

PARASITECOLOGY

S01E05 - "I Feel Something in the Air"

written by

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ACT 1 - THE STRUGGLE

INT. JAVIER'S BED - LATE MORNING

Buzzing sound of phone notification.

CHER

Come on, Javier - we've got to get out of bed.

JAVIER

(mumbling, half-sleep)
Mmm. Nooo.

CHER

Come ON.

JAVIER

No, I'm tired, and exhausted and -- apparently I still have a parasite in my head.

CHER

I've told you before, please do not use the P-word.

JAVIER

(grumbling)
Sorry... sorry, Cher. You know... I thought you were supposed to help me with this.

CHER

I am, but it's not that simple. Your body doesn't just make endless supplies of chemicals, you know, and...

Phone buzzes again.

CHER (CONT'D)

What is that?

Roll in bed sound.

JAVIER

Mmm.. it's just a message from some people at Personeum, my old company. They're getting together for drinks this Friday and invited me along.

CHER
Work friends, wonderful!

JAVIER
I didn't say friends.

CHER
Sorry, and what's this figure
wearing a multicolored hat and then
an image of a fountain?

JAVIER
That means... drink to excess.

CHER
I understand, you get overly
inebriated with ethyl alcohol and
then jump in a fountain for fun.
I'm not naive, Javier. We will say
yes.

JAVIER
Uh -- NO we will not. I don't want
to see people from work AT work,
much less in a social setting,
thanks. Hard pass. Hardest of
passes. Host VETO privilege pass.

CHER
That is a M-A-Y-B-E maybe. And...
send. You've got some unread
messages, here.

JAVIER
Yeah, they're from my sister Mia,
checking up on me.

CHER
Oh - that's considerate.

JAVIER
It's not. She thinks now that Dad
is dead that it's her job to be HIM
and push me. Tell me what I'm
doing wrong with my life. See --
"Got your message about quitting --
hope you are still on your meds and
not planning on asking me for
money. Being hard on you because I
know you can do better."

CHER

I understand, but... I have seen your memories, you know, and you haven't always made it easy for her. And of course, she shares genetic material with you and you don't exactly have the largest... emotional support network.

JAVIER

No family, no friends, no life - got it. Thanks, Cher.

CHER

Now. That's not what I meant. And this -- state -- goes back to what I said before. I'm not a miracle worker, ok, and while I can boost things here and tone them down there -- I need more chemicals to work with. You wouldn't expect me to bake a cake without sugars and saturated fat and desiccated arthropod powder, would you? No! We've got to get your body making more raw materials -- dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline, oxytocin, maybe melanin, get you a nice glow going.

JAVIER

Okay, how do we do that?

CHER

Simple. I'm new in town, take me on a tour of your hormones and neurotransmitters by engaging in a series of behaviors that will elicit their release.

JAVIER

Okay, I think I see what's happening here, and I'm NOT comfortable with letting you watch, that's just weird.

CHER

What? NO! Ughh, please, keep all that REPRODUCTIVE-ADJACENT stuff to yourself. No, I'm talking about FUN -- organic chemical producing FUN! Chemicals that I'll have your body store and release in order to keep you functioning in peak condition.

(MORE)

CHER (CONT'D)

In fact, if you can't produce enough, eventually you will become ill and perhaps even... die.

JAVIER

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Because what I heard just there is that I am pretty much in a 1-to-1 Crank situation.

CHER

No, Javier.

JAVIER

Well, I don't really think Crank 2 applies.

CHER

Neither applies, Javier. This is not Crank, because, as you know, Crank is not a serious work of applied science.

JAVIER

Okay, Mr. Science -- what's our first experiment, then?

CHER

ICE CREAM!

EXT. CITY STREETS - OUT FOR A WALK, DAY

City sounds of streets, foot-traffic, etc.

CHER

Are we almost there?

JAVIER

Patience. This tour guide's giving you the scenic route around the city. Coming up on your left, there's a bus stop that smells like urine and

(sniffing)

Pine-sol.

CHER

Actually, that's us. Side-effect of the pinenes, plus you getting full sniff privileges back. It's 80% of tasting, you know. And I thought the ice cream place was THAT way...

JAVIER

Scenic route, remember? And isn't it better if we stay out of sight, you know, of the MURDERBOTS?

CHER

Always with the murderbots...
RELAX. I've told you before - there aren't any murderbots here, and there aren't likely to be any anytime soon. This is a pre-enlightenment system, which means galactic regulations prevent travelling here in anything but the most rare of circumstances. And, let's be frank, it's not like many would be coming anyway... it's a bib world.

