

PARASITECOLOGY

S01E10 - "Dark Lady"

written by

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ACT: CAFETERIA

INT. PERSONEUM CAFETERIA

Crowded cafeteria sounds.

CHER

(picking from buffet)

One of those. A double scoop-scoop of that. A baker's dozen of these. Oh, I have to say everything smells just delicious.

JAVIER

Yeah, it does, actually. Everybody raves about the cafeteria here. I think they got some famous chef in to do the menu, probably some Michelin-star rated one.

CHER

Michelin-star, ohm... very impressive. Now would you personally recommend the Thai Pork Exploders or the Pizza Rib Pockets with Wang Jangler sauce?

JAVIER

No idea, I've never eaten here.

CHER

What? Why not? It's delicious and FREE!

JAVIER

Eh... I don't like crowds. Or co-workers. Plus, I need to escape from work for one brief hour in the day and go off to where no one can see me while I cram fast food. Sometimes I cry.

CHER

Well that's an... unexpectedly dark reminder of where we started, and how remarkably far we've come... look at us now! Uncovering dark plots and standing in buffet lines without breaking down in tears!

JAVIER

(pleased)

Yeah - it's... not too bad.

CHER

Good. Now -- wait, do you smell that? Sorry, of course you don't. Oh, that is just -- look at that!

Quiet blender noise in distance.

JAVIER

It's the VIP section for AlphaTrack execs. They get special treats like protein kale [smoothies]...

CHER

[Smoothies]! With some special ingredients...

JAVIER

Orange zest... pine nuts... by BetaRay Bill's hammer! They must be feeding the bugs in the executive bearers!

CHER

Yes. A direct vector into the body. Further evidence that this isn't just happenstance but a coordinated infiltration.

JAVIER

Right. Huh. Well, this is giving me the creeps. Let's dine and dash. Let's sit over there.

CHER

(hesitant)

Really? It's going to be uncomfortable... Vance and I haven't talked since the night at the bar and I think we're on the outs.

JAVIER

We haven't seen him at all... when would you have talked to him?

CHER

Well, I gave him our Twitter, and our 'Gram, and our... Coffee Meets Bagel profile.

JAVIER

Let's just sit.

(aside)

Hey, Vance. Mondays, am I right?

Sound of tray sliding onto table. No response.

CHER

A very cold silence.

JAVIER

I told you, he doesn't talk unless he's drunk.

CHER

It's the shoulders, too, you can tell from the shoulders. It's a unfriendly angle.

JAVIER

Alright, Cher... Enough about Vance. There was something you said earlier... about the food thing being coordinated.

CHER

Obviously! Arggh, I'm so hungry, I can't decide whether to start with the chicken-fried sesame chalupa in MGD Mayoli or the kabob-nugget pot stickers...

Fork clatters onto plate after each Javier line.

JAVIER

Well, all these start-ups Personeum is investing in... Flashbite, a meal delivery service that you...

CHER

Eat. Yes, speaking of eating...

JAVIER

DentistDodgers... a oral care service with a bluetooth device you...

CHER

Stick in your mouth... yes, sounds very nice right about now.

JAVIER

SloshAndNosh... an alcoholic meal replacement shake that you...

CHER

Guzzle like a starving symbiote being tantalized with Waffle au Gratin Puffs.....

JAVIER

BettyBomb... a viral challenge to
stick a pod in your...

CHER

Glorious gobstobber... yes, let's!

JAVIER

GoEars, disposable bluetooth
earbuds meant you plop in your...

CHER

Lunch interrupters...

JAVIER

Ear canals! Then PerkPods, an
inhaler to stick right up your...

CHER

Food snuffler.

JAVIER

I was going to say nose, but I
suppose that ...

CHER

At least you've stopped knocking
the fo...

Another fork clatter (final one).

JAVIER

AirBNP! Which provides a freshening
spray you spritz ANYWHERE you feel
like... It's just like you said,
this company is going after a
direct vector to the body, and it
isn't just for hosts with bearers.
It's the whole world!

CHER

(with food in mouth)
Um not thure I fowwow.

JAVIER

(forcefully)
Spit out that Deviled Egglette
Mexiranch Dipper right now! They
could be doing the same thing with
our cafeteria food as they're doing
with all those start-ups. We've
got to find out what they're
injecting all these products with.

