

Swappe Shoppe - "Feet First"
by Gabriel Walsh

Wicker Wonder, Sugar Packetts, Hive Ive and Virgil toil away in a vast, subterranean junk yard. They grumble about their task: Waitress has ordered them to find an old "Penny Clutch" while some of Waitress' cluster-mind extensions, a large roach and a cyborg-opossum, supervise. The gross creatures eat a picnic lunch while members of the group scavenge for the lost object. Clearly Virgil has no idea what's going on as he presents a couple of ancient, decaying made-for-TV products.

Sugar points to a strange, old, coin-operated kiosk. Wicker confirms with an eye-scan that, yes, the cupid encrusted machine has some coins in. As he speculates on the find, Sugar is already hacking away at the back of the device, and it powers back to life.

"Step forward to find true love," pipes the ragged machine. Wicker complies. The machine describes his match: a breathtakingly beautiful philosopher, inventor and movie starlet who lived and died over nine-hundred years ago. Smitten, then grieving, Wicker bangs at the machine "Not fair! Dead people make bad girlfriends!"

Hive, trying to distract Wicker, tries the machine. His match: an inanimate object. "I am a chair," the image of Hive's match claims, to which Hive transmits to Virgil, "Could work."

Virgil takes a turn and - jackpot! The machine churns into action playing what looks like a television show intro to a chipper, robot-pioneer girl called "Penny Clutch." Like a sugar-trance-induced *Orphan Annie*, Penny declares her unstoppable pep levels, love of 'all critters' and of Virgil. Virgil blushes. "Why does she like me?"

The cockroach and opossum supervisors cheer. Wicker asks Sugar to grab the processor core so they can head out. First, though, Sugar wants to try the matchmaker.

The machine produces a mist-filled image of a man stepping forth through the fog: her match, a dapper dude named Panish Gocup. Sugar stares at him, her eyes watering as he strikes lame model poses. Sugar, entranced, breaks off and in a hate-filled rage smashes the machine, then runs away sobbing, leaving the group bewildered.

Later, Wicker checks in with Sugar. She won't open the door of her quarters. Wicker, through some gentle prodding, gets her to relay the story of Panish Gocup.

"Panish and I were to dance *Cinderella* at Culture Preserves. We

were both the in the lead roles." We see a flashback of Sugar (with legs) dancing ballet with the foppish Panish Gocup. The show progresses to the glass-slipper bit when Panish breaks off into a tirade. "Those are the most disgusting feet I've ever seen." The orchestra stops. The audience gasps. We see Sugar's feet - and they are indeed gross, complete with fungal coating, extra toes etc. Sugar, mortified, whispers through a fake smile for him to "Stick to the script"

Panish Gocup continues his rant about her feet. The audience looks on shell-shocked as Panish begins a bizarre, yet jazzy, song and, of course, dance about Sugar's disgusting feet. "It was the most embarrassing moment of my life," Sugar cries.

We return to the present. Wicker asks, "Wait, what was so gross about your feet?" This question upsets Sugar even more. Wicker focuses himself to console his friend, but Sugar is beyond upset and runs back into her room crying.

Time passes and we see Sugar's depression over the incident during the next several days. She looks truly despondent as breakfast machines spill on her. She's absent minded whilst mixing deadly chemicals in the salon and finally suffers, without reaction, a series of mutant bird droppings.

Later, Wicker approaches Waitress' court. All of her animal extensions as well as her main 'face' are enthralled by a holo-sitcom starring Penny Clutch. Wicker eventually gets her attention and asks her for some help with Sugar. Waitress snaps back, "I don't get involved in your kind's primitive chemical imbalances." Wicker counters, "Run the numbers." Waitress does, and Sugar's productivity loss is rather extensive, according to some quick charting she conjures up. Waitress, now resolved to help, asks "What do you need?"

Next, Wicker, Virgil and Hive are standing outside of a suburban neighborhood. They approach what looks to be a doll-house-sized mansion in the midst of other small homes. The trio kneels down and knocks on the roof. From inside we hear the foppish voice of Panish Gocup tuned to an impish high pitch, "I don't want any! Go away." Virgil asks, "What didn't he want?"

