

Chapter 1: A Harmonious and Well-Ordered Society

Radio Announcer: *(as the Turkish March from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony plays)* Greetings, ladies and gentlemen. We here at 104 WPR Metro joyfully announce that today will forever have a place in the annals of history. After three years of brutal conflict in the Strait of Taiwan, officials from both The People's Republic of China and the United States of America have agreed to a complete cessation of hostilities. The announcement of armistice comes in the wake of historic protests and general strikes in Beijing and Hong Kong, as well as Washington and New York.

Dignitaries from both countries have agreed to a summit in Geneva this coming August, to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the end of World War 2, when the two superpowers last stood together against the forces of fascism. 104 WPR Metro affiliates in New York have commissioned the following radio play, to commemorate the occasion...

(Music changes to Overture of Mozart's Abduction from the Seraglio)

Radio Announcer: Our story begins in the distant future, thousands of years from now. Humanity has annihilated itself through war. The only survivors are a small band aboard an experimental faster-than-light generation ship. Somewhere in the depths of space, the remains of humanity search on... *(Industrial drones of machines. The stillness is punctured by the whirring of an impact drill)*

Hun: And that's how you're supposed to do it. Do you notice how the thread is in exactly the same place for each one?

Mech: It was just the angle making it look like that. I saw you strip some too ya know! Last month I thought the whole east wing of the ship was gonna fly off!

Hun: The section only looked fine because Mana came in after you and fixed everything. You could never have done the job right by yourself.

Mech: What you say to me...

Hun: You heard me!

Nut: Uh, guys, do we need to fight over this?

Mech: (Prelude to violence) No I didn't hear you, do you wanna go and say that again? (Trips over the drill, crashes into the metal grating. Hun laughs)

Hun: To think we make it this many light years out, then might die when he trips over something important. Just imagine the hands of your sweet beloved Mo guiding you, caressing you...whispering in your ear, that if you're a good boy, a competent mechanic, maybe she's finally...

(Mana the Manager enters)

Mana: Boys! Status report now!

Hun: (Snaps to attention) Section A-7 fully serviced, the oscillating panels replaced with the new composites, per the designs.

Mana: How many layers? (silence)

Hun: ...how many what?

Mana: (mumbling to himself) Idiot C Levels. (Loudly) I said...how many layers of composites on the panels?

Hun: Well, I think...these idiots only put one! Mech, what were you thinking?! One layer of composite and we would have all been killed next power cycle! Some people just can't be taught...

Mech: Hey, we did exactly what you told us!

Mana: We have our orders from Jin! The designs specify two layers! Go back through and redo the entire section!

Hun: You heard him! Mech, Nut. Two new layers! (To Mana) Sorry, sir. I've been dealing with these two incompetents all day. We'll get the job done though.

Mana: Don't try to pawn your failures off onto others, Hun! Jin gives me orders, I give you orders, and right now you're all making a mess of it! So get your heads on straight, or else it'll be twelve hour shifts for all of you for the next three weeks! I'm going back to the bridge. Get it done! (Walks off with a sound of sci-fi doors shutting)

Nut: (Sighs) Why do we even have to do this? Can't we have AI or robots do it for us?

Hun: AI is only for the upper levels, Nut. Skilled physical labor like this still requires the human touch. 'Skilled' is the key word, though, which doesn't exactly apply to you two. Now, you heard Mana! Get back to work!

Mech: He said that to all three of us! You get back to work too!

Hun: Oh no. Only you. You're the lower level. You're the one who stripped the thread on those bolts.

Nut: (Defensive) Hey guys, I thought we settled this....

Mech: Come a little closer and say that, Hun!

Nut: Wait, Mech, I'm moving, don't! (trips, and yelps. He drops his tool, which clangs on the grate) Oh no, no no no (he tries lunge after the tool but is unsuccessful. It falls, landing in liquid with a distant splash. In a quavering voice...) Oh no...that's...not good....

Hun: (Laughing hysterically) I can't believe it! (Imitating Nut) 'Hey, we're not bad mechanics. . Let me just prove it first and drop this state of the art welding laser into the protein recycling pools'. You've proven me wrong, I'm sorry I ever doubted you (keeps laughing).

Nut: Hey, well, everyone makes mistakes.

