
I'm working on it.

*(Matthius sees Smith's lighter on the ground, picks it up.)*

**MATTHIUS**  
What's this.

*(He clicks it on. Nothing.)*

AYLA  
It was Smith's darling. He made it. It doesn't work.

MATTHIUS  
Where did you get it.

AYLA  
Does that matter?

MATTHIUS  
Did he give it to you?

AYLA  
Dora had it.

MATTHIUS  
Did she give it to you?

AYLA  
I asked her for it and she lent it to me. So yes. It was given. Freely, if that's what you're so worried about.

MATTHIUS  
Smith made this. You're sure?

AYLA  
He's a smart man, Matthius.

MATTHIUS  
Did you show him yours?

AYLA  
I may have let him glance at it. For a moment.

MATTHIUS  
How closely.

AYLA

Well that's a matter of perception now, isn't it.

MATTHIUS

You let him hold it? Ayla? Or use it? Is that how?

AYLA

Are you angry?

MATTHIUS

I'm curious.

AYLA

I wish you would get angry.

MATTHIUS

I don't think he'll need us for fire anymore. Not with this.

AYLA

But it doesn't work!

MATTHIUS

It's perfect. It should.

AYLA

Smith has disappeared. Matthius. I thought you'd be more worried.

MATTHIUS

Of course I'm worried.

*(Ayla puts her hand out for Smith's lighter.)*

AYLA

Dora will wonder. I was only going to borrow it.

MATTHIUS

Trade you, one for one.

AYLA

Keep it then.

*(Ayla leaves, still scanning the world for Smith.)*

*(Dora at home. She plays a waiting game, while playing with her half-frozen snowball in hand.)*

**DORA:** Opposite of down is up which rhymes with cup.

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Opposite of cup is plate which rhymes with hate. Opposite of hate is love which

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** rhymes with glove. Opposite of glove is sock which rhymes with mop. Opposite of mop

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** is broom which rhymes with noon. Opposite of noon is night which rhymes with bright.

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Opposite of bright is brown which rhymes with down! And the opposite of down is up

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** which rhymes with cup-Hah! Did one!

TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.

THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Opposite of in is out which rhymes with shout. Opposite of shout is whisper  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** which rhymes with um. is whisper which rhymes with,  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Opposite of shout is whisper which rhymes with sister. Opposite of sister is  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** brother which- Brother. Ayla?!  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Don't panic, don't panic. Just breathe. Just, yeah. Breathe. Okay. Calm.  
Okay.  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

**DORA:** Make a decision, Dora. Dora the Decider. Yeah. That sounds good. The Decider. Yeah.  
TWO: Don't. Panic. Just. Breathe. Calm.  
THREE: (tick) (tick) (tick) (tick)

*(Dora takes a deep breath, opens the door and leaves, snowball still in hand.)*

*(Smith alone in the almost dark. At the end of each line a snowball falls directly on top of his head.)*

SMITH

I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.

SMITH CONT'D

I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.

*(Matthius on the high road, jar in one hand, Smith's lighter in the other. One, Two and Three are the sound of Strifes int he jar. It sounds slightly worse. He really examines the lighter. Checks every part. He takes out the middle, opens it. No fluid.)*

MATTHIUS

Ahhhhh.

*(Pocket search. Finds lighter fluid, fills lighter, puts it together. Clicks the lighter on. It works. He holds the flame.)*

MATTHIUS

Smith, you fucking genius.

*(Matthius is hit by a lobbed snowball from off.)*

MATTHIUS

Honestly?

*(He picks through the ice until he finds a small piece of paper. Reads it. A summons. A big sigh, a gathering of things. He rushes off.)*

*(Ayla drops from the high road into Dora and Smith's. Nobody home.)*

**AYLA:** Dora? Dora!  
**ONE:** *(thunk thunk thunk thunk)* *(creak - Slam.)*  
**THREE:** Hey. Hey. *(knock knock knock)* Hey, let me in. Baby, You home?

