

I kept my eyes fixed on the bottle of kiwi-lime sauce and waited, not daring to risk a glance at either the glass of brackish fluid that was supposedly orange juice to my left or the anonymous grey slab of “Salisbury Steak” to my right lest the contents of my stomach should try to flee in terror. The kiwi-lime sauce, I realized, was probably the only edible thing for miles around. Nor did I dare to look up at the dour visage of the man who sat on the other side of the table, peering down at me like a bird of prey: Falko Falkowitz, Czar of Kitchengrad and the right-hand man of the legendary Frank Dickinson Bartlett, Ghost King of the Dining Halls and also of Manly Sports. *More like Vulcho Vulchowitz, the way Bartlett’s been scavenging these days.*

“So, what precisely is your complaint?” the Bartlett representative said at last.

“That was supposed to be the obvious part. There’s a dead man’s mustache in my chicken. For starters, I want to know what happened to the rest of him. Then we can talk about entrees.”

“Did you know the dinee personally?” Falkowitz replied without batting an eye.

“The *dinee*?”

“It’s simple terminology, really. You were the diner. Bolton was the dinee. Did you know him personally?”

“No, but that’s not important. What’s important is he’s *dead*, don’t you understand?”

“If you didn’t know him personally, there’s no basis on which you can lodge an official complaint.”

I blinked.

“Come again?”

“We’re trying to forge a sense of class consciousness amongst our patrons by having people from different social groups eat each other. Naturally, if you had eaten a friend of yours, we would have offered you our deepest condolences and two free swipes. We keep telling Immigration to stop sending us multicultural prospies. Eating them offends *everybody*, so what’s the use? But I digress.”

“God Damn it, Falkowitz, I want answers!” I said, slamming my fist down on top of the table. “Who killed John Bolton?”

Falkowitz’s whole body suddenly seemed to undergo a violent spasm, and electricity arced for a moment across his chest.

“You selected John Bolton,” he said in a voice devoid of emotion. “During what times would you be most likely to use this service?”

“What the fuck?”

“You selected ‘What the fuck?’ During what times would you be most likely to use this service?”

It seemed Falkowitz was a robot. He could be of no further use to me. Perhaps I had found the last cylon. But I had neither time nor patience for such concerns. These are for schizophrenics and the hopelessly obsessed.

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Meeting with Falkowitz left bad taste in mouth, so bad, have forgotten how to use pronouns and articles. Nabbed that tasty kiwi-lime sauce on way out; drank some, and soon remembered language. Fun while it lasted, though. Felt like Rorschach.

It seemed like every angle at which I tried to approach the case just led to another wall. Or perhaps the same wall, I wasn't quite sure. It all depended on whether the half-length of the wall was greater than the sine of the angle at which I was approaching it. My head was spinning. I needed to talk to somebody, and who better than the one man who always contradicted me, and generally tried to make my life as difficult as possible?

Austin Feller saw me before I saw him, snuck up behind me, and punched me twice in the back. *This is what friends are for, I suppose.* Austin and I had been on the run from the Pranco regime together last year, and, while I had been offered a cushy cabinet job when the new administration came to power, he was still wanted by the state, for whatever reason. He asked me why I had come, and I briefly recounted the events of the past few days, starting with Bartley's mysterious visit and culminating with my unfortunate encounter with Falkowitz.

“Sounds like Bartlett has some real sanitary issues,” Austin said, completely ignoring the bulk of what I had said. “Speaking of which, I have something to tell you. And this isn't just about how the math department periodically sends its students reminders not to shower by email. This is—”

Everything he may have said after that was swallowed by an awful screeching sound from the next room over, which lasted for three and a half minutes, and was followed by an exuberant “Shazzam!”

Ah, yes. Dr. Aaron Space, until recently president of the Hitchcock Academy of Sciences, now on the run from the law after it was discovered he had diverted the entirety of the nation's science budget to the pursuit of his personal dream to land a blue whale on Neptune. Just when he was about to have the museum named after him, too.

“Does he do that often?” I asked after the noise finally subsided.

“Every time I ever have anything to say. *You* try being at large with him.”

