

# THE MINUTES FROM THE FUTURE

**RECEIVING TRANSMISSION . . .**

**PLACE: HITCHCOCK HOUSE, CHICAGO**

**TIME: THE FUTURE**

It had been a quiet week. Despite winning everything the previous week, Hitchcock had forfeited every IM game, and the Masters Chaskin, after collecting their ten dollars from most of the people signed up for their trip, had found themselves with a lot of no-shows. Nobody had turned out for the Terra Museum of Modern Art, either, and *RawHead Rex*, the Bad Movie of the week, had drawn almost no audience. (Likewise for the Good Movie, *Being John Malkovich*). The Hitchcock Hitched competition, even in its “Extreme” 32-hour version lasting from noon on Saturday until 7 P.M. on Sunday, had not occurred at all. Now it was Thursday evening, and nobody was even using the swing. Christian Kammerer was suspicious.

“They were all so lively last Wednesday at Duff’s Biweekly Imbibation Soiree,” he mused, pacing the arcade. “What could have happened since then to make this place feel so deserted?” Just then he saw a bundled figure duck in from the vestibule.

Thinking only with his spinal cord, Christian immediately delivered a flying roundhouse kick to the figure’s head. Dirty blond tresses coiled out of its scarf, and Christian drew back, mortified. “Jared!” he said. “I hope I didn’t hurt you. It’s just that I didn’t see your ID at first and I thought you might have been a neighborhood hooligan.”

“It’s cool,” said Jared, dusting himself off. “I was just looking for Shannon and Tiwalade for our flag football game. Have you seen them?”

“Can’t say that I have. Things have been awfully quiet around these parts lately... almost *too* quiet.” Christian tapped his forefinger pensively against his chin.

“You can say that again,” said Jared, quickly adding, “but don’t.”

For a moment the two men were quiet, listening to the soulless voice of the wind.

Christian eventually broke their reverie. “Want some of these prepackaged T.G.I. Friday’s Buffalo Wings?” he ventured.

“Do I ever!”

The kitchen seemed a little musty when they arrived.

“Doesn’t anyone ever clean this place regularly throughout the quarter in assigned shifts in order to recoup their quarterly Kitchen Coop deposit?” Christian asked rhetorically, streaking his finger through the patina of dust that had settled on the table.

“I’m not sure,” said Jared. “All I know is, I want buffalo wings.”

“Word,” said Christian. “But we’ll need an oven tray. Let me just see if anybody has one in their cupboard.”

“But wait,” said Jared. “Those cupboards are private space. As I understand it, the objects contained therein are the sole property of their owners, and not for public use. In fact, is it not the case that any use of such property without the express consent of the owner is considered stealing?”

“Private property? In the Hitchcock kitchen? What a quaint notion,” Christian sneered, brushing the cobwebs off of a nearby cupboard door. “I bet you believe in the tooth fairy, too. But this cupboard is locked. I need something to break it open with. Help me move this fire extinguisher.”

“Move the fire extinguisher?” said Jared. “But won’t we get kicked out of housing?”

“Only if they catch us,” said Christian, hefting the extinguisher and bringing it down hard on the cupboard’s lock. “Which they won’t, since this place is about as populated as our side of a belatedly announced capture the flag game against Alper house that isn’t even occurring at the proposed time.” There was the faint sound of a spring uncoiling.

“Get down!” said Jared, diving full into Christian’s chest and knocking him over. When they looked up, a spear was twanging in the wall just above their heads. “People are getting protective of their stuff.”

“You’d think, if this were so important, that Raber would write it up in the minutes or something,” said Christian. “Somebody should have made an announcement if they care so much.”

“Where are the minutes, anyhow?” said Jared. “I haven’t seen Raber all week, actually.”

“Curious. But isn’t it almost time for this week’s meeting? I thought I’d drop in this week.”

Despairing of using the Hitchcock kitchen without Kitchen Coop membership, Christian and Jared climbed the stairs to the front desk. Stella was on duty.

“How are you, Stella?” said Christian.

“All right,” she replied. “Say, do you know why the only people that have been coming around the front desk are Snell folks checking their mail?”

“Hmm..” said Christian. “Snell folks, you say?”

“Mm-hmm.”

“Can’t say that I do. But... what could possibly be keeping everybody in Hitchcock from going about their normal daily lives?”

“You know,” Stella added, “I haven’t seen that Ryan Rubin either.”

And then they knew. And then they understood. As the two men look’d at each other

with a wild surmise, a cold chill raced down their spines like a ghoulish arachnid and stopped up their voices. Jared's mouth worked noiselessly like that of a dying fish. Christian felt his cheeks fill with cotton.

"Good God!" he finally croaked out. Lurching over to the Green Room door, he flung wide the heavy board and beheld that sight for which he was prepared in thought, but not in spirit: the room was strewn with the listless forms of the residents of Hitchcock House, their bodies draped all over the floor and furniture, their faces streaked with cold, dried sweat, their filmy eyes focused on nothing. At the podium, the sagging form of Claire Gilbert commanded the room.

"No!" cried Christian. "Good God, no! Why? My worst fears have finally come to pass!"

Jared found his voice. "What the heck is going on?"

The two men raced into the Green Room and began to shake the flaccid bodies, trying to revive them. "Robin! Jeremy! Wake up! Speak to me! Laura, Margaret, Raber! Speak! Ryan Rubin! Come on! You can do it!" But they were greeted with only glassy stares and surly blinks. Jesse Raber was scribbling aimlessly on a piece of notebook paper, but his attention could not be captured.

Finally Jared called out, "I've got a live one! It's Chris Lee!"

Christian rushed to his side. "Chris, what's happened?"

Chris slowly sat up. "What do you mean? And why are you so late? Anyhow, stop distracting me, I need to pay attention in case Raber's minutes are a contest again. You know, I won last time."

"Barely!" croaked out Ben Tradewell and Mary Fee from behind him. "We only got one more square wrong than you did on those crossword minutes. We were paying just as much attention as you. Anyhow, your only reward is your role in this lame story!"

"Shh," said Chris. "I need to listen."

"Minutes?" said Jared. "Paying attention? What the heck is going on here?"

Just then Claire opened her eyes into bleary slits. "Any more announcements," she wheezed, before collapsing on the podium.

"Oh my God," said Jared. "You mean...?"

"Yes, said Christian. "It's true. *This meeting has been in session all week.* That's where everyone has been. We need to get these people out of here! The milk and cookies have long since run out, and people are dying of hunger and thirst! Come on, everyone," he bellowed, waving his arm in the direction of Bartlett, "let's get out of here!"

"But wait," groaned Jim from off in the corner. "I still have to talk about the balcony..."

**TRANSMISSION TERMINATED . . .**