CHER
(spitting out)
Okay, okay. But I want a nice
dinner to celebrate when all this
saving the world business is done.
And I mean NICE, Javier. Outback
or HIGHER.

JAVIER
Deal. Let's go.

CHER
Okay, I just need one second.
(aside, breathing in and
then whispering)
I forgive you, Vance.

INT. PERSONEUM, HALLS

Walking sounds.

CHER
Hey, where are our legs going? I
was trying to steer us back to the
Jibbrrr office.

JAVIER
Executive wing.

CHER
That sounds remarkably ill-advised,
Bearer. Our cover-up "stank"
levels have fallen considerably due
to excessive sweating and it's
likely we'd be detected. Maybe we
should wait until tomorrow after
we've had an opportunity to re-
apply.

JAVIER
We can't risk it, so buck up,
buttercup. We're already taking
the chance of somebody noticing our
snooping. We may have only one
shot at this. Toss me some
adrenaline and you can sip on some
norepinephrachillax.

CHER
Yes, but why are we going into the
proverbial anti-bacterial colony?
(slight pause)
(MORE)

CHER (CONT'D)

I mean, we obviously are going to have different danger-specific proverbs and I don't really know what your species is particularly frightened of... the... proverbial psychopathic... spider... C.H.U.D?

JAVIER

(grunt)

Like I said, the private executive communications are on a different database shard from the company-wide ones. I'll need physical access to one of the executive machines.

CHER

Couldn't you just... access the base of data directly?

JAVIER

Only if I had access to the database server room and only a [database admin would have access to that.]

CHER

[database admin badge would get us in]... eh, that's close enough to count.

Sound of a credit card.

JAVIER

WHY do you have that? And WHERE did you... Oh, NO -- not Vance!

CHER

Well, now WHY are you getting so upset? There's got to be some sort of consequence for his actions, it can't be all forgiveness and cuddles. So what if I... allowed him to misplace it... into our pocket... when we left the canteen. So he has to buzz to get in or...

(chuckling)

Have someone come to the bathroom with him. Well, it's a petty revenge, sure, Bearer, but a fitting salve for our wounded pride. Not a real biggie.

JAVIER

NO, CHER -- he's going to report it missing, and then they're going to use the RFID tracker to figure out where it is!

CHER

Oh. A tracker... Yes, you definitely should have mentioned that.

JAVIER

Organic meatbags! We'd better move fast. Okay, umm... around this corner.

Peanuts traffic.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(loudly)

CASE OF THE MONDAYS.

(aside)

Okay, here.

Badge and door noise. Server room hum, then chair and computer typing.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Okay... alright... I'm in. I just have to dump out the data and run the AES 256 decryption on the message blobs... remembering to include the salt from the timestamp...

CHER

This real-world computer skill play-by-play is making our stomach rumble again, Javier. You know salted blobs are a favorite of mine.

JAVIER

THIS IS IT!

Sound of mouse clicking and scrolling.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

We were right. Cher, they're putting something into all these products they give freebies of, or make viral campaigns for. What is this line about... Complex mechanoreductive cells?

CHER

Forbidden andro-robotic technology.
You see, our people foresaw that
technological advances might
eventually lead to semi-autonomous
cybernetic shells which spirits
could inhabit, obviating the need
to be joined with bearers. They
feared this might lead to war
between the species, and further
research was outlawed.

JAVIER

(unsure)

Well, it would have to be something
much smaller than that, smaller
even than [murderbots]...

CHER

[Murderbots]. Yes! they have a
nanite-scale semi-autonomous
mechanoreductive processor which
can be remotely controlled. If the
cabal was able to make that tech
work inside human hosts and spread
it virally to the population, they
[would have a virtual army of
murderhumans at their command!]

JAVIER

[Would have a virtual army of
murderhumans at their command!]
Wow, we even said "murderhumans"
together...

CHER

See, that's what I'm TALKING about!
Nothing like an evil interplanetary
plot to get a well oiled team.
(starts laughing)

JAVIER

Let's get out here quick. We'll
ditch Vance's badge in a trash can
at the cafeteria, then take off
early -- hopefully, scott-free.
Cher? Cher?