Hun: Everyone also dies eventually. One can lead to the other.

Nut: (groans. Lifts up the metal grate to look down) That's so far down. (Gags) And that smell....do we really eat that?

Hun: Yep. And we have been for years. In the front, out the bottom, through the tubes, back in the front. Not so appetizing before oxygenation and reculturing, is it?

Nut: (Coughs) No it's not. (Pauses) We don't have to go get that, do we?

Hun: No, we don't. That's why we have the D levels. Someone even lower and more pathetic than you, hard as that is to believe. That one? The janitor, Jan? That mangy girl with the greasy black hair. I bet she relaxes in those protein pools the way the C level girls relax in the mineral baths.

Nut: Can we message the D levels to retrieve it?

Hun: Yeah, I'll patch into the console. They'll know in about five minutes.

Mech: And tell her to wipe off all the slime. And just leave it outside the equipment bay, don't go inside tracking in muck and stinking everything up.

Hun: Will do. (Types into a console, with keyboard sounds) Now. You get to finish changing these panels.

Mech: Oh, just us, you won't help?

Hun: Yep. Both of you. Cuz otherwise I'll tell Mana and Jin you just dumped one of the best welding lasers into a hot pool of liquid protein shit.

Nut: Well...

Hun: (Typing) I'm patching into the A Level Deck now...

Mech: All right! I'll do it. (whirring of screws and drilling. Hun laughs)

Hun: Have fun, you two. I'm off to see what Mo is up to. (Whistles as he leaves)

Mech: (grumbling to himself) Lousy kiss ass, pompous greasy bootlicking golden boy, fleshy, bug-eyed nasally, big dumb heavyfoot lumbering imbecile worthless....

Nut: Hey, Mech. He's our superior officer.

Mech: He's a C level just like us!

Nut: He's older though. And he's more skilled.

Mech: That's just what he thinks! (Sighs) It all comes down to what Mana thinks. And above him, Jin. Let's just get to work. I want to be done for the day. (Pauses) I don't think it was your fault you dropped the laser, by the way. I....got in your way.

Nut: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Mech: Don't get carried away, it was just that one time. You still screw things up.

Nut: What did you say?

Mech: You heard me! You still screw things up. Now get back to work!

(Gentle ambient music. The nutritional station of the ship. Sounds of liquids flowing)

Mo: So yesterday...I was going to the Replicator...you know I always make the dresses before Saturnalia myself! I can't trust Bree or Libby to get the sewing right. Anyway, so I'm heading to the Replicator...and of course, Bree is just standing in the hall right outside the mainframe room. Where Jin does the plans for the ship.

Flo: (giggles) She always finds a reason to be just outside there. 'Oh sorry Jin, I was just cleaning this hall...oh sorry Jin, I was just trying out some new decorations...'

Mo: I know! Anyway, so I see her standing there, but I don't say anything. 'I want to see what exactly she's doing' I think to myself.

Flo: Oh, I think I know where this is going...

Mo: I go to the Replicator and spend 10 or 15 minutes getting new weaves for the tunics and robes. When I head back...she's in the exact same position! 10 to 15 minutes, just waiting outside the room where Jin's working, like she's frozen.

Flo: (giggles) Paralyzed with love...

Mo: And then Jin comes out of the room...doesn't know she's been there the whole time! She kind of...(laughing) pretends to slip and almost fall...'Oh, I'm sorry Jin, I was just passing by, I didn't mean to disturb you...'

Flo: That's probably the smartest plan she's ever come up with.

(Radio intercom) Libby: C Levels, report.

Mo: (little groan of annoyance) Mo, standing by.

Flo: Flo, standing by.

Libby: Did you two add more nitrogen to the culturing tanks?

Flo: Um...

Mo: Did you ask us to do that?

Libby: Please do not shift the blame by implying that I gave unclear instructions. The tanks need to be stocked with nitrogen by the end of the day. That will allow plenty of time for the new food cultures to be grown by the end of the week. Our Saturnalia feast, for which I have a number of scrumptious recipes I am quite excited to prepare. So please, if you'd be so kind...no more excuses.

Flo: We don't know which nitrogen tank to use! The only one we could find was in the atmosphere control dock. We didn't want to take the wrong one and...ruin the ship's atmosphere.

