

PARASITECOLOGY

S01E08 - "Living in a House Divided"

written by

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ACT 2: PUSHBACK

INT./EXT. MALL - DAY

Sounds of mall; foot traffic, food court, receipt printing; etc. Various types of buzzing/droning happen as they walk.

JAVIER

You're doing great. You just have to get used to the idea of being scared all the time - trust me, it's not that bad. Well, it's horrible and debilitating but... like I said... you get used to it.

CHER

I'm not scared, I'm sick. I've got the flu. I need to rest.

JAVIER

Stop faking.

CHER

I'm not faking -- YOU used to get sick all the time, remember? Go ahead, WHY DON'T YOU tell me I'm just depressed and not really sick... I feel sick, and that's what matters... Wait, what's that?

Drone whine.

JAVIER

Relax. It's just some kind of toy quadcopter thing over at that kiosk.

CHER

(relieved)

Okay, good. WAIT - what's that?

Buzzing noise.

JAVIER

Electric razor, there's a Hair Cuttery right over there.

CHER

(relieved)

Alright - WAIT WHAT'S THAT!?

Vibrator.

JAVIER

(quickly)

Spencer's Gifts - look, you gotta calm down.

CHER

This is a bad idea. I don't want to be here.

JAVIER

(chuckle, grunt)

Huh, you sound like me. I get it -
- you're nervous. But you're also
being paranoid.

CHER

It's not paranoia if you're
actually being hunted down by
murderbots. Why would you take us
to a place so crowded and noisy?

JAVIER

Because, one: this mall is
completely enclosed and bee-size
flying robots are NOT commonly
found here. Because, two: you're
the one who wanted to buy a bunch
of smell cover-ups.

CHER

With PRIME, Javier! By asking
Godfrey, the bodyless smart home AI
voice to make the purchase, while
sitting in the cozy safety of your
apartment, streaming The Warburton-
less Tick reboot and virtually
borrowing books from a fake
library, and -- AND -- giving .5%
of our purchases to Smile, a
charity that helps... uh, humans
that frown... what do you have
against helping humans smile,
Javier?

JAVIER

You said yourself we need to sample
scents to find the right
combination of odor isolating
fragrances. And three: I came
prepared.

Sound of paper bag opening and fly swatter swatting.

CHER

This is SERIOUS. Your overconfidence is misplaced; you take down one murderbot and suddenly you're...

JAVIER

[The Sultan of Swat]

CHER

[Luke Flyswatter]... Look how out sync we are... this would be a TERRIBLE time to run into an adversary.

JAVIER

Then give us a little JUICE to help you out.

CHER

You're getting low on the necessary organic chemicals since the incident, I can't waste them.

JAVIER

Another reason to be out and generating them, then. You just need to take your mind off of things. Tell me something about your world. You... You kept referring to Jar as "they". Do both your species not have sexes and genders?

CHER

Well, that is a complicated subject. Our bearers have in time become largely dependent on the spirit biote species to provide genetic material which we biotes internally manufacture to be compatible with the host's biological needs. On my planet, the biote's chromosomes are passed onto the bearers, who generally have donor, receiver, or intersex organs which still function to also allow non-biote based reproduction, though in all cases fertilized gametes are transferred to a external cocoon-like environment to grow to maturity.

(MORE)

CHER (CONT'D)

Some bearers consider themselves to be non-gendered, others as non-binary, and still others who identify strongly with one of several genders. Now, we biotes typically reproduce asexually via budding -- you know what, I appreciate you asking, but this is bit too complex of a topic to cover while hiding from killer drone monsters in the crowd outside a Jamba Juice.

JAVIER

Hold on, go back to that "internally manufacture" thing. You say that like it's... planned?

CHER

Look, a Lord and Taylor! OH, we're saved!

Cheery female peanuts voice. Then spritzing noises.

CHER (CONT'D)

YES! Please, affirmative, ETCETERA, spritz merchant! Flood me in your overpowering bouquet! More... More... MORE...

JAVIER

Ok, Cher -- this is the fifth cologne fog we've walked through. There's no way we smell anything like pine needles anymore.

CHER

(growing irritation)

Fool! Our musk is as powerful as ever. I can't trust you with this sniffer at all, I'm TAKING IT BACK!

JAVIER

FINE! I'm sick of exuding odors like I'm a planet-sized Sephora that imploded into a pulsar and ejects superdense Kimoji Vibes into space every few seconds. At least I won't have to smell us anymore!

CHER
YOUR UNDERSTANDING of cosmic
singularities and the scent profile
of the KKW Fragrance line is
INFANTILE!