*(Ayla goes into the other room, comes back.)*

**AYLA:** Fuck.  
**ONE:** *(thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk thunk)*  
**THREE:** *(knock knock knock)* I can totally hear you walking around, let me in, okay?

*(Dora walks the neighborhood, door to door, partially melted snowball in hand.)  
(Ayla searches for her.)*

**DORA:** *(knocks)* Hi. Hi I- How are you, I'm- I just wanted to ask  
**ONE:** Alright! Alright! What do you want?  
**TWO:** Get the door! Who is it? What do they want? Shut the door it's

**DORA:** you- You have a nice evening. *(knocks)* Hi. How are  
**ONE:** We don't need one. Goodbye. Some salesman. Get the door! Who  
**TWO:** freezing out! Who was it? *(slams shut)* Alright!

**SMITH:** you? I was wondering if you'd seen- Okay. Okay. Yeah, no, no,  
**ONE:** is it? Tell whoever it is we don't want any. Shut the  
**TWO:** Alright! Whatever it is we don't want any, and that's that, understand?

**DORA:** I- Okay. You too. *(knocks)* Hi Sir, do you have a moment?  
**ONE:** door it's freezing! *(slams shut)* Oh! Hello. I have  
**TWO:** You have a good evening. *(sings something alluring, and slightly*

**DORA:** I just wanted to ask if you- No thank you.  
**ONE:** plenty of time. Won't you come in? Have a drink. It's cold out.  
**TWO:** *sensual, but not overtly so, and ideally something slightly upbeat as well,*

**DORA:** No, no thank you. No! I'm going now. Goodbye. (knocks) Hello Miss,  
**ONE:** Please! Well, if you're sure. Your loss. (sounds of  
**TWO:** like it's on the radio, or a record in the other room.) (slams shut) Hello?

**DORA:** I'm sorry to bother you. Do you have a moment? Please? Oh thank you.  
**ONE:** cats meowing. Lots of cats all around. This woman is the epitome of Neighborhood  
**TWO:** Oh a visitor. Lovely. Yes, I have a

**DORA:** Have you seen my brother anywhere? No, brother. Yeah. I don't know  
**ONE:** Cat Lady, and has a consistent twenty-odd cats in residence. The more this  
**TWO:** moment. Seen your who, child? Mother? Ah, brother.

**DORA:** where he's gone and I thought maybe since you live nearby you might have- Oh.  
**ONE:** sounds like twenty-odd cats, the better. A variety of meowing and hissing tones  
**TWO:** No, child. I can't say I have. I'm sorry I'm no help.

**DORA:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you anyway, goodnight.  
**ONE:** would be ideal. Maybe a moment of silence before a last finale.)  
**TWO:** Best of luck. I'll keep my eyes out for you.

(Matthius enters the Office of Ultimate Authority, note in hand. He approaches the front desk, and hands over the note.)

**MATTHIUS:** I got a summons?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** Yes? Ah yes. Let's see... Your papers went through, and  
**ONE:** Carol, you have a call on line two. Carol, line two. Office of Ultimate  
**THREE:** (bring bring!) (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**  
**RECEPTIONIST:** everything cleared earlier than expected. I must say, you're very fortunate  
**ONE:** Authority, please hold. Office of Ultimate Authority, please  
**THREE:** (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** Sir, I think Ultimate Authority must have been particularly interested in your  
ONE: hold. Thank you for holding. All representatives are now busy. We will  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** case because they answered first thing this morning, despite it being pretty  
ONE: be with you shortly. Office of Ultimate Authority, how may I direct your  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

**RECEPTIONIST:** far down in the queue. If you'll just wait here, I think they want to talk to  
ONE: call? Certainly ma'am, hold one moment please while I transfer you.  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**MATTHIUS:**

Ultimate Authority?  
**RECEPTIONIST:** you in person. Well, the board members at least. Have a  
ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, please hold. Office of Ultimate Authority,  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

**RECEPTIONIST:** seat, they've been expecting you, it shouldn't be long.

**MATTHIUS:**

ONE: please continue to hold. To hear the menu in English, press one.  
THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

