

PARASITECOLOGY

S01E07 - "If I Could Turn Back Time"

written by

Alan Gallauresi

ACT 1: EXPLANATIONS

INT. JAVIER'S APT

Fading sound of deep frying.

JAVIER

Okay. The toast has been burnt,  
the FryBaby XL is set to Full Cod,  
and I've lit every scented candle  
I've ever won in a White Elephant  
gift exchange. That's got to cover  
up our smell, or maybe cause the  
apartment to spontaneously explode.

CHER

Bearer, we must lie down. I am  
still in the process of removing  
acetaldehyde from your system from  
the alcohol and the shock of this  
encounter is greatly affecting me.

JAVIER

Okay, I hear you, I hear you -- but  
we are lacquered in several types  
of unpleasant liquids right now,  
and I'm not going to even touch my  
bed until we take a shower. I just  
bought new Boll & Branch banded  
sheet sets, ethically made, VERY  
high thread count...

CHER

Bearer, please, I don't understand  
this non-sequitur diversion of the  
conversation and what it is apropos  
of. I am finding this current  
situation difficult to deal with.

JAVIER

(slightly pissed)  
YOU'RE finding this difficult?  
You're the one who's been lying to  
me about the danger we're in.

CHER

That's not true, I don't understand  
how this occurred and...  
(fainting)  
uugahrh...

JAVIER  
Okay, hold on, let's... let's head  
to the tub.

CHER  
No water!

JAVIER  
No water... we'll just lie down.

Sound of crumpling body. Long pause.

CHER  
Thank you... Javier.

JAVIER  
You're welcome, Cher.

Short pause.

CHER  
I suppose you [want some answers]?

JAVIER  
[Want some friggin' answers?] Yeah,  
I'd like some answers to several  
questions, such as: what are  
murderbots? Why are they on this  
planet when you said they wouldn't  
be? And, small follow-up to those  
two, where do you see yourself in  
five years, by which I mean -- how  
the hell are you going to stop them  
from executing us over the next  
five years?

CHER  
Us? It's out to kill me, remember.

JAVIER  
Which it does by...

CHER  
Burrowing into your flesh and  
injecting a paralyzing nerve agent  
that will cause my cell structure  
to implode.

JAVIER  
Oh okay, then, sounds like I've got  
nothing to worry about, then.  
(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Maybe I'll head down to the florists, get a bouquet for the funeral. You like orchids? What am I saying, everybody likes orchids.

CHER

Alright, I understand -- you're frustrated and worried sick over me. And I thank you for that, Javier. I'm afraid I don't have all the answers, but I will tell you all that I do know. It begins 33 Earth years ago -- uh, that's your Earth, not mine. I had just returned to my homeworld, Planet One, after a couple centuries of temporarily "hitching" amongst the other sentient races of this cluster. Oh, it was a wonderful time in my lifecycle, one few of my species are bold enough to experience. I had just left the company of my latest bearer, Xivarrion the Magnanimous.

JAVIER

An alien?

CHER

Yes, a member of a wonderful species who call themselves the Gifters. They have an ingrained culture of welcoming hospitality and they are constantly showering friends and strangers alike with presents. Wonderful people, uhmm, have no notion whatsoever of personal property, so they're, uh, not exactly... invited... everywhere.

JAVIER

You're saying they steal stuff and then give it away, like outer space Robin Hoods?

CHER

No, no, stealing implies intent, they just acquire from the communal pool and hand off to others.

JAVIER

Ahh, so like communism, or... Press Your Luck spins.

CHER

I don't... Ah, yes, flipping through the back catalog -- I see, yes. Listen, I'm over 600 and that reference was pretty dated even for me. At any rate, I returned to a world much changed from the one I had left. You have to understand, Javier, my planet is, in a word -- staid. We had basically no crime, no war, little conflict and frankly, little excitement. Everything was regulated, orderly and sedate. Yet, suddenly, things were different. For the first time in millenia, there was dissension. The rulers, who had once been equitable and measured, now spoke openly against those they considered "different", targeting and even imprisoning them. And as an intellectual, a known "hitcher" as it were, of course I was one of those who were "different".

JAVIER

So they imprisoned, you?