JAVIER

I don't know what that means.

CHER

A bib world... you know. There's no judgement, it's just... You know how some planets are immaculately maintained and when you go you dress up nice and if you happen to spill a few crumbs while you're eating there, a fancy waiter comes by and scoops them up with a tool invented just to scoop up little crumbs? And then, some planets are more... CASUAL... COMFORTABLE... the sort of place you throw on some crocs and a scruffy server offers you... ah...

(aside)

I need an inexpensive alcoholic concoction designed specifically to encourage copulation...

JAVIER

That's, like, all of them. Ok, uhmm... Bangaritas.

CHER

... And a scruffy server offers you three-for-one Bangaritas and notes that bibs aren't just optional, they're encouraged. A BIB WORLD.

JAVIER

You're saying my planet, home to wonders like the great pyramids and Van Gogh's Starry Night, birthplace of Shakespeare, Joan of Arc, originator of amazing moments of inspiration like... Hands Across America... to... umm, the original Prisoner miniseries, the wrestling scene from They Live... keyboard cat...

CHER

WHAT is a keyboard cat?

JAVIER

IT'S A CAT THAT PLAYS THE KEYBOARD. Mostly Hall and Oates songs. Ok, it's probably more of an impressive accomplishment under the broader umbrella of "the internet"...

CHER

Hmm - mmm. I'm intrigued by this "internet", we do not have anything similar to the concept.

JAVIER

Oh it's fantastic. I mean, it's the worst thing ever invented but it's FANTASTIC -- DON'T -- DON'T interrupt! You're saying that ALL THAT is roughly comparable to an all-you-can-crack-open bring-your-own-hammer crab legs dinner served on large picnic tables covered in stanky butcher paper?

CHER

Oh, no! This ENJOYABLE conversation has been interrupted by our sudden arrival at an ICED CREAM establishment. Let's not stand here in the doorway, all the congealed lactase might melt away, and the chocolate chip cookie dough will be at dangerous bacteria levels!

Door and bell sound.

JAVIER

You're just lucky this place has
the greatest Butter Brickle ice
cream known to man. It's the food
of the gods.

CHER

It sounds wonderful!

(aside)

Yes... hello, ETCETERA! Scoop-
keeper, I'll have a large Butter
Brickle in a... waffled cone.

JAVIER

With chocolate sprinkles.

CHER

With chocolate sprinkles! Oh, my
that is large, yes. A couple
napkins, a large bench, and now,
Bearer -- we wait!

JAVIER

Excuse me?

CHER

Well, you want to eat it, don't
you?

JAVIER

Is this a trick question? It's my
favorite food in the world.

CHER

No trick. Your body doesn't
produce dopamine for a reward, it
produces it in ANTICIPATION of a
reward. So, here's the reward.
You just have to wait for it.

JAVIER

(unhappy)

But... my reward is melting.

CHER

Yes, it's drip-drip-dripping, just
like that steady flow of dopamine.

JAVIER

Plus that mom is looking at us
strangely. And her newborn.

CHER

We don't care what they think,
right? They're strangers, they
don't define our behavior - we do,
and we reward it appropriately.

JAVIER

Well, they define whether they're
going to call the cops on the man
who's purposefully letting ice
cream melt all over his forearms.

CHER

Alright, alright, let me just check
on the old maple-syrup bucket,
and... yep, looking full. Good job!
I think we're ready for our reward,
now. You know, Javier, I've had
dozens of hosts but every time is
new and exciting, and I think you
might be the most exciting yet. I'm
excited for the grand tour of human
emotional responses, and this is
just day one! I've got a whole
week planned - we're going to have
some wonderful experiences, you and
I. And speaking of... how's that
ice cream tasting?

JAVIER

(mouth full, neutral)
Tastes a little like my hand.

CHER

Mmm, yes - it is delicious, isn't
it?

(aside)

Scoop-keeper, we require moist
towelettes. No, moister!

INTERSTITIAL - THANKS

HI FOLKS, THIS IS ALAN/ROB FROM PARASITECOLOGY AND OTHER FINE INTERRUPTED TALES PODCASTS SUCH AS INTERRUPTED TALES.

We want to thank you for listening and hopefully you're enjoying the show. If not, keep listening, cause there's candy. Bags of it. Mark Summers has not seen as much candy as we'll have on this podcast.