“Hmm. Well, I came here to warn you about John Bolton, not to flee from justice in the company of an eminent physicist. I need to know who killed Bolton, and why.”

“I heard he’s been working for the government since ‘01, derailing diplomatic approaches to delicate situations. Maybe this was a political killing?”

“Maybe. Or maybe someone’s picking off HARC representatives. Who’s next, Austin? Aaron Space? Mandy Stafford? Me? You?”

I realized immediately that I wouldn’t have another opportunity to make a dramatic exit on such a dramatic high note for probably another five years, so I left without saying another word. Austin had told me nothing, partly because I hadn’t given him any time to reply, partly because of Aaron Space, and partly because Austin never told me anything. I was back to square one. Until out of nowhere came an inexplicable flashback:

“Maybe. Or maybe someone’s picking off HARC representatives. Who’s next, Austin? Aaron Space? Mandy Stafford? Me? You?”

My very words! Still, I wasn’t quite sure *why* I had had this flashback, when the events I was supposed to be flashing back to were still entirely fresh in my memory. And then it struck me. Three of the people I had mentioned weren’t affiliated with HARC at all; the only reason I mentioned them in the first place was to give my statement the rhetorical oomph it otherwise would have lacked. But if neither me, nor Austin, nor Aaron Space was next, then Mandy had to be next! My logic had more holes than a diffraction grid, which probably explained why it was so good at interfering with itself. But I resolutely ignored the fact that I had spontaneously created meaning out of rhetorical oomph. There were deaths to prevent, and I had to improve my track record somehow.

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“Hello?” said Mandy Stafford as she stepped into the small room hidden in the heart of the bureaucratic clusterfuck of the Reynolds Club. The lights were off, and all was silent. “Is anybody here?”

“It seems *you* are the only one here, Ms. Stafford,” said an ominous voice from deep within the gloom. “*You* are the only one left in HARC.” Mandy froze as she heard the door lock behind her.

“But, please, make yourself comfortable,” continued the ominous voice. “We’re going to be here for a while.”

(Excerpted from Brubaker, B. Michael, *Being and the Perennial Question in the works of Ben Brubaker*, Cambridge: Harvard, 2036.)

[...] and thus the onus lies with the reader to problematize the notion that it is even *conceivable* to overemphasize the importance of Brubaker's writing for language, the literary culture of early twenty-first-century Hitchcock, and the moral and spiritual well-being of humanity more generally. I argue at length in Chapter 12 that not only can humans not really be said to have been human *in esse* before Brubaker, they cannot be said to have been mammals at all, and in fact more closely resembled our most recent common ancestor with arthropods. At the very end of Chapter 4, as we have seen, Brubaker revolutionized the literary world by inventing *third-person narrative*: the brief scene between Mandy Stafford and the person with the ominous voice actually occurs *outside* of the presence of the protagonist Brubaker: as commonplace as this may seem to contemporary readers, we must remember that such a narrative decision had *never been made* before Brubaker. And this was just the beginning of Brubaker's experimental phase: in subsequent chapters, he employs meta-textuality so extreme you'll probably shit yourself [...]

AW, SHIT, HE STILL MAKES JOKES IN THIS PART:

- Noah Moskowitz and Shola Farber confirmed as associate members.
- House Meeting will continue to take place on Thursdays
- The party line on parties is don't be lyin'. Tell the Resident Heads. Also, don't do lines. Coke is bad.
- The Off-Off Campus show, Give Me Liberty or Give Me Meth, is now playing on Friday evenings at University Church. Don't give them meth. Meth is bad.
- House homecoming (hereafter housecoming) is still happening.
- Regular homecoming happened, and some of you went, which was unprecedented.
- We are good at soccer. We may or may not be good at other sports.
- There was a motion to impeach Elizabeth Lee for not being present to talk about sports. She has been given a week to come up with a defense. Wearing a suit of unimpeachable quality has been shown to correlate strongly with whether or not an elected official survives impeachment.
- Someone from the SCC will be coming to the dorm of November 4th to talk to you specifically about how to use a condom. Specifically, how to put one on as quickly as possible, with no thoughts for the consequences. The weekend of November 7th-8th will hereafter be referred to as "Start a Family Weekend."