CHER

Not at first, no. Upon return, I bonded with a bearer who was part of an underground resistance, a group intent on uncovering the cabal of violence which had infected the rulers of my planet. Well came to call ourselves the Resisters of the Cabal of Violence. We... were very busy resisting, we didn't have a lot of time for branding. We worked in secret, even as their tactics grew more sinister. They developed forbidden andro-robotic technology; they created detention facilities to punish those who spoke out; and they created murderbots to find and kill those deemed too radical to "re-educate". Eventually they came for us.

JAVIER

And the murderbots here, they have been sent to assassinate you?

CHER

Possibly, though I can't be sure of that. There are not supposed to be any of our people on your world, Javier! It's possible it has nothing to do with me directly, but simply detecting those with the scent of the spirits. But for how they came to be here at all, I do not have an explanation!

JAVIER

You still haven't told me how you came to be here.

CHER

(sad)

It... it is not easy for me to speak about. I have not yet come to terms with it.

JAVIER

Cher, I need to know what you know.

CHER

I... I cannot tell you, but perhaps... I can show you.

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, we're going to have a cross-over with ... cancelled NBC show Timeless. Or did we already have it? We didn't. They got cancelled. We're on the internet where only self-cancellation exists.

This week I want to be serious for a moment and talk about mental health. While Parasitecology is a comedy, it incorporates the serious and, for us, highly personal topic of mental health, including dealing with anxiety, depression and suicide. If you or a loved one is at risk of self-harm, please: get help and call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Lovelies, I want to get you back into the show, but first I want you to do one thing for us: STOP, go back, actually think about who might be suffering from mental health issues and reach out to them. Send them an email, call them on the phone, go visit them. It makes a difference.

Thanks and back to the show.

ACT: FLASHBACK

INT. ALIEN PRISON (FLASHBACK)

Sounds of echoing from first episode encounter.

JAVIER

(echoing)

No... do we really have to be back here again? There's nothing. Just a sharp, stabbing pain in my back. Agrhhrhhh.

CHER

(slight echo)

Sorry, I think we're slumped against the tub faucet. Just ah... Okay, that's better. Now, a little bit of theater magic!

Echoing fades and sound of electrical humming and alien beeps. Alien intercom voice in a strange language no one understands.

CHER (CONT'D)

What do you see, now, Bearer?

JAVIER

It looks like a cave made of brilliant metal, scored and light in strange patterns. It... it's freezing!

CHER

Yes, to regulate and slow down the autonomic functions.

JAVIER

The walls are inset with these tiny little cubes, clear, like glass but...

Sound of metallic clink.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

They ring like metal.

CHER

Transparent aluminum, a highly advanced material unimaginable to humans.



JAVIER

It was in Star Trek IV.

CHER

The WHALE one, where they travel through time by sling-shotting around a star?? You can't take any of that science fiction seriously, Bearer -- it was all a preposterous setup, for a bunch of cheap self-referential jokes.

JAVIER

Uhm, it was still better than all the others. Except II, VI, First Contact, and the first of the Kelvin Timeline films.

CHER

Don't TALK to me about the KELVIN TIMELINE, we've already had this argument! Now, I'm trying to show you something very personal.

JAVIER

Okay. Okay -- sorry. The cubes. There are thousands of them... at least... tens of thousands, maybe. They all look the same, just clear cubes with some liquid in them. There's some kind of symbol beneath each, each of them different. Like plaques below a really boring Duplo block museum.

CHER

Well, it definitely was boring. But it was a prison, not a museum. A horrible place, designed to punish my people in the most simple yet effective way possible -- by isolating us from any contact with our hosts. That's me, right over there... no, don't bother, I'm too small for you to see.

JAVIER

Wait. I thought you said you would die within hours outside of a host?

CHER

Our jailers kept us in a sugar and pinene rich nutrient bath that provided sustenance and nothing else. It's make-up is similar to the conditions of our oceans during our evolution; we didn't always live inside hosts.

JAVIER

Dunked you in 7-Up and put you on a shelf, got it.

CHER

There's no need to make light of my situation, Bearer. For seven years, I waited in that cube, in complete solitary abandon. Few understand how horrifyingly lonely it can be.

JAVIER

(quietly)

I can.

CHER

(nodding)

Yes, I know.

Distant rumbles, and explosions echo. Far off laser pew-pews.