Libby: (pauses) One moment...Jin is here with me, I'll ask him. (Mo giggles excitedly at the mention of Jin's name)

Jin: Mo? Can you hear me?

Mo: (excitedly) Yes sir, crystal clear.

Jin: Go ahead and use that tank you found. Atmospheric nitrogen levels and backup systems are all stable. And thank you for being considerate, never hesitate to ask questions like that.

Mo: Not a problem, sir!

Jin: Libby, unless you have anything else for them, I'd like to meet with you Mana and Derry to review some things before Saturnalia.

Libby: Very good, sir. Command deck out (electronic static)

Flo: (giggling) Sounds like someone else has their eyes on Jin. Bree might have some competition.

Mo: (unimpressed, unflinching) Very cute, Flo. The difference in this situation is that I'm actually in his league, whereas you and Bree are definitely C level through and through. Try talking to one of the mechanic boys. (footsteps as Bree enters) Speak of the devil. You just missed a chance to talk with your boyfriend, Bree.

Bree: (embarrassed) And who would that be?

Flo: Oh, we're not telling.

Mo: (mockingly) I thought I knew but I forgot. Flo, could you remind me?

Bree: (angry) Is this supposed to be a joke?

Mo: You think talking about your love life is a joke? Have some self respect, my dearest Bree. Now, you two, get down to culturing tanks, as Libby requested. I have some higher level work to do to get ready for Saturnalia. (Walks off)

Flo: (after a pause) Run along, Bree. Go change that tank, or else we'll tell your boyfriend you've been slacking off work. (Bree groans in anger and frustration)

(The command deck of the ship. An array of sophisticated computers, making a gentle electric hum)

Mana: Well, another Saturnalia ready to go in the books. How many does this make for you, Libby?

Libby: Well, 10 as a B level. And then before that 15 as a C. So, 25 in total since I came of age.

Mana: Which one was your favorite?

Libby: Well, Jin's first Saturnalia was quite funny. His test scores were so high, he started as an A-level as only a teenager. The part where he had to serve the other guests, he kept dropping plates and knocking over glasses! Poor thing, the waiter's coat was far too big for him. It was rather adorable, I must say.

Mana: I remember that one! He was a cute kid, no doubt about it.

Libby: What about you?

Mana: Oh, you wouldn't remember it. I'm an old timer. It was from way back when...none of them are around anymore, except for Derry...(doors open and Jin and Derry enter)

Libby: Libby, standing by.

Mana: Mana, standing by.

Jin: At ease. I know you're both very busy. I just wanted to review some things before we all take a few days off. Libby, did you check the mineral level records?

Libby: Yes sir, (punching keys). All readings of mineral intake and outtake from the cultration tanks read as stable going back 5 years.

Jin: What figure are you getting? What counts as stable?

Libby: 99.98% percent, sir, with a margin of error of .001.

Jin: That's a low margin, but on a long enough timeline inefficiencies will add up. We'll continue with the festival food preparations as before—extra magnesium, carbon, phosphorus...we'll enjoy ourselves for Saturnalia. But afterwards please get me a reading on the mineral intake and outtake levels exactly one day after the end of the festival. I want to update my long-term cultration cycling plan.

Libby: Yes sir.

Jin: Mana, have you and the C levels changed the oscillating panels with the composite designs?

Mana: Yes, sir. All the sections have been serviced.

Jin: And with three layers for each panel?

Mana:...well, not yet. Two panels for all the sections closest to the braces.

Jin: It needs to be three layers for all sections, period.

Mana: (aghast) ...Three layers, sir? That'd take days, we'd have to...

Jin: The oscillating panels protect the ship from the vibrations given off by the Alcubierre drive. Functionally infinite amounts of dark energy drawn through functionally infinite dimensions, concentrated into one inflection point centered around the ship's gravity sphere. That's what keeps us traveling through warp space at 20% the speed of light. If those vibrations got through to anything, if any section of the ship was compromised...

Mana: (grumbling) We'd drop out of warp space, and could smack into something.

Jin: At 20% the speed of light. So we have to follow the servicing specifications exactly.

Derry: The wisdom of our forebears is not abstract. It is as real as the metal of the ceiling, the wood of this table. The designs of the ship.