Hive lifts the roof up and catches a tiny Panish sitting on the toilet. Wicker introduces himself, as Virgil asks Hive, "Why is he so little?" Hive replies, "Sometimes, in order to have more riches people must shrink themselves." Wicker holds up a coupon for a free session at the Swapp-Shoppe and explains how Panish has won this very special prize. "I don't need that I have everything I could possibly want, swimming pool [really an old pot filled with water], fleet of limousines [Matchbox cars], and even my own brand of soft drinks [big cup of old juice]." Wicker says, "I see, well sorry to have bothered you," while he fishes in his pockets and

secretly attaches a small glowing sticker on the outside of Panish's house. The sticker begins to count down like a time bomb and the gang walks off. The sticker goes off and Panish grows back to normal size. He now wears his small mansion like a diaper. "Uhh wait... I'll take that coupon!" he cries out to Wicker. "Sorry," Wicker says, "Limited time offer like I said. But we could work something out."

Back at the Shoppe, Sugar pushes away a tray of food, sighs and looks out upon the view of Trenton. Wicker calls her name and she turns to see the boys gathered around a small present box on the table. "Oh, guys, thanks but I don't think..." Wicker interrupts asking her to open it. She does, and inside is the tiny Panish Gocup, humbled to his knees in a plea for forgiveness. Panish delivers an eloquent, maudlin, apology. Sugar's eyes tear up. Before Panish can finish, he stops. "Oh I can't do it. I am an authentic being and one must not compromise when it comes to the truth. And the truth, dearest Sugar, is you had UGLY FEET!"

Panish breaks into an incredibly awkward dance routine while chanting. "Ugly feet, Ugly feet." The small, annoying man dances away. Sugar buries her face in her hands and looks to be sobbing. Wicker winces and says, "Umm... I'll just let you get back to your lunch." But Sugar uncovers her face. She's laughing hysterically. She leaps up and kisses Wicker, Hive and Virgil (who blushes intensely) on the cheek. "You guys are the best. I can't believe I let that dork-biscuit get to me." They all walk off delighted as Sugar sings the "ugly feet" song.

Swappe Shoppe - "Stand Off" by Gabriel Walsh

Wicker Wonder works away in the salon, crouched over a hair-dressers rinse sink. Mrs. Loafletter, an ancient patron of the Swappe Shoppe, chats away while Wicker washes her hair. "So, I says three credits for pudding cups? I can get these for two-fifty at Waggersmans. And, Wicker, you know what they did?" Wicker replies, "Let you pay 2.50 for the pudding?" "No, they told me to put some clothes on or leave the store." Wicker chips away at Loafletter's encrusted beehive hairdo.

"Okay, Mrs. Loafletter, let's get you set up over here." Wicker guides the old woman to one of his opulent Swappe stations. While Mrs. Loafletter continues her banter, Wicker lifts a small flap of skin around her neck revealing a small bit of circuitry. His eyes ignite and a beam of blinding, pink light hits the circuit. A glowing seam appears around Loafletter's neck. Wicker lifts her head off and places it on a stand on top of the nearby vanity nearby. All the while Loafletter continues to chat.

Wicker unpacks a new head and places it next to the decapitated Loafletter. This new head looks like a youthful movie starlet. Wicker applies some chemicals to the neck of the headless body and then to the bottom of the new head.

"So I told her, Brownie, you've got to watch out for these guys." Wicker nods, not missing a beat. As he mounts the new head he adds, "Sounds like she needs to be more careful." Wicker continues his work hooking a siphoning device from the old head to the new head. "And another thing, I told her, don't tell these guys nothing..." The old head seizes up, becoming lifeless, while the new head picks up with a more youthful voice. "Because that's how they get you."

Wicker fires an eye beam to weld the head on. "Well, Mrs. Loafletter, how's that?" Loafletter studies herself in the mirror. "Not bad, Wicker. Not too bad at all!" Sugar comes over and adds "Well, look at you! Just gorgeous!" Sugar leads Loafletter away to settle up.

Wicker begins to tidy his work station. He tosses the old head into a bio-recycling container. Sugar rejoins him. "She's one happy customer, Wicker. Nice Work." Wicker, humming away, counters, "Eh - simple procedure." Sugar looks into the ghastly bio-recycling chamber. "Wicker, if you were just going to recycle the head, why did you wash the hair?"

Wicker stops. "Oh, my! I almost forgot!" He rushes over to the sink, calling for Virgil as he runs. Virgil hurries over after

holding the door open for Ms. Loafletter.