*(Dora on the street, snowball in hand.  
She addresses those passing. Ayla still  
searches.)*

**DORA:**

Smith! Smith?! Excuse me, I was  
ONE: Hello? Hello? Hold on, I think I have another call. (Hooooooooonk!!!)  
TWO: (Honk!) (honk honk!) Yeah, yeah he is. I agree, yes,

**DORA:**

wondering if you'd seen- Excuse me, have you seen-  
ONE: How about lunch next Wednesday at that cute little place near work? (Honk!)  
TWO: definitely. (Zoom!) (Zoom zoom!) Hot dogs! Hot! Three for a

**DORA:** Excuse me, I was- Sheesh. That's not very nice. Smith!  
**ONE:** (Honk honk!) No. No. No, that's not what I meant at all, that's not what I-  
**TWO:** dollar! (Sound of a siren passing, turning a corner, and fading away) I'll get

**DORA:** Excuse me, please, could I ask- Could I ask you if- Excuse me,  
**ONE:** (Honk!) (Honk honk!) Tell him absolutely not, under no circumstances will I  
**TWO:** that to you by Friday afternoon. (Zoom! Zoom zoom!) (Zoom!)

**DORA:** I need to know- Do you have a second, Sir? I promise I'm not selling any-  
**ONE:** even consider going-(Hooooooooooooooooooooonk!) I'd like to make a reservation for  
**TWO:** Get em while they're hot! Three for a dollar! (Sound of a motorcycle

**DORA:** Smith? SMITH! Please hear me, pretty  
**ONE:** three tonight at seven. (Zoom zoom!) Mom, no. No. Can we not start  
**TWO:** shifting) and yes I do understand what you're saying, but, (Honk!)

**DORA:** please, do! Mister, could you- Fine! To you too!  
**ONE:** in on this now? Please? (Sound of a helicopter flying by overhead) One small  
**TWO:** (honk honk!) was running late because of some maintenance thing, and then three

**DORA:** Sir, do you know what time it is? Thank you so much, have you seen my-  
**ONE:** coffee to go please, no sugar. Quarter of. (zoom!) Nina, your order is  
**TWO:** (HOOONK!) Donahugh, D as in David. No, D! D, O, N, A, (Honk!)

**DORA:** Excuse me, do- Ex- Time? Thank you so much and  
**ONE:** ready! Nina! (zoom zoom!) I'm running late, but I can- What?  
**TWO:** Let's not skirt the issue here, let's (Honk!) Quarter of

**DORA:** also have you seen my brother anywhere? He's missing.  
**ONE:** What? Sure. Sure.  
**TWO:** (Zoom zoom!)

(Matthius at the Office of Ultimate Authority.)

**MATTHIUS:**

Yes?

**RECEPTIONIST:** Matthius, Titan? They're ready for you. Right this way.

ONE: Office of Ultimate Authority, thank you for holding. How may I direct your call?

THREE: (bring bring!) (bring bring!)

*(She leads him into an adjoining room. It is small. Just one chair. He sits, she leaves. Matthius waits in silence. Then it begins.)*

ONE: Case number 572R-94, Informational Request of the Unknown put to Ultimate Authority,

TWO: Case number 572R-94, Informational Request of the Unknown, put to Ultimate

THREE: Case number 572R-94, Informational Request of the Unknown put to Ultimate Authority,

ONE: answered Today, 2:35pm, room 104B by board of Directors. Answer as follows. Quote.

TWO: Authority, answered Today, 2:35pm, room 104B by board of Directors. Answer as follows.

THREE: answered Today, 2:35pm, room 104B by board of Directors. Answer as follows. Quote.

ONE: Good question. I'm not sure how to destroy Strifes. I'm also not convinced it's

TWO: Quote. Good question. I'm not sure how to destroy Strifes. I'm also not convinced it's

THREE: Good question. I'm not sure how to destroy Strifes. I'm also not convinced it's

ONE: a good idea. However. Leave your jar here, and I will take care of them. For you.