Jin: I know it's a lot of work and you and the C levels have been buried with repairs, but this needs to get done in the next day. I promise to come help you as soon as I can.

Mana: Very well, sir.

Jin: Thank you. Derry, unless you have anything for them, I've said my piece.

Derry: I would just like to add, I would like a gathering tomorrow evening, for a little rehearsal and performance. I sense a great amount of commotion amongst the crew. There's a lot to be done as we prepare for the Saturnalia, but I just want to make sure that everyone feels centered, so we can enjoy the fruits of our labors. I have selected a play on this theme I think will be quite illuminating. So, I request the attendance of everyone on the ship at the bridge tomorrow. Libby, I know we don't customarily bring our friends from the lower quarters...

Libby: The D levels? (Nervous) You want to bring them...up to the bridge?

Derry: We just need one. I'm sure they have a busy work schedule.

Libby: Very well, sir. I suggest bringing up the boy, Cus. The girl...has a very busy work schedule indeed.

Derry: Very well. We shall see our friend from the back of the ship, Cus, tomorrow night. Thank you, most kindly. And with that, I have nothing else to add to our conversation.

Jin: Very well. B Levels, dismissed.

Libby: (Salute) Sir!

Mana: (Salute) Sir! (both the B-levels stand up and leave the room)

Derry: (after a pause) You didn't have to offer them help. They should understand that their roles can be...demanding, sometimes.

Jin: There are lots of plates to weld. I know how to do the job quickly. They will have some long nights ahead of them if I don't help.

Derry: Then long nights are sometimes what The Mission requires. To understand the significance of their task is to understand that it transcends their comfort. (After a pause) I don't mean to override you, of course. By all means, help them, if it suits you. I just hope we're careful about instilling the right virtues.

Jin: I'm aware. I just want things to be sustainable in the long run. The ship parts, all running without breaking. The crew members, all running without breaking. To think how easily we could just...evaporate....God knows how many light years away from Earth, in the middle of space...

Derry: Leadership can be quite a burden.

Jin: Well, the others would relieve me of it if they had the chance.

Derry: That chance will never come. They see the prestige of your position, but not the responsibility. (Pause) You seem troubled as of late. May I ask what bothers you? It seems to be something beyond a normal amount of stress.

Jin: (sighs, and walks to the windows of the bridge) Do you see out the bridge windows? Out into space?

Derry: I do.

Jin: And what do you see?

Derry: The blackness of the interstellar medium. The distant pinpoints of stars.

Jin: It's exactly the same starry sky it's always been. Ever since I was a child, every single star, every single constellation, has remained in the exact same place. (Beat) Long ago...I have no idea how long...this ship was humanity's last gasp. Just before the final antimatter attacks destroyed Earth's atmosphere, this ship traveled to a gravity well between Saturn and Jupiter. An antimatter reactor the size of Iceland fired, activating the Alcubierre Drive, pouring dark energy in through countless dimensions, and launching the ship into warp space, where it's been ever since. This night sky is what could be seen in the ship's atmosphere the exact moment it went through the warp. And it just...doesn't change. We follow the designs, we follow the instructions of the Mission...and nothing ever changes. Nothing ever moves.

Derry: I think quite a bit is moving. You said yourself, the ship is moving 20% the speed of light.

Jin: Yes, I know the ship is moving. But...I'm not moving. I've been consumed by it the last couple of months. I'm doing the best I can, of course, I'm doing everything I can to maintain the long-term viability of the Mission.

Derry: Yes, and you are doing quite well.

Jin: But I'd give anything to know the timeline of the Mission. Just, what to expect from the future at all. Last week I went into the ship's mainframe...I looked at the large scale ballistic inputs. Launching the ship into warp space was like firing an arrow from a bow, they could only fire it once. So they fired it according to those ballistic plans. (Sighs) I couldn't make sense of them. I tried to get answers about how far we've made it, or where we're going, or how long it's going to take...I couldn't come up with anything. Hours and hours of studying, and, just like those stars out the window...I'm exactly where I was when I started.

Derry: It saddens me to see you torment yourself in this manner. You're very brilliant, Jin. The finest mind of our community. If you can't solve this riddle, whom amongst us could?