Wicker directs Sugar, Hive and Virgil's attention to the undrained sink. "Mrs. Loafletter has some fun little passengers riding along with her this morning." Wicker holds up a magnifying device and reveals hundreds of little floating creatures in the water. They look like a cross between a beetle and a strawberry.

"Berrybugs!" Sugar claps her hands. "What do you do with them?" Virgil asks. "I thought you might like to try your hand at running a Bug Juice stand." Wicker replies. "Every kid does it. It's kind of a rite of passage."

We see a montage of Virgil preparing his juice and stand as Wicker explains the details:

"First, you add something sugary to the bowl and make sure the water stays warm for at least two hours. The berrybugs will hatch and you'll need to scoop them up before their legs fully develop."

"Okay - now you'll need to set up a habitat. You'll need a small tank, some dirt, and some scenery. Now you'll hear a lot of berrybuggers have differing opinions about what type of scenery to use. But there's really only one tried and true method, if you ask me."

Virgil has built a tiny book store for his bugs. The little guys come into the store and, while looking around, feel the urge and run to the tiny bug bathroom Virgil has rigged up. We hear a flush, and Virgil grabs what looks to be a blue lemon that drops from his Berrybug tank. The little Berrybug washes his hands and returns to the store to see a line of other bugs waiting their turn.

"Once you got the berries, just juice two of them and mix with a pitcher of water, and you've got yourself the most refreshing drink money can buy!"

Virgil is out in the streets of the Trenton ruins selling Bug Juice to tourists. "One cup for money, please," he hawks. Business is brisk and Virgil is happily at work.

We see Virgil's busy cart from the perspective of his competitor, a small furry guy, Clumpio, with a cockscomb on his head. He grumbles to himself, then changes his sign to sell his Bug Juice for less than Virgil's.

Clumpio stares in dismay as even more customers flock to Virgil's stand, ignoring his.

As Clumpio again cuts his price, his wife, Sheena, calls him. Her video phone call is displayed on the underside of the cart's umbrella. His wife, even more hideous than him, she holds in her arms a newborn Clumpio. "Congratulations. You're a father again." She then throws up another Clumpio baby, who turns toward the videophone's camera and, still glistening with birth puke, says "Shoes, braces, allowance."

Clumpio's face turns from shock to anger as he sees Virgil's stand humming with business.

We see a series of fiendish acts Clumpio ventures on to shut down Virgil's stand:

Clumpio hides in a trash can until Virgil places a "Closed for Lunch" sign on his stand, then walks off to a nearby bench and opens a lunch-box. Clumpio emerges from the trash can and dumps the contents into Virgil's Bug Juice tank.

Clumpio watches in delight from back across the street as a customer comes to Virgil's stand and says "I'll have my usual no sugar please." The frequent customer takes a sip and his face puckers in shock. Clumpio is thrilled. "What have you done to this juice, boy!?" Virgil looks worried. "It's even better than before, an earthy hint of mineral extracts, light fermentation. My goodness, I declare this is the best glass of Bug Juice I have ever enjoyed!" Clumpio is crestfallen as customers surround Virgil's stand.

Later we see Clumpio hand a stack of credit coins to Skip Jump, a Ball Player. He smiles and then holds up a cup of Clumpio's Bug Juice. "Hey there, Trenton it's me, five-time hall-of-famer Skip Jump - and I'm here today to tell you about my favorite Bug Juice - this guy's juice. Drink it and win, like me." Finally, customers turn from Virgil's stand and head over to Clumpio, who sighs in relief as he begins to sell to the small crowd.

A hush begins to fall over the crowd. We see customers pointing at Skip Jump then back to their devices. Eyes begin to flash with incoming broadcasts. We see the faces of the crowd change from admiration to absolute horror. People begin to back away from the stand as if it were a hungry bear. A little boy asks Skip, "Sign my cup champ?" Before the athlete can comply, the boy's mother slaps the cup to the ground and utters "Monster! You're a monster," to Skip. The crowd runs away while showing their distaste for Skip by spitting on the ground, throwing cups and knocking over Clumpio's stand.

"Guess they found out about my puppy-snappin'," says Skip. Clumpio is left in shock with his stand in ruins. Clumpio rights his cart and then grabs a bucket. Gritting his teeth he marches across the

street to Virgil's busy stand. Virgil has so many customers that he doesn't notice Clumpio siphon off some of his juice. With a full bucket Clumpio marches back across the street.