TWO: a good idea. However. Leave your jar here, and I will take care of them. For you.

THREE: a good idea. However. Leave your jar here, and I will take care of them. For you.

ONE: Dispose of them. For you. Leave the jar here. You won't need it anymore. End quote.

TWO: Dispose of them. For you. Leave the jar here. You won't need it anymore. End quote.

THREE: Dispose of them. For you. Leave the jar here. You won't need it anymore. End quote.

ONE: Case number 572R-94, instructed to leave equipment on premises. Bag provided beneath

TWO: Case number 572R-94, instructed to leave equipment on premises. Bag provided

THREE: Case number 572R-94, instructed to leave equipment on premises. Bag provided beneath

ONE: seat cushion. Thank you for visiting Ultimate Authority. Your opinion is important to

TWO: beneath seat cushion. Thank you for visiting Ultimate Authority. Your opinion is

THREE: seat cushion. Thank you for visiting Ultimate Authority. Your opinion is important

ONE: us. Please take a comment card on your way out. Thank you, and have a very pleasant  
TWO: important to us. Please take a comment card on your way out. Thank you, and have a  
THREE: to us. Please take a comment card on your way out. Thank you, and have a very

ONE: afternoon.  
TWO: very pleasant afternoon.  
THREE: pleasant afternoon.

*(Matthius gets up, tries to leave. He can't. He tries even harder to leave, but he can't.)*

MATTHIUS

Excuse me?  
Am I free to go?

*(Still, he can't move.)*

MATTHIUS

Fine.  
Here.  
Take it.

*(Matthius takes out the bag from beneath the seat cushion, places his jar inside of it, and leaves.)*

*(Smith alone in the almost dark. At the end of each line a snowball falls directly on top of his head.)*

SMITH

Sorry.  
Sorry.  
Sorry.

*(Though he doesn't continue to speak, snowballs continue to fall at regular intervals for the next minute. Or so. However long it is should feel like a real forever.)*

*(Snowballs are still falling on Smith when Ayla finds Dora on the street, trying to get anyone's attention. It's so busy out, we only hear parts of what they say.)*

**AYLA:** Dora! Dora, come home. Dora, this isn't- Come on.  
**DORA:** Excuse me! Miss? Sir?  
**ONE:** What? Huh? Speak up, I can't hear you. *(Honk honk! Honk!)* There's a lot of traffic  
**TWO:** What? *(Honk honk!)* You'll have to speak up there's a lot of traffic. *(Zoom!)*  
**THREE:** *(Honk!)* *(honk honk!)* Yeah, yeah he is. I agree, yes,  
**AYLA:** Let's look together, we're not going to find him him.  
**DORA:** Excuse me, can I ask you- Quick question. Have you-  
**ONE:** this morning. *(Honk! Honk honk!)* Come on! *(Zoom!)* Yeah, and entirelyly just,  
**TWO:** *(Honk! Honk honk!)* Let's go, let's go, let's go, move it, let's go! *(Honk!)*  
**THREE:** definitely. *(Zoom!)* *(Zoom zoom!)* Hot dogs! Hot! Three for a  
**AYLA:** Dora! Listen to me! We aren't going to find him here!  
**DORA:** Have you seen my brother? Sir? Please, have you?  
**ONE:** yeah, yeah, entirelyly. *(Zoom zoom!)* *(Zoom!)* I hear that, I hear that  
**TWO:** *(Honk honk!)* Full steam ahead I say let's just go full steam ahead. *(Honk!)*  
**THREE:** dollar! *(Sound of a siren passing, turning a corner, and fading away)* I'll get-  
**AYLA:**  
**DORA:** People don't just dissappear! One of you has to have seen him!  
**ONE:** *(Zoom! Zoom zoom! Zoom! )* No, you tell me. You tell me what you mean by that,  
**TWO:** what do you mean you don't know, you can't not know, what do you mean? *(Honk honk!)*  
**THREE:** *(honk honk!)* was running late because of some maintenance thing, and then three-