JAVIER
Enough, Cher! If you want to be a
brat, then be a brat. We're headed
to the REI to get some toxic-
strength insect repellent and then
that's it!

CHER
But you said we'd go on the food
court trolley! It's the only
reason I agreed to this ill-advised
excursion!

JAVIER
The trolley is ONLY for good kids,
Cher!

INT. JAVIER'S APT - MIDDLE OF NIGHT

JAVIER
(waking up, groggily)
What... what is going on?

CHER
Shh, shh. Go back to bed.

JAVIER
Why... why are my hands so greasy?

CHER
I ordered pizza from Pizza Citadel.
It's UH-MAZING. And these garlic
knots...
(eating)
They're like food puzzle and the
reward is MORE garlic knots.

Sound of pings and beeps from a Twitch chat or videogame
streamer commentary in background.

JAVIER
When... when did you do that? It's
the middle of the night and I was
asleep!

CHER

I was hungry, Bearer. I took some initiative.

JAVIER

You were supposed to be researching a solution to our murderbot problem! Instead you're watching... what is this?

CHER

It's a Twitch stream of a YouTube live broadcast of a guy playing PubG dressed as a Fortnite character. There's a lot of LAYERS of social commentary.

JAVIER

What? I... Why don't you just watch the YouTube stream?

CHER

I gotta have my pogchamps, Javi.
(chuckling)
Watch the YouTube stream, sure,
I'll do that next time... kappa...

JAVIER

Well turn it down, alright?

Pause, then sound of pizza cardboard.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Wait... DID YOU EAT FIVE BOXES OF PIZZA!?

CHER

Yes, but I only ate two. The other three are destined for long-term salt preservation in case we have to wait this out for a... few months at the mm... ah mum.

JAVIER

Maximum?

CHER

Mm... ah mum.

JAVIER

Look, Cher -- this has got to end. We've been holed up in here for almost two weeks and gotten NOWHERE. You're not any closer to solving where the murderbots have come from or how to fight them.

CHER

Well, it's not that simple, ok? They're not out there writing Medium articles on their secret weaknesses, are they?

JAVIER

We're laying in bed all day. We're ordering in every meal and eating too much that we have to take a nap again. We're avoiding any possible contact with the outside world.

CHER

It's the SMART thing to do.

JAVIER

It's depression, Cher! It's a deep dark hole of depression and we're wallowing in it. We're not exercising or trying to eat healthier, we're not having any fun, we're barely even talking -- which is pretty hard to do when your roommate is literally invading ALL of your personal space. We're not doing any of the things you promised. We're not doing ANYTHING, Cher! And I don't want to live like that any more. I've felt what it's like to be able to push that aside, even just a little... and I'm not going back.

Sounds of haptic feedback from typing.

CHER

Okay, I think we can resolve this. It seems mostly like a low blood-sugar issue -- I'm just going to Postmates up some Green Tea Kit-Kit bars over-nighted from Japan and....

JAVIER

And that's another thing. We've completely run through our gambling winnings with all this delivery service, and I'm on my last dime. I don't think I even have enough for next month's rent. So, tomorrow, I'm going to...

(deep breath)

Go to Personeum and pick up my last check.

CHER

(rude chuckle)

The place where you have a panic attack every time you walk through the doors? Good luck.

JAVIER

Good luck?

CHER

Well, you don't really expect me to help you put our lives in danger, do you?

JAVIER

I... are you really that stubborn... or, is it scared ?

CHER

Are you really that reckless?

JAVIER

Reckless? I'm being logical. What we're doing right now is not helping. And if I don't get some money, we're going to be out on our asses in the street, with big "will be murderbotted for food" signs. You know what, I take it back -- you're not stubborn. You're a COWARD.

(pause)

What? No comeback? No well-thought-out rationale for sleeping away two weeks straight?

No response.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Okay, I see what this is. Well, two can play that game.

(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)
It's back to sleep, and you won't
get a peep out of me, either.

Very long pause.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
And for the record, ham and
pineapple pizza is gross, but
pineapple WITHOUT the ham is a war
crime against the universe, ok?
Look it up. The galactic code of
not ruining things that are
amazing, or something, probably.

Very long pause.

CHER
(mumbling)
That's not a real law.

JAVIER
SHUT IT, CHER!