CHER

(still laughing, then
pause)

Ahh, sorry what's that?
(laughing)

(MORE)

CHER (CONT'D)

Oh, I think maybe I need to uh cut
back a little on the old endos.

Just a little

(click click click click
tsk a tsk sounds)

JAVIER

Tch... Why am I always the
designated driver?

AD: AIR BNP

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

Let me ask you a question: who here likes to do their business in dirty public restrooms? Show of hands? Okay, now who has actually stopped whatever you were doing out, running errands, getting groceries, maybe in a movie theater watching a classic cyberpunk film -- stopped doing that and run home just to your use your own comfortable and clean bathroom? I know I have. But what if there was a better way? Good question, Alan, I guess we'll never know the answer to this theoretical query that would improve people's lives so much... but wait - THERE IS. Personeum has recently unveiled their newest service: AIR BNP. What is AIR BNP? 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. Use their app to easily and profitably list your home's facilities (*that's water closets for our European listeners*) or match with a bathroom that's right for you based on your current geolocation, price and amenities. What amenities? Well, the copy doesn't say, but I'm gonna throw out a few - does the toilet have wooden seat cover, or one of those shag rug coverings? Is there a low-flush option? Is it Japanese? What I'm saying is, I have a lot of preferences when it comes to toilets and I think you do too. How about this - does the bathroom have the three shells? If you don't know what to do with them, I can't help you. Okay back to the ad text -- The best thing is that you can be a renter and a rentee, and can take advantage of both ends of the deal -- I don't think they read that part over well. How does Air BNP maintain quality standards? That's where the Air BNP Miracle Spray comes in. Every Air BNP bathroom gets a monthly supply of Miracle Spray, a patented formula that works as a germ disinfectant, air deodorizer and body freshener at the same time. Spray it ahead of time to destroy 99.9% of bathroom germs; spray it after to clear the air; and then give yourself a spritz -- YES it works as a breath spray and a freshener for wherever else you get the urge to spray it. Wow -- *that's not me making things up, people, that is IN THE COPY.* And because Air BNP is part of the Personeum family of services, you know Miracle Spray will be of the highest quality. If you go to our website today we'll give you a free bottle of the AIR BNP Miracle Spray to try at home to get a taste of the comfort and convenience you can expect when you use Air BNP. Go to ohthehumanity.com/offer that's O H the humanity.com/offer offer. Air BNP - matching private home bathrooms to people who gotta go when they're out on the go.

Huckleberries, I do want to get you back into the show, but first I want you to do one thing for us: find someone who likes sci-fi and comedy and recommend the show, or if you're not comfortable doing that, don't recommend the show but say "Parasitecology - I hear that show gives out free money but only if you listen to the end, but don't skip to the end, because the secret instructions on how to get the money are carefully hidden in all the episodes like the Beale cipher, or... AmWay." Hey, let me ask you - what's that one thing? RECOMMEND THE SHOW!

Thanks and back to the show.

ACT 3: AFTERMATH

INT./EXT. SUBWAY RIDE HOME

Sound of subway train ride.

CHER
Does it look like anyone is
following us?

JAVIER
We're in a subway car. Everybody
is following us, they HAVE TO.
(pause)
This is our stop.

Train arrives at station and they get off.

CHER
Anyone following us now?

JAVIER
Yes, all the people who just got
off without getting stuck in the
doors. Calm down.

CHER
I'm calm. Does it seem like I'm
not calm?

Sound of ticket and doors. Then climb onto escalator.

CHER (CONT'D)
There -- that guy behind us. He's
tailing us for sure. Never gets
any closer or farther away, never
makes eye contact.

JAVIER
We're on an escalator, Cher. Do
you know how DIFFICULT it is to
make eye-contact with someone else
that's going the same way on an
escalator?

CHER
No, Javier, I said he's not making
eye contact, it's very smart.

Sounds of city streets and walking.

JAVIER

I'm putting you on bed rest when we get home. Come on, it's only a few blocks walk from here.

CHER

You take good care of me, Bearer.

(pause)

And *I*...

JAVIER

[Appreciate it]?

CHER

[Do the same]... alright, something to be said for independence of thought... well, anyway, I do appreciate it.

JAVIER

(embarrassed)

Nice. Cool. We don't, uh, I mean. Thanks.

CHER

These lights are funny today.

JAVIER

I bet. Wait, funny how?