**AYLA:** Dora, this isn't the place to look!

**DORA:** Well what's your idea then? Where is he if he

**ONE:** you tell me. (Zoom!) (Honk!) Completely unfounded

**TWO:** It isn't so bad as you think, I don't think, I don't think it is. (Honk honk!)

**THREE:** (HOOONK!) Donahugh, D as in David. No, D! D, O, N, A, (Honk!)

**AYLA:** I don't know, Dora, but-

**DORA:** isn't here? Then I'm keeping looking until you do!

**ONE:** accusations, completely unfounded. (Squealing of brakes) Simply put, simply

**TWO:** (Honk!) completely unnecessary you know that, right? You know that.

**THREE:**

**AYLA:** Dora,

**DORA:** Sir! Miss! Excuse me! Excuse me, have you seen my-

**ONE:** put, just tell it to me in a- (Siren passing, turning the corner and fading)

**TWO:** (Zoom zoom!) Traceability, compatibility, and flexibility, that's all we

**THREE:** Let's not skirt the issue here, Morris, let's (Honk!) (Honk honk!)

**AYLA:** Dora, please.

**DORA:** Have either of you seen my brother anywhere? He's missing.

**ONE:** Somebody's gotta pay for it, okay? Somebody has to. (Zoom!)

**TWO:** need here. (Honk! Honk honk!) That isn't the issue here,

**THREE:** (Honk!) (Honk honk!) (zoom!)

*(Matthius with a new jar. He enters the cave of strifes to begin collecting again. There sits Smith, nearly frozen in the snow. Snowballs continue to drop directly on top of his head at regular intervals.)*

**MATTHIUS:** Ayla. Ayla! I've found him.

**AYLA:** Yes? He's found him.

*(In an instant, Ayla picks up Dora, jumps to the high road, and travels to the cave.)*

*(Matthius fumbles for Smith's lighter. He lights it, holds the flame, begins to dig snow away with one hand, and melt the ice with the other. He whispers.)*

MATTHIUS

Smith.  
Smith, you did it. You made this.  
You just forgot the lighter fluid.  
I don't blame you, you couldn't have known.  
Smith.  
Feel this?  
Feel this, Smith. It's yours.  
It's warm and it's beautiful and it's yours.

*(Dora and Ayla enter the cave. Ayla lights her lighter, and helps dig snow away.)*

SMITH

I heard that.

DORA

What is this place? It's freezing.

SMITH

Dora?

DORA

Hi Smith.

SMITH

Hi Dora.

DORA

You look ridiculous.

SMITH  
Forgive me?

*(Ayla gets the last of the snow off of Smith, as Dora throws what's left of her melted snowball at him. It clunks.)*

SMITH  
Ow! What did you put in here, a rock?

DORA  
Whatever it is don't touch it! It's mine.

*(Dora picks through the last bit of snow, and pulls out Matthius's lighter.)*

DORA  
Wow.  
Cool.  
Next time don't tell me to put things in the freezer, okay?

SMITH  
Okay.

*(Ayla unties one of Smith's hands from the chair.)*

SMITH  
Want me to show you how to use it?

DORA  
Is it hard?

SMITH  
No, it's easy. Just,  
Here.  
Like this.

*(He clicks the lighter on, holds the flame, and hands it to Dora.)*

Like,

DORA

*(Sparks. Sparks. Sparks. She clicks it on.)*

Wow.  
It's beautiful.

DORA

*(Softly, from the corner, we start to hear it. One, Two and Three are the sound of Hope in the corner of the cave. It is soft, soothing, and sung.)*

Do you hear that?  
What is it?

DORA

Want to catch it and find out?

MATTHIUS

How do you catch it?

DORA

Here, I'll show you. Don't let the flame go out, okay?

MATTHIUS

Okay.