Clumpio fills his tank with Virgil's juice. From behind he hears "Junior." Turning he sees a grey-haired, melted version of Clumpio. "Momma," says Clumpio. "Got a drink for your mother?" As Clumpio ladles her a cup, "Our secret family recipe, mmm can't wait to taste it." Clumpio looks worried as he hands her the cup. She gulps it and swishes it in her mouth. "Clumpio, you know I never really believed in you. You were such a spiteful, lazy child. I thought you basically made a living off stealing my recipe. But I never said anything, what with Sheena and all them grandchildren. But as I taste this, I know I was wrong. You took my recipe and made it better. You contributed. And it's the best-tasting Bug Juice I've ever had. Now I know you're not a loser. You're my son and I'm so very proud." She's in tears. Clumpio withers into a primal ball of shame.

Later, we see Wicker and Hive I've packing up the stand. Virgil hands them each an equal portion of his profits in money bags, which they refuse. Wicker says, "Such a sweet kid, hey you keep this. It'll put a good dent in your tab with Waitress." The gang hears someone clearing his throat.

They turn to see the Clumpio family - complete with a dozen ragged Clumpio children all dressed in their pathetic Sunday-bests. Clumpio holds a hat in his hand and gets down on one knee.

"Mercy. Please. Your stand is putting me out of business and I can support my family. And I just can't make the Juice like you people. Please help me. Tell me how you do it. How come your juice is so good?"

Sentimental music plays as Wicker approaches the kneeling Clumpio. "Hey there, no need for that," Wicker says. "Don't you know...? You have everything you need to make better juice." Clumpio wipes his tears. "What do you mean?"

"You see, you are disgusting. You have never bathed in your whole life. Isn't that right? And because you are disgusting you are covered with Berrybug eggs." Wicker shows Clumpio his infested fur. "In fact, your whole family is disgusting, even this little guy. Why you have enough eggs to start a Bug Juice factory, you're all so filthy."

Clumpio rises and his bug-covered family surround him. The newborn Clumpio speaks, "I'm itchy, Daddy."

"That's my boy. That's my disgusting, filthy boy." Clumpio ends with teary-eyed thankfulness.

Swappe Shoppe - "Tip of the Thriceberg" **by Gabriel Walsh**

In the Shoppe, an old man, Vasdad, is telling a war story while Virgil, Sugar, Duckstar and Hive Ive listen intently. Vasdad has no arms, because Wicker is working on them at a table near by. Vasdad finishes his story as Wicker installs his brand-new arms. He stretches and admires himself in a full length mirror - he's still got it. Sugar walks Vasdad to the reception area to pay for the bodywork, but Vasdad becomes suddenly anxious. Sugar asks if everything is okay, and Vasdad tells her he's lost his monocle, but is running late for an appointment with the Council on Long Distance Six. "If you happen by it, would you mind dispatching it my way?" he says.

The rest of the Shoppe employees are cleaning up. Duckstar orders Hive Ive to help him haul a really large ear off to the bio-recycler and the two exit. Virgil, who is sweeping up the gore left over from the day's procedures, overhears Vasdad and then spots the monocle in the mouth of a discarded head. Virgil runs over to Vasdad and returns the monocle. Vasdad is overjoyed. He asks how he can ever thank him. He studies Virgil a moment and asks, "Say, how long have you had this form?" Virgil doesn't understand, "I do my forms on Fridays." Sugar intervenes, "Virgil is actually an Emergent. He's technically just a few months old." Vasdad smiles and says. "Yes, well then I do have a way to thank you." He hands Virgil a small box. Virgil thanks him, and Vasdad takes his leave.

Sugar, excited too, watches as Virgil opens the box. Inside is a glowing, glassy ball with a small crack on its top. Sugar gasps. "Virgil! My goodness! What a gift!" Virgil asks what it is. Sugar, suddenly panicked says, "Quick, put that away before Wicker sees it!" But it's too late. Wicker sees the box and asks, "What don't you want me to see?" Virgil turns, revealing the ball to Wicker. He flips out, trembling, even drooling slightly. "That's... that's Thriceberg isn't it? Did Vasdad give that to you? That old devil! I tried to buy it off him at least ten times. Back when I had money. Do you mind if I hold it?"