AD - DENTIST DODGERS

HI FOLKS, THIS IS ALAN/ROB FROM ...THIS PODCAST, THE OTHER PODCAST, YOU KNOW THE DRILL. AND SPEAKING OF DRILLS... HE SAYS, *SEGUEING MARVELOUSLY INTO THE AD COPY...* IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU HATE GOING TO THE DENTIST. STUDIES SHOW THAT 70% OF ADULTS RATE GOING TO THE DENTIST AS THEIR LEAST FAVORITE HEALTH CHECK UP AND A FULL 43% ADMIT TO POSTPONING REGULAR CHECK UPS TO AVOID THE DENTIST CHAIR - *ALTHOUGH I HAVE TO SAY, THAT MIGHT BE WORDED SLIGHTLY WRONG, I DON'T THINK IT'S THE ACTUAL CHAIR THAT PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF USUALLY.* THAT'S WHERE DENTIST DODGERS COMES IN. DENTIST DODGERS IS A SAFE AND STREAMLINED SERVICE WHERE YOU CAN GET REAL DENTAL CHECK UPS FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME USING YOUR SMARTPHONE. DENTIST DODGERS OFFERS LIVE ONE ON ONE CONSULTATIONS WITH REAL DENTISTS WHO WILL WALK YOU STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE PROCESS OF USING THE DENTIST DODGERS APP AND OUR PATENTED BLUETOOTH ORAL INSPECTION DEVICE WHICH STREAMS IMPORTANT HEALTH DATA AND PROVIDES YOU WITH A FULL DENTAL DIAGNOSTIC CHECK. *DIAGNOSTICS? IT'S LIKE CHKDSK FOR YOUR MOUTH, THAT'S FOR THE PC DENTIST HATERS, MAYBE I'LL THROW ONE IN FOR MAC OS USERS LATER...* PROBABLY GOING TO SKIP THE CHROMEBOOK PEOPLE, *I DON'T KNOW THEY CAN AFFORD DENTIST CARE. WAIT, WHAT AM I SAYING, EVERYBODY CAN AFFORD DENTIST DODGERS!* IT'S QUICK, IT'S PAINLESS, AND YOU DON'T NEED INSURANCE. TO SIGN UP AND RECEIVE YOUR FREE DENTIST DODGERS BLUETOOTH ORAL INSPECTION DEVICE OR BOLD AS THE MARKETING COPY FAILS TO SHORTEN SO I'VE JUST REGISTERED A TRADEMARK FOR THEM ON THAT, WE'RE A FULL SERVICE PODCAST HERE AT PARASITECOLOGY, UH, SIGN UP AT OHTHEHUMANITY.COM/DODGE... IT'S COMPATIBLE WITH APPLE, ANDROID AND PERSONEUM SMART PHONES, INCLUDING THE JUST RELEASED FLAGSHIP PERSONEUM XR AND XRS PHONES. THE ORAL INSPECTION DEVICE IS EXTREMELY INTUITIVE TO USE, THEY SENT ME ONE AND YOU JUST PAIR YOUR PHONE WITH THE DEVICE, PUT IT IN YOUR MOUTH FOR A FEW SECONDS, LET IT DO ITS THING AND YOU'RE DONE. SPEAKING AS SOMEONE WHO ACTIVELY AVOIDS THE DENTIST, IT'S REALLY A GREAT SERVICE. DENTIST DODGERS, THE NEW WAY TO ORAL.. HEALTH. *HMM. I'M GOING TO READ THAT SENTENCE ONE MORE TIME, JUST A LITTLE MORE QUICKLY.* DENTIST DODGERS, THE NEW WAY TO ORAL HEALTH.

Lovelies, I want to get you back into the show, but first I want you to do one thing for us: give us a review on iTunes. I thought we already talked about this, but I'm looking back through your browser history, and I don't think searching for winter hats with a hole for ponytails counts. I don't want to make you feel guilty, but, ashamed, sure. Do that one thing: leave us a review!

Thanks and back to the show.

ACT 3: DIVIDED

INT./EXT. PERSONEUM CAMPUS

JAVIER

Okay, Javier, you can do this.
It's one short social interaction
with your old boss, she'll hand you
a check and that's it. You're out.
Everyone will be very friendly and
probably persistent about asking
you to stay on but you'll be firm
but polite without letting them
know you would do anything to avoid
another day of this hellhole, and I
mean anything, obviously. Including
slathering my body with a
combination of Deep Woods Off with
extra DEET and non-stick PAM spray.
AND babysitting a malignant PARA...
no, I'm better than that...
SYMBIOTE who is stealing half of my
senses and won't even TALK to me...
okay, stay on target. Time to dig
out the old door badge and get this
over with.

Beep sound and door opening. Light lobby music playing.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Oh no, a lot of emotional response
going on here, Cher. I could
really use a little of that old
(click click noise.)