Jin: Something tells me it's not that. I'm missing something....

Derry: You are of the age where you are seeking answers, exploring frontiers. It is as all young men are. But every man comes to the point of his limitations—he is damned when he keeps pushing anyway, past his strength. But he is saved when he turns back and sees the acceptance of the community he once sought to leave.

Jin: I...never said I wanted to leave the community.

Derry: You want to find a place outside the Mission. A place, for yourself. And I caution you, Jin. That line of thinking can be dangerous. We must trust the wisdom of our predecessors. The mission, our roles within it, the cycles of our lives. Only faith in the project that's been handed down to us can redeem us. I know you are very busy with your work, but I sincerely hope you'll attend the play later tonight. The theme at the heart of the play is very instructive, I believe. Especially regarding the crisis from which you are currently suffering.

Jin: (pause) I'll be there.

Derry: Good. I look forward to an enlightening evening for everyone...

(Transition of ambient sound effects to mark the passage of the scene)

Mech: (Groaning) Is this gonna take long? My feet are killing me.

Hun: Shut up, Mech! It'll be done when it's done.

Mech: Easy to say when you're not the one doing all the drilling...

Mo: Looking handsome there, boys! Grease and grime really go with your eyes.

Flo: I'm really liking this look on Nut. He has this little boy playing in the mud thing going on, I like it.

Hun: (Flirty) You like them looking dirty, Mo? Maybe try raising your standards just a bit?

Mo: Raising my standards? Do you have someone in mind when you say that?

Libby: (entering sharply) All right, everyone. Places. We'll be starting in five minutes. Here are your scripts. I did the courtesy of writing your names next to your parts so you know who's who. As soon as Jin and Derry get here we'll begin. (Walks off)

Mech: Do you think Mo meant what she said? Grease and grime make us look better?

Nut: I don't know. Well, maybe she does. It shows how hard we've been working. Women love hard-working men.

Mech: News to me. I thought they just liked someone higher ranked.

Nut: Well that's how you get higher ranked, is by working! Every day, nose to the grindstone. You can sleep when you're dead.

Hun: (Chuckling) This is pretty funny to listen to. Care to weigh in, ladies?

Bree: What did they say?

Hun: (loudly) Speak up a little fellas, I wanted the girls to weigh in with their opinions.

Mech: Uh...we were just saying...

Flo: (Sighs) Trapped on a starship for life, no escape from listening to boys' talk...

Mo: Bree, you dirty little rat. You've got something on your gown.

Bree: (Agitated) Where?

Mo: Down here by the hem...let me get it out...do I have to do everything for you...

(Jin, Derry, and Mana enter through an automatic door)

Mana: Attention! (Everyone stands up at once)

Jin: At ease. (Everyone sits back down). Thank you all for coming tonight. I know you've all had exhausting work loads as we get ready for Saturnalia. But, as a means of connecting emotionally and getting our community into harmony before the festival, Derry thought this little piece would be quite effective. I'll leave it to him. Derry...

Derry: Thank you, Jin. I see on everyone the signs of toil and struggle. I see in your eyes the weariness and the hope for release. Tomorrow, we will all eat, drink and be merry. You will all wear crowns for a night and have whatever you desire. But for tonight... I want you all to hold close the pain in your limbs. We are the last remnants of humanity. Our course is vast, our itinerary uncertain...our Mission...cosmic, in its significance. Outside the warmth of this ship there is the abyss, deeper than time or light.

Derry: That is why I ask all of you to stare out the windows of the bays and know the void is always several hundred feet of metal away. Each task handed down to you bears the highest charge of meaning and significance. You may be frightened or weary, but there is never time for weakness. There is no time for sloth, or selfishness, or discontent of the spirit. Our community is the body of the human race. Each limb, each organ, each function...you each are part of the greatest whole.