I want to say thanks this week to a lady gracious enough to lend her voice to doing narration on the show. She is Stacey Frost from the Rough Giraffe podcast, one of the absolutely funniest podcasts out there. It's a comedy trivia podcast hosted by Stacey, her hilarious Mom and of course Kipper the wonky cat. Go look it up and subscribe to Rough Giraffe on all major podcast platforms or at roughgiraffe.podbean.com.

Sugar britches, I want to get you back into the show, but first I want you to do one thing for us: tell people about us on social, why don't you, that would be nice. Log into your hootsuite, check your clout score, do it for the gram, just kind of nicely gently tell people that this show is the only thing you like and everything else is meaningless. Cool? Cool.

Thanks and back to the show.

ACT 2 - THE TURN

INT./EXT. MONTAGE OF SCENES

INT. CASINO

Sounds of slots and buzzing.

CHER

Day 2: Norepinephrine for energy
and coping with stress!

JAVIER

(scared)

Cher, I can't afford this.

CHER

Exactly! Pretty stressful, isn't
it? Especially if we put it all
down on one ride of a tiny metal
bearing's brownian motion.

(aside)

"Put it all on black, attendant of
the wheel!"

JAVIER

Cher, that is twenty-five hundred
dollars and my entire savings...

Male peanuts mumbling, rolling sound, and announcing.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(excited)

And PETER PARKER'S PARTY PANTS, you
are the most amazing symbiotically
joined life-form I have ever known.
Five THOUSAND dollars!

CHER

... Actually, Bearer, we'd get more
of the "good stuff" if you lost.

JAVIER

Got you covered. Five bucks on
black, TEN bucks on red, and then
all the imitation crab you want,
BABY!

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK

Sounds of crowd, carnival music.

CHER

Day 3: Adrenaline for reaction time and stimulation. Now, I feel compelled to reiterate, too much adrenaline could result in a massive cardiac arrest.

JAVIER

I already told you, the Tea Cups are for toddlers.

CHER

Toddlers have a very keen sense of self-preservation.

JAVIER

(questioning)

I'm starting to think you're scared.

CHER

Nonsense! It's just that when you get to be over 600 years old, you learn the wisdom of not leaving your personal safety to the whims of itinerant carnies who refer to crystal amphetamines as "their medicine."

Clunking noise of roller coaster stopping.

JAVIER

Cool, 'cause the best view is at the front. We're up - time to strap in!

CHER

Let's not and tell the ticket taker we did.

JAVIER

You really are scared, aren't you?

CHER

NO -- simply cautious, circumspect, unacquainted with this park's safety record, ETCETERA.

Clank of seat restraint coming down.

Uhh, there's still time to reconsider.

(aside)

Attendant, I believe I have consumed unsustainable amounts of fried oreos, please unhook my restraint!

Negative male Peanuts mumbling and clunking of coaster taking off.

JAVIER

Oh yeah, vomit is pretty much guaranteed.

CHER

Sweet MODOK on a crutch!

Loud coaster noises.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE

"Scary" sound effects loops.

CHER

(vampire accent)

Day 4: Endocannabinoids for mental plasticity and mitigation of the FEAR reflex, ah ah ah.

JAVIER

This is not going to work.

CHER

(Boris Karloff)

Why won't it work, Javier? Will you be too frightened to make it through this house of haunting? Mmhh hah hah.

JAVIER

I think it's more that the exit signs are so bright that I can see the wooden zombies before they pop up. And also the teenager dressed up like an Old Navy shopping axe murderer tripped over one as he grabbed my arm.

CHER

Yes, and given that he's such a bad employee, do you think he obeys the "all employees must wash hands" instructions in the bathroom? And what if those cold sores on his mouth weren't costume make-up?

JAVIER

That's disgusting... Are... Are you being serious with me?

CHER

No, because the Herpes Simplex Virus is coming from inside your own body, Javier!

JAVIER

WHAT?

CHER

And now you're scared.
(ghostly)
LET'S GOOOOO.

INT. PUPPY PETTING ROOM

Sounds of puppies yipping.

CHER

(muffled)
Day 5: Oxytocin for empathy and bonding.

JAVIER

Now this was a good idea.
(baby talk to puppy)
WASN'T IT, little puppy?
(normal)
Where'd you find a puppy petting room, anyway? I don't remember looking it up.

CHER

(nasally)
It was in that rec center flier we saw when we were looking at couple's retreats. Can we go now?
(sneezes)

JAVIER

(disappointed)
Yeah, I suppose.
(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Although I don't understand how you are somehow allergic to dogs when I'm not. And second, the couple's retreat thing made NO sense at all.