CHER

Hrmph.

JAVIER

Well, I think it's obvious I'm
going to need my vocal chords back.

CHER

Fiiiiine.

JAVIER

Thank you. Ok, polite but
authoritative nod at the
receptionist so...

Peanuts male voice.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(to voice)

Hey, uh, how's it going. Thank god it's Friday, right?

(aside)

Damn it, Cher, I can't understand what the hell people are saying. You could at least translate!

No response.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Oh, that's just fantastic. I'm already panicking and you want to add the social pressure of not understanding anything I hear. Great. I'm going to have to avoid seeing anyone at all on a 3000 person campus. I'd better go through the moonshot division wing, maybe I can avoid bumping into anyone I know. Jeez, how do I get through this way to Jibbrrrr again? Right, Hallway F, past the self-driving car division. Wait, big crowd coming.

(aloud)

Hey, how's it going. Thank god it's Friday, right?

Many short mumbled peanuts.

CHER

(after pause)

They made fun of you.

Sounds of: keyboard clacking; then steady beeping and balloon deflate noise; short 1 second viral video clips (Lysanderoth); whining noise of that robot dog and robotic woof, then one very loud and one very quiet woof.

JAVIER

HEY. You're not talking, remember? Okay, let's see... cloud computing division... giant balloon satellite division... smart home hub AI Godfrey division... social platform with only 2.75 second video clips division... robotic dog division... giant robotic dog division... nanite robotic dog division slash tinnitus treatment clinic...

(hearing tinnitus sound and irritated)

(MORE)

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Oh no, it's flaring up again...
 Perkpods division... what the heck
 is an Air BNP customer support
 division? AIR... B... N... P...

Swipe and haptic clacking as Javier checks his phone. Sound
 of many muted flushing.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 (reading)
 "AirBNP is a web 3.0 service that
 provides very short-term rentals,
 matching private home bathrooms to
 people who gotta go when they're
 out on the go."

Quite short male Peanuts.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Just looking, sorry. We do some
 crazy stuff here, huh? Thank god
 it's Friday.
 (aside)
 Okay, Cher, come on. This isn't
 funny.

No response.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 At least we're getting close,
 there's the self-driving car...
 SHIT, that's the freaking CEO and
 the whole executive team. Holy
 crap, Huggy Jeff is with them!
 Okay, head down, just walk on past,
 Huggy Jeff won't recognize you...
 walk on past. Walk. On. Past.
 (big sigh)
 Jibbrrr. We made it. Well, I made
 it. No thanks to you, Cher.
 (realization)
 Huh, I did make it... alone. I can
 do this. Okay! Here we go.

Knock on door. Female peanuts.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Hi, Alicia. How are you doing?
 Thank god it's Friday, right? Uh,
 is that my check?

Short female peanuts.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Thanks... yeah, if I could just
 grab it...

Slightly longer female peanuts.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
 Umm, well before you say anything,
 uh, more, Alicia...
 (aside)
 Okay, I can do this.
 (to woman)
 I appreciate the opportunity to
 work at Jibbrrr and Personeum at
 large. You've always been very
 kind and I appreciate that. And the
 work's... challenging, which can be
 a good thing. But I should...
 I should really say that I never
 liked working here. And I know
 you're going to ask me to stay on
 instead of quitting...
 (suddenly very muffled)
 [and my answer is no.]

CHER
 [And my answer is absolutely YES!]
 I was just joking around, this is a
 great place to work.

JAVIER
 (muffled)
 No, I said no.
 (aside, normal voice)
 Cher! What are you doing?

CHER
 So, if you'll have me -- see you on
 Monday?

Affirmative female Peanuts.

CHER (CONT'D)
 Great, see you then!

Closing door.

JAVIER
 (furious)
 WHAT did you just do? I finally
 get up the nerve to stand up for
 myself and you sign me up for
 another tour at this life-draining
 place?

CHER

Bearer... remember how I have your sense of smell?

JAVIER

Like my sense of hearing? Yeah, I know!

CHER

Well, what you don't know is that I was actually paying attention when we walked by your company's executive board. And they stunk like a pine forest doused in...

JAVIER

Flat mellow yellow, mixed with melted ice and left overnight in a car in August?

CHER

Exactly! Possibly. Flat mellow yellow, mixed with melted ice and left overnight in a car in August!

JAVIER

You're telling me the people in charge of the largest tech company in the world are hosts for symbiotes?

CHER

Symbiotes? Javier, those things are bearingfucking PARASITES!

OUTRO