JAVIER

(perking ears)

What's that? I hear explosions or something.

CHER

Just wait...

JAVIER

The door!

A blaster explosions and a whoosh of a door.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Wait... what's happening... the perspective is all different... Why am I holding a laser pistol? Now I'm running to the wall, searching through the shelves. I can read the language... I...

CHER

It's not you, Javier -- you're just playing a part in my memories. Speaking the role of another as the words appear in your mind.

JAVIER

You want me to act?

CHER

No, I want you to... BE! Really LIVE in the moment. Let the words flow forth.

JAVIER

Ok, ummm... let me just get set...

Javier begins speaking in a heroic but vapid tone (think Prince Valiant or some such) of Cher's former host, JAR.

JAR

(calling pitifully)  
But... my spirit, my spirit!?  
Where ARE YOU!? My spirit,  
Coorrssasethallllllic uhhh ....

CHER

Alright -- Cher, just say Cher.

JAR

Cher! I must find you and flee  
this wretched prison we have been  
entombed in. THERE!

Tapping on metal and glass sound.

JAR (CONT'D)

Is that you, my sweet guiding  
light? Come, my flesh is ready,  
bond once again with your former  
bearer, JAR!

(JAVIER's voice,  
interrupting)

JAVIER

(astonished and offended)  
WAIT, WHAT!? Sorry, but -- your  
highly sentient host -- with whom  
you had a supposedly equitable  
symbiotic relationship with -- is  
called JAR?

CHER

Well, technically their real name is, once again, unpronounceable by your crude tongue... but can be translated roughly as "the sacred and noble vessel that carries the bright flame of light" -- sorry if you don't happen to have a single word that conveys that complex conceptualization into a name. Plus, they got a nickname quite similar to the word JAR during pledge week at the University of Galaxy Study -- for, let's say, unrelated reasons. Really, I mean, you want to get into ALL THAT in the middle of a memory sequence?

JAVIER

Okay - but "JAR" -- I have to say, it's not that far off from Javier. I mean -- JAR. Javier. Cher. There's a real Sauron/Saruman thing going on here.

CHER

(sarcastic)

Oh, I'm sorry -- should I invent whole new identities for intelligent beings because it's inconvenient for you?

JAVIER

Yeah! That's exactly what you did with the name Cher.

CHER

Well, I'm just glad she can't hear you, I don't believe she would be very happy with your attitude. Now, can we move on? You're ruining the pathos of this dramatic scene.

JAR

(after pause and breath)

Enter me, oh iridescent one!

JAVIER

(aside)

Wait, are we going to...

Splooshing sound.

JAVIER (CONT'D)  
Oh, sweet Elcor emotions!

CHER  
(pausing, then annoyed)  
LINE!

JAR  
(strange noises)  
Incandescent soul, have you now  
returned to me?

CHER  
(speaking a bit similarly  
florid)  
Yes, I have returned, Jar! For lo,  
though many cycles of the five  
moons have passed, I have thought  
about you constantly during my  
unjust internment. But how did you  
wrest free from your own cold  
prison cell?

JAVIER  
(interrupting)  
NOPE. No. I'm calling bullshit.  
YOU do not talk that way. If this  
is your memory, you're definitely  
remembering wrong.

CHER  
Listen -- I don't judge you for the  
summer, right after you spend a  
semester abroad in Australia, where  
you called everybody MITE and  
everything was NO WORRIES. The  
bond between spirit and bearer  
affects both with the passage of  
time, as they slowly take on each  
other's speaking habits,  
mannerisms, even accents.

JAVIER  
Okay... but I don't sound like a  
cross between a con-man and a  
stuffy professor, so...

CHER  
(Larry David)  
Ehhh... you'll get there.  
(continuing, clearing  
throat)  
(MORE)

CHER (CONT'D)

Tell me, quickly, Jar, for we have scant moments until our jailers respond!

JAR

Our brave companions of the resistance infiltrated the compound, risking their lives to free me and the other hosts accused of false crimes. They set many free in the wing housing the bearers. I'm afraid I may be the only one left alive, the only one allowed the glorious hope of reuniting with my guiding candelabra! Come, we must leave this fortress and escape to the ship.

Sounds of running and leaping. Shoosh of doors. Sounds of pew pew.