DORA

*(Dora and Matthius sneak up behind the source of the noise, as Dora holds the lit lighter high. Matthius hands Dora the new jar, and together they scoop all of Hope into it. One, Two and Three become the sound of Hope in the jar. It is quiet, soothing, and hummed.)*

*(Together, everyone listens to Hope in the jar. The closer Dora holds the flame, the louder it gets.)*

*(Suddenly, Matthius's jar of strifes falls into the cave. It hits the ground, and explodes.)*

*(As the strifes leap out of the jar, an air raid siren sounds. It's so loud it makes you blind.)*

*(Greed lashes onto Ayla, Sickness to Smith, and Insanity to Matthius. Dora keeps the lighter lit. They don't touch her.)*

*(New day. Dora alone at home, listening to the radio. The jar with Hope sits on the floor beside her. Chorus Two hums its tune softly in the background.)*

#### ONE

An unprecedented breach in security at the Office of Ultimate Authority last night has resulted in several new and exceedingly powerful strifes being released into our midst in what has already been hailed as potentially 'The most detrimental plague ever leased upon Mankind.'

Head Chairman of the Board at Ultimate Authority joins me now to talk about it.  
Good morning.

THREE

Morning.

ONE

I know detailed investigation is still currently underway, but how much can you already tell us about what led to last night's events?

THREE

Quite a lot, actually. We have already been able to trace the initial security breach to a second generation Titan, whose name has not yet been released. He had no previous record of acute misbehavior, but was engaged in a questionable project that was never given full approval, for which he was already under low level surveillance, which is part of the reason we have been able to respond to the crisis as quickly and effectively as you've seen today.

ONE

And what is Ultimate Authority doing to control the situation?

THREE

We've evacuated everyone within a ten mile radius of the cave from which the strifes were released. Unfortunately, there's nothing we can do to stop them from spreading, but the good news is that the more they dissipate, the weaker they become. Our primary concern was to

THREE CONT'D

ensure that nobody contracted any of these things while they're still at their strongest concentration, because there is no coming back from something like that.

ONE

And have there been any casualties?

THREE

Only those who were involved in the episode. Two Deities.

DORA

And Smith! My brother!  
You're forgetting about Smith!

THREE

There was one girl by the name of Dora who did manage to flee unscathed from the scene. As we understand it, she had been given a box containing the strifes and, though given clear instructions never to open it, disobeyed orders and got us into the situation we find ourselves in now.

DORA

It was a jar, not a box!  
And that isn't anything like how it went!  
I never touched it!

THREE

The end result being that the project the Titan had been involved in backfired entirely due to the poor girl's stupidity.

DORA

Not my fault!  
It wasn't!  
That's not how it went!

ONE

Any words of advice to our listeners?

THREE

Stay indoors. Shut your windows. If for some reason you have to go outside, wear protection over your face and hands. We're doing everything we can to keep things safe out there, and we appreciate your patience and cooperation.

ONE

That was Head Chairman of the Board at Ultimate Authority. Thank you so much for your time.

THREE

My pleasure.

ONE

Moving on to topics outside of-

*(Dora turns off the radio.)*

DORA

That isn't how it went!

*(She opens the front door and is met with: )*

ONE: This is the story we know: gives fire to man This is a story we  
TWO: Prometheus steals  
THREE: And is punished for it.

ONE: know: Out fly the spites of mankind. Sickness,  
TWO: Pandora opens a box. Pandora opens it Vice,  
THREE: Old Age, Labor

ONE: Insanity This is the story we know:  
TWO: Passion This is the story we know:  
THREE: Hope. This is the story we know:

DORA

THAT'S NOT HOW IT WENT!

ONE: This is the story: gives fire to man This is the story:  
TWO: This is the story: Prometheus steals  
THREE: This is the story: And is punished for it.  
**DORA:** No it's not! He never did! That isn't the true

ONE: Our fly the spites of mankind Sickness, Insanity  
TWO: Pandora opens a box. Pandora opens it. Vice,  
THREE: Old Age, Labor  
**DORA:** story! It was a jar and I never touched it once! I never touched it once!

ONE: This is the story: This is the truth of it: gives fire  
TWO: Passion This is the story: This is the truth of it: Prometheus steals  
THREE: Hope. This is the story: This is the truth of it:  
**DORA:** I never! That is not what happened! They're lying!