Sugar looks concerned. "Wicker, I'm not so sure this is a good idea." Wicker completely disregards her. "Oh, Thriceberg, I haven't seen you in person in a century or so. How's your little crack holding up? Looks like it's grown a bit, poor thing." Virgil asks what a Thriceberg is. Wicker replies, "It's not so much what it is as where it is." Sugar clarifies, "It's a pocket world Virgil. People thought they could live forever if they copied their consciousness into them." "Thought they could?! Sugar, my darling. They do live forever." "Wicker, you know, I think you should really put that down."

Wicker is already walking away from the Shoppe toward his quarters

with an entranced Virgil and a worried Sugar in tandem. "Listen Sugar, I'm not going to bankrupt myself again. Virgil here already owns it, right kid?" Virgil says, "I'm not sure you can own a world, even if fits in a pocket."

The group has entered Wicker's quarters. He touches a small robot toy on a bookshelf that is very reminiscent of his own antennae. The bookshelf slides away and we see Wicker's Pocket World parlor. A main throne is in the center of the room with a fuel caddy to its side. Around the throne are four other wired-in seats, facing the throne in a semi-circle. Behind the chairs are dozens of arcane machines, monitors, and, most predominantly, a display case of five other pocket worlds. Sugar asks "Wait Wicker, are we really doing this?" Wicker looks through a cabinet and finds a bunch of nearly empty bottles of bubbling blue fuel. As he's combining the dregs into one bottle he says. "Oh, come on Sugar, I know you're curious. Besides, how is the boy supposed to appreciate his gift if he can't experience it for himself?"

Sugar gives in and sits in one of the chairs, "Okay, you're right. I'm dying to see this. Let's do it." Wicker says to Virgil, "Have a seat, kid. You two are in for a treat. Now I only have enough fuel to sync us up for an hour or so. It's the last I got, so I hope you appreciate it." Wicker hooks Sugar and Virgil up to the apparatuses. He then puts the remaining fuel into the fuel caddy. Reaching up to the top of his antennae, he unscrews the metal ball and replaces it with the Thriceberg pocket world. As the fuel begins to flow, the room begins to melt away. The pocket world expands and the entire scene is saturated in heavy psychedelic patterns and music. The trippy, blissful travel scene rivals The Yellow Submarine in its hypnotic ambitions.

Virgil opens his eyes. Strange birds circle past green tinged clouds. The crack in the pocket world's outer shell now spans miles of the open sky. He sits up to find Wicker and Sugar sitting on the edge of a alien rock formation, looking out over an open, beautifully strange landscape. "Oh, he's awake." Wicker says, "Virgil, welcome to Thriceberg. Your own little world." Virgil looks around amazed. He's overwhelmed and his awe escalates to tears of joy. "It's so beautiful." Wicker pulls Virgil to sit down with them. Sugar and Wicker wrap their arms around Virgil in a parental gesture.

"What's that?" Virgil asks. In the road below the trio, is a procession of little armored knights, not on horseback, but rather carried by other men, dressed in the courtly, Rococo attire of eighteenth-century French aristocrats. As the little knights look like children on their father's shoulders for a piggyback ride. The procession passes we see that it's actually escorting a prisoner, Edomel Lemode. The prisoner has been stripped of his armor, his mount and shaved. Lemonde is in shackles and being prodded along by those behind him. As Virgil asks what's going on, he and the other Thriceberg tourists are surprised by a squad of

mounted knights. Polearms are thrust at Wicker, Sugar and Virgil who raise their hands in surrender.

Later we join the circle of Rococo knights. Edomel stands in the middle of an amphitheater, surrounded by guards and the pageantry of a trial. Wicker, Sugar and Virgil watch from a mezzanine seatbox. They too are surrounded by guards. Sugar asks Wicker, "What do we do?" Wicker answers in a whisper, "Just lay low we only have a few minutes of fuel left." A wig-clad judge takes the bench and begins the trial. "Sir Edomel Lemonde, Champion of Thriceberg, Guardian of the Cracked Sky, you stand accused of betraying your order. How do you plead?" Edomel, looking down, does not speak until he is poked in the back by one of the guards. "I am innocent." The crowd gasps. The Judge calls for silence. "Sir Edomel, you plead your innocence and yet you were caught in the act of releasing your mounts to the wild. Mounts you did not own."