CHER

(still nasally)

Well, we still need more oxytocin. So if you could quickly fall in love or cuddle some strangers or be sad over a loss...

JAVIER

Be sad over a loss, why didn't you say so?

Sound of film projector and muffled dialogue, then music.

CHER

(crying)

I can't believe he sacrificed himself for everyone, even after he'd been abandoned for so long...

JAVIER

(crying)

There will never be a braver toaster, Cher. NEVER.

EXT. PARK.

Sound of birds.

CHER

Day 6: Endorphins for controlling pain. Now according to your decades-long memories of light news articles, there's an ideal circumstance in which endorphins are produced...

JAVIER

Ok -- one, I live in the city and I don't have a car. Two, I don't have a kid to be trapped under one. Three, I don't have the credit or the... infrastructure to make either.

CHER

Are we wedded to the idea that is
has to be your car, or your...
baby... alright, I can see this is
a NO GO. You'll just have to do it,
the old fashioned way. Exercise!

JAVIER

Hold on, Cher, it's possible we'll
stumble upon a kid trapped under a
car by accident. Better that than
on purpose.

CHER

Seems unlikely. Let's get JOGGING.

JAVIER

Are you planning on bottling the
chemical that causes stomach
cramps? You know what I ran my last
mile in?

CHER

Judging from the muscle
degeneration and overall, uh, flab
factor, maybe 7 or 8 minutes?

JAVIER

The correct answer is that you'll
have to ask my 9th grade gym
teacher.

CHER

Excuses. Nobody wants to exercise,
they want to HAVE exercised. Look
forward to that feeling.

JAVIER

Oh, I am. The thought that you'll
be having it too is my main
motivator. Here we go...
(exaggerated breathing)

INT. JAVIER'S APARTMENT

Sound of door opening and slump onto a couch.

CHER

(indistinct)
COUCH -- COUCH!

JAVIER

(breathing lightly)

Wow, I don't understand what's going on -- I should be wiped. I think I've finally experienced a runner's high after 30 years of wondering what the hell people were talking about. It's like the g-spot of exercising!

CHER

(breathing very hard)

I... gave you a little extra juice to reduce pain and... turned down, aghh, production of lactic acid to reduce muscle... fatigue.

JAVIER

Why do YOU sound like you just ran a marathon?

CHER

I... am mitigating the effects of... the increased need for oxygen. You... need more and I am... getting less. I'm acting... as a barrier... until your body is more capable.

JAVIER

Really? That's actually really sweet, Cher. What can I do for you? Get you some juice? Chew on some pine needles?

CHER

Just... relax. Lie down. And try... to consume less oxygen.

JAVIER

Now you're in my wheel house. Time to fire up my phone and fall down an Internet hole until I drift off to sleep.

CHER

It's 10:46 AM.

JAVIER

You're right, The Price is Right is almost on. Ehhh, but the remote is over there. Back to Plan A.

Sound of phone unlock and clicking while Cher breathes.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Although... it's strange. I'm not really feeling tired. Trying something new like exercising, combined with my depression, normally would send me running back under my bed covers. But this past week has actually been... pretty good. I might just go to that work drinks thing... maybe. Hey -- check out this red hot nickel ball vs hydraulic press video. Might as well bring a biplane to a star destroyer battle.

Short background sounds of videos.

CHER

(still out of breath)

Yes... that is... oddly satisfying, just as claimed. Javier, it isn't just that you did the activities... it is that you accomplished them. And that... results in Day 6.2: serotonin for happiness and well-being. So, that leaves one question -- are you still thinking about... what you were when we first met?

JAVIER

(confused)

You don't know?

CHER

(emphatic)

Well, obviously not. I can't read your thoughts, only your memories.

JAVIER

(thinking)

No... no. I guess I'm not.

CHER

(sighing in relief)

Good! Okay, here you go then.

JAVIER

(reeling)

Oh god, what... something just hit me like a ton of bricks.

CHER

(cheery)

Oh, listen... I know. I've kind of been holding back a... a lot... for you and I'm going to need just a short break, just while you take a little nap. So let's just get cozy...

JAVIER

(woozy)

Yeah. Yeah, ok... whooh.

CHER

And before you drift off, there's something we haven't discussed yet that is crucially, vitally important -- which button do I press to meet the fabled CAT of KEYBOARDS?

OUTRO PART 1