CHER

Like you just walk up and they change to that Walky man. No waiting. Like we're in the VIP room.

JAVIER

Not the VIP room argument again. I guess we're just lucky today.

Pause.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

So... alien bad guys creating an army of remotely controlled murderhumans through viral internet marketing, huh?

CHER

Yes. Wild, uh?

JAVIER

Yeah, wild.

CHER
(confused)
But what I don't understand is WHY.

JAVIER
To take over your world and impose
martial law, enabling the cabal to
rule in perpetuity, right?

CHER
I mean, yes, no, but... what I mean
is... why build up an army that's
22 light years away from the place
you're trying to conquer? Do you
know how expensive and time-
consuming it is to send thousands
of human-sized creatures through
interstellar space, much less
millions of them! It just isn't
feasible. I'm missing something, I
know it...

JAVIER
Hey -- hey, Cher? You notice
something strange about the cars
going by?

CHER
Maybe they're not planning on...
Strange?

JAVIER
Yeah, look in the windows.
(pause)
No drivers.

CHER
What's a "Flynn Ride"?

JAVIER
"FlingRide". It's that autonomous
rideshare program I used earlier.
You want to guess who owns it?

CHER
(nervous)
Umm, maybe we should walk faster.
Would a trot be too noticeable?
Canter?

Walking pace quickens. Sudden sound of a car peeling out.

JAVIER
Gallop, Cher, gallop!

CHER
Yes, gallop! Here comes the Lasik,
you stud of a thoroughbred!

Sound of horns honking and car lock alarm beeping.

CHER (CONT'D)
Through that alley!

JAVIER
Maybe we can lose them...

CHER
Up that drainpipe and onto the
roof.

JAVIER
Up the... ??? I'm not Batman!

Sound of pipe and clambering on roof tiles.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
HOLY Lazarus Pits, I AM Batman!
Harhg!

Sound of massive jump and landing.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Why have we not been getting a
cosplayer to make us a very
flexible but form fitting costume
this whole time!?
(some grunting)

CHER
Alright now, you're not a
"superior" hero from your comical
books. You're just an ordinary
human being whose latent abilities
have been unlocked in combination
with a powerful alien symbiote
brought to Earth.

JAVIER
So, like... Venom.

CHER
Could be, is this Venom a likable,
debonair sort of fellow, dispensing
confident wisdom in a collegial
atmosphere?

JAVIER

No, I glanced through Rotten
Tomatoes and I can't think of
anyone who said Venom was
likable... Whoo! THIS FEELS GOOD.

More climbing down and grunting.

CHER

Let's just take a moment here. It
seems pretty clear they're on to
us, which doesn't leave us with too
many options, except...

JAVIER

(amped)

To fight! All of them!

CHER

No, no, I don't think we're gonna
do that. A world-spanning
corporation infested at the highest
levels with the cabal... I think
our options are pretty limited.
There is one thing that could help
us; I haven't mentioned it before,
for... certain reasons. Look -
that's your apartment building, why
don't we go in there for a moment,
regroup and figure out next
steps... yes, clamber down...
quietly... okay, I don't think
anyone -- or anything -- saw us.
Let's get inside quick.

Sound of keys, door lock and door swing.

JAVIER

I feel AMAZING right now. Like I
can do [anything]...

Struggle and crumpling. Injection/air hiss.

CHER

(voice fades out to
silence)

Javier? Javier, come back! No...
I'm losing him! Listen, you have to
believe, Javier? You have to
believe!

JAVIER
(groggily)
Cher? What... What did you inject
me with. Cher, help me!

MIA
Just -- calm down, Javier, we don't
have to do all this drama. Your
doctor just gave you a sedative...
He's been telling me you've been
delusional and off your meds again.
I can't say I'm surprised, you
don't call or text me back... you
don't take care of yourself...

JAVIER
Mia?

MIA
(to doctor)
God, this place is a mess...
Listen, doctor... I love my
brother, but... I'm not sure I can
handle him in this state. Maybe
it's best if you do take him. What
do I need to sign, again?

JAVIER
(very out of it)
Mia, no...

Paper rustling.

MIA
(reading)
I declare the patient is a danger
to himself or others...

Pen click.

JAVIER
Cher? Cher...

OUTRO PART 2