Sir Edomel looks up. "I call for right of Unbridling." The crowd erupts. Virgil asks Wicker, "What does that mean?" Wicker shrugs. "Very well." The judge says, "Sir Edomel Lemonde, you have called for the ancient rite of Unbridling. I cannot stop you now. I am personally saddened it has come to this. May the cracked sky have mercy upon you. Sir Edomel - what mount do you choose to represent you?" Sir Edomel slowly turns toward the mezzanine. He points toward Virgil. "That one." Again the crowd erupts. The judge calls for quiet as Virgil is escorted down to the amphitheater floor. Sugar is worried, "Wicker... do something." Wicker looks back - "We go a few seconds, tops." "Silence!" yells the judge. Virgil is shoved to the middle of the proceeding. He looks around confused and scared. His glance settles on Sir Edomel, who nods at Virgil with serene, humble encouragement. The proceeding is completely quiet, all eyes upon Virgil. "I just think...", Virgil begins. More gasps of astonishment echo through the court. "It speaks." "He's innocent." The judge waves his hand, and the guards turn on the crowds to settle them. "Continue," orders the judge. "I just think that you may be confused. You little people who ride the big people are confused about what being a person is. Just because a person can't speak up, or know how to use all your fancy things, doesn't mean you can own it. And so, it sounds like Sir Ed-o-mel here figured that out a little sooner than the rest of you. So I think you should let him go."

All eyes point toward the judge. "In accordance with the right of unbridling I hereby find Sir Edomel..." Suddenly the world fades out, replaced by a whirl of lights and sound. We are back in Wicker's quarters. The fuel cannister gives its last drip, and the apparatus shuts down. Wicker gets up and begins packing up. Virgil is dazed and slightly panicked. "Nice little world you got there kid!" Virgil pleads, "We need to go back! What's going to happen to Sir Edomel and the little people?" Wicker counsels the boy, "I'm sorry Virgil. I don't have anymore fuel. You did really well, all things considered." Wicker hands Virgil Thriceberg and Virgil

stares at it. "But... what's going to happen to them?" Wicker says "I don't know. But the good news is that time for them moves very slowly compared to us. So, if we get some more fuel, we can just pop right back in and see what happens. If only it weren't so darn expensive." As Wicker cleans up, he sighs, reality depressed. Sugar, woozy, rises and leans over to the distraught Virgil. "Guess we know how the great Wicker Wonder went bankrupt."

Swappe Shoppe - "Twilight of the Überfans" **by Gabriel Walsh**

Having just finished a long procedure, Wicker returns to Shoppe living quarters and finds everyone eating popcorn and watching a "Where Are They Now?" Tonight's subject is Wicker himself. The show details the wild ups and downs of Wicker Wonder and asks what happened to the now reclusive superstar.

Puzzled by the show, Virgil whispers to Wicker, "How did you lose all your money?" Wicker smiles and says, "I have expensive hobbies." Waitress eyes the program intently and has an idea. One of her creature extensions, a wired-up pink elephant, contacts the holo-station, "Waitress would like to purchase some broadcast time." A blur of lights and movement flashes through the room. A crew-bot emerges from the blur and salutes. "We're uploading the ad right now," says the elephant.

"We'll be right back after you open your home to our sponsors." Wicker gets up from his seat and asks, "Beverage anyone?" Wicker looks back in confusion to see himself on the holo-show. "Wondering what happened to Wicker Wonder? He's at the Swappe Shoppe, where everybody can get a new body, located in the Trenton ruins." Waitress appears on screen, "Skin, organs, consciousness upgrades. And remember, if you need a body loan, just look for us under the big pink dome." Waitress mouths along to the ad's conclusion.

Wicker, taken aback, asks, "What have you done? Now everybody knows I'm here." Waitress tells him, "Get off your high horse. I took care of all your debtors when you signed up here."

Wicker looks up, very serious for a moment. "Not everybody looking for me wants money. I'm going to go chill in my quarters, and try forget this whole episode. Good night, everyone." Waitress mumbles under her breath, "Drama queen."

Wicker is trying to relax in his quarters, but can't settle down. He brings up a screen and calls down to the guard, Knightly, at the lobby, asking him to keep an eye out for anything unusual. Shortly after ending the call, three people in dark concealing clothes with some sort of Wicker Wonder paraphernalia on, walk up to Knightly and ask to be let in to see Wicker. He lets them in. "Nothing unusual" he says as the fans head into the Shoppe.