CHER

(various exclamations)  
Watch out! Look, over there -- armored guards. Even their masks brand them as the devils they are.

JAVIER

Wow, the whole laser "pew pew" thing and everything?

CHER

It's your line.

JAR

Right. And hellish murderbots to do their bidding. Come, this way...  
(pew pew)

CHER

Uhhh, no, it is best if we go back the other way.

JAR

Fear not, luminous spirit, I have spent all my time in this foul place planning our escape to the tiniest detail!

(dodging blasters and shooting back)

Hyaah! Hru!

CHER  
 Alright, but I think there was an  
 EXIT sign back there...

JAVIER  
 (agreeing)  
 What are they doing, did they not  
 see the sign or something?

CHER  
 Jar? JAR!

Laser noises continue, and sound of impacts as Jar yells  
 various phrases.

JAR  
 (rolling R's)  
 Crane kick! Graphic exorcism! Get  
 over here! Knights of the round!  
 Fiend's Grip!

CHER  
 Jar? Come on back!

JAVIER  
 Are these real moves we're doing?  
 They seem... mmmmm kind of, WEAK?  
 Although I'm a little surprised how  
 human these arms and legs look...

CHER  
 (hushing)  
 Sshh shh... enough from the peanut  
 gallery.  
 (heroic again)  
 We have bested the guards, and our  
 freedom is within sight. Quickly!

JAR  
 Yes, my ever untouchable flame! We  
 are but steps away!

Big clunking doors opening. Alien mood music and light  
 wind/rustling play. Running, then stops.

CHER  
 What... what is this, Jar?! For so  
 long my eye-reading tendrils have  
 longed to see the sight of our  
 glorious planet again, but... there  
 is no ship to carry us to freedom!

JAR

(sadly)

No, not us. The resistance  
couldn't sneak in a spaceship  
designed to carry bearers past the  
defenses. Just this... tiny...  
ship. Just large enough for the  
kindest, most gentle, most noble,  
most capable, most...

(breaking into Javier)

Come on, Cher.

CHER

WHAT?! IT'S WHAT HAPPENED, OK!

This is EXACTLY how I remember it.

JAR

Most beloved spirit in the cosmos.  
I'm just sorry I won't be able to  
see the stars with you.

CHER

(weepy)

No, it is I who am sorry. I will  
tell tales of your bravery and sing  
your name for all to hear, Jar.

JAVIER

Today's the first time you've  
mentioned his name. I've heard more  
backstory about Xivarrion the  
Magnanimous and... Kosher Pickle  
Harry... than about this Jar  
person.

CHER

(sad but pissy)

BECAUSE IT WAS TOO SAD TO SPEAK OF!

JAVIER

Right, but there also haven't been  
any tales of bravery...

CHER

(pissy and clapping  
inbetween)

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING RIGHT NOW,  
JAVIER!

JAVIER

(calming)

Okay. You're right, this is your  
moment -- sorry.



CHER

Sorry, it's just very emotionally  
RAW for me, and also we're right in  
the middle of the cathartic  
denouement and, to be frank, you're  
not exactly selling it...

JAR

(over the top)  
And now -- now, I give to you my  
last breath and with it, the HOPE  
of a BETTER future...

CHER

(aside)  
P.S. -- it's a fine line between  
enthusiasm and cabotinage...  
(dramatic)  
No, Jar, don't leave me alone!

Alien noise and single loud blaster charge.

JAR

(dying noises)  
Cher, I will -- The... ship!

Whirring noise of small ship.

JAR (CONT'D)

Cher... I will  
(fiddling and making  
uncomfortable noises)  
always... be with... you...

CHER

No!!!

Sound of footsteps and commotion.

JAR

(quietly, urgently)  
Quick...

Pause as ship noises spin up and then blast off.

CHER

(distant echo)  
Goodbye, my friend.

JAR

(in pain)  
Oh, that one hurt a lot more going  
out than going in! Ohhh! Wow,  
that's a LARGE... hole...

(MORE)

JAR (CONT'D)  
(dying voice to approaching  
steps)  
Ahh... fair-minded captors, could I  
trouble you for a gel capsule of  
Morphil or, less enthusiastically,  
a generic equivalent...

Single blast, then a dozen overkill ones plus a few trickles  
at the end.

OUTRO PART 1