Virgil suddenly opens his eyes from sleep to find Craigy, a guy dressed in what 20th century marketing people might have considered "cool." "Oh hey. I'm Craigy. I'm looking for Wicker's room. I'm a blast from his past, yo." Virgil tells him "The shop is closed, come back tomorrow... yo?" Craigy says, "Oh, okay I'll just hang here." He climbs on top of the bed and on to Virgil. Sitting down, he begins to tap out drum beats by banging his head

against the wall and smacking Virgil's body. "Craigy and Wicker, Craigy and Wicker," he chants. Virgil is terrified.

Hive I've is in the Shoppe's spire, drinking some honey tea. From behind a pair of hands cover his eyes. "Guess who?" a sultry voice says. Hive spins around to see a beautiful, but crazed woman, Barbet. She flirtatiously traces Hive's lips and informs him that they are going to have a "nice talk" about her boyfriend Wicker. Hive looks down to notice that Barbet has pulled some of his circuitry out from his open wound. Yikes!

Sugar, wearing a bathing suit, is brushing her teeth while her sink-tub is filling in the background with pink water. While she spits into the sink, a round, floating-face creature, Massahero, sneaks past her. He is mumbling Wicker's name softly. She looks, but she doesn't see Massahero who deviously dives into her sink tub. Sugar dons a swimming cap and steps into the sink tub. We see under the water and Sugar's sharp legs skewer Massahero. Sugar screams in horror.

Wicker sits in an armchair, still trying to relax, reading a book about Glam Rock. There's a scream in the background. Wicker sits up and stops the noisy music he's listening to (which sounds a lot like screaming); he doesn't hear anything. Again, he calls down to Knightly who answers, "Nothing unusual, Wicker don't worry ol' Knightly has got you covered." Wicker thanks him and right as he's about to hang up, there's a knock on his door. Knightly says - "That will be your friends." "My friends?" "Your three friends I let up." Wicker sighs and opens the door to find Craigy with a chained Virgil, both in head-to-toe Wicker fan gear, Barbet, her hand still holding Hive's circuitry, blowing Wicker a kiss, and Massahero impaled on Sugar's leg, chanting his name. Wicker takes in the scene and says, "Okay, let's get the fan club meeting started."

Wicker has seated everyone around a small table. "I hereby open the Official Wicker Wonder Fan Club meeting," says Craigy. "I have new business," says Massahero. "Let's review last week's minutes," claims Barbet. Wicker hushes the crowd, "Guys, before we get started, I wanted to give a toast to you, my most loyal fans. I've got something really special I've been saving." Wicker unveils a tray of bubbling champagne. Hive voices to Virgil, "Is Wicker not going to help us with the lunatics?" Sugar shrugs at Virgil is disbelief.

Wicker leads a toast, "To me, Wicker Wonder!" Wicker turns toward Craigy - "No, to you Craigy. You've always been there for me. You, more than any other person in the world, understand me. That's why we are best friends, and why, I've decided to graft my head to your body." Craigy cheers in ecstatic glee as Wicker's headless body sews on its own smiling, humming head to Craigy making a two-headed monstrosity.

We see Barbet swallow her drink, and Wicker, strangely starts up again. "No, to you Barbet. You are my true love, my soul mate. And I forgive you for trying to eat my pets all those years ago. Barbet will you marry me?" Wicker kneels and looks deeply into Barbets eyes.

We switch to a reaction shot of Massahero, magically free of Sugar's leg. His eyes sparkle with excitement as Wicker's hand lift him up. Suddenly, Wicker's quarters transforms into a basketball court. Swish! Wicker shoots a perfect shot with Massahero, who squeals, "We're a team!"

We cut back to reality to find Knightly scooping the unconscious fan club up onto a cart. Sugar turns to Wicker, "Wow, they seem so happy." Virgil asks, "I don't get it, why didn't you fall asleep too? And why do they like you so much that they don't like you?" Wicker leans over and says, "First question - I've uh, built up a bit of a tolerance to dream juice over the years. And second, I was, and I guess still am, pretty famous for changing people into what they think they want the most. That's why they're obsessed with me. And, as you put it, they don't like me because I really can't change them."

Virgil, looking up at his Wicker Wonder ball cap asks, "Can I keep the hat?" Wicker sighs.