Derry: For tonight, I picked a play from the archives I believed shows the importance of harmony with the community....and the danger, of thinking one knows what's best. The danger of setting oneself aside from the body larger. 'Grand Old Supergiant', is a rather light-hearted musing on this theme. The lieutenant of a ship becomes so pleased with himself, he begins to imagine himself a red supergiant, the greatest of stars. His 'gravity' is so immense, he sits perfectly still on the bridge of the ship and refuses to move, refuses to help in any way. What becomes of this ingrate, well...we'll have to wait and see. For this performance, we're fortunate enough to be joined by one of our friends from the rear of the ship. Cus the Custodian, our

humble caretaker, always helpful in the cleaning of the ship, eager now to join us in this expression of communal spirit (footsteps as Cus enters the bridge of the ship, wearing a comical costume. The C levels snicker under their breath)

Cus: (Nervously) Um...hello everyone, always good to be part of the fun. I hope I do this part well....let me know if I'm not doing right and I'll do better.

Hun: (sarcastically) Looking great there, Cus.

Flo: Mo, did you make that costume?

Mo: I did.

Flo: You really outdid yourself.

Mech: (laughing, under his breath to Nut) How much do you think that thing weighs?

Nut: I know right! He certainly looks the part.

Derry: If everyone has their scripts ready, we can begin. (a rustling of papers. Derry clears his throat) Cus, we will go straight to your big scene, so you can be relieved of that costume as soon as possible.

Cus: Right, thank you very much sir.

Derry: Page 58, line 7. The heavenly chorus. Bree, if you will.

Bree: (clears her throat) 'The work of planets in their orbits, shooting roundward for their star'

Flo: 'The humble tides of gravity, pulls us near and far'

Mo: 'Each of us has a station, each of us knows his place'

Hun: 'To plot one's own course, defies the heavens' race'

Derry: Very lyrical, yes. Good. The music of the spheres in their orbits. Now we switch to prosaic language.

Cus: 'In my storied career, I have seen everything from Sagittarius A to the Perseus Arm. A thousand ships guided safely by my powers of wit and invention. So as a matter of fact, I don't think I need to heed that summons from command.'

Mech: 'Sir, that was a direct order to stay clear of the gravity well. We're endangering the lives of thousands by entering it.'

Cus: 'Has command seen the glittering of the Corona Borealis Great Wall? Or the ghostly whites of neutrinos from a dying star? This is the fastest path to our destination. I will guide us safely. This gravity is nothing to me. I am far, far greater than it.'

Mo: (stifles laughter, struggling to read her lines) 'Sir! We just got a mayday call from the lower levels! The gravity is too intense, the life support systems are breaking apart! We need to turn back!' ' (breaks out in quiet laughter at the line, trying to summon theatrical distress)

Derry: These lines require true terror, Mo. You are trapped in a tunnel collapsing all around you. This plea may be your character's last living speech.

Cus: 'We need to cross through! We can make it. I can make it... Yes, I can barely see the end of my greatness. It would take light years to travel across its expanse. I am growing so great before it...'

Derry: This is no metaphor, Cus. The character is actually growing into a supergiant. It is too late for your character to stop the expansion of his ego. He is powerless before it now.

Cus. 'I fuse rare elements within my supernova folds. I anchor constellations in the sky. I am...truly...at the center of everything.' (All the C levels stand up from their chairs. They begin pushing and rearranging chairs)

Derry: Bring in the prop table. That's right, directly in the center of the dais. Cus, please lay atop it. This should go rather smoothly.

Hun: 'Even great supergiants must eventually die...their gravity becomes so great, only a black hole can remain.'

Mech: 'Sir, what are you doing?'

Mo: 'The gravity readings are too high! The ship is breaking apart!'

Bree: Now for the best part!

Mo: Everyone gather round. (Sarcastically) Are you comfortable, Cus? I mean, 'Grand Old Supergiant' ...

Cus: (Nervously) Of course....ready to get to the good part.

Mo: Put your hands on his stomach and shoulders, and push....(all the C levels push down onto Cus. Cus begins grunting and wincing in pain. The wooden table creaks). Why isn't it breaking? Everyone push harder....(Cus's groans of pain grow louder) It's starting to crack....

Hun: On his legs too...(Cus begins screaming in pain)

Jin: Stop the play. He's had enough.

Mo: We're almost done! It's about to break...

Jin: I said that's enough, you're hurting him.

Hun: C'mon, it's all in the role...

Jin: (Militantly) THAT'S AN ORDER. STOP AT ONCE.

Hun: But...

Mana: (Sternly) You heard him! An order's an order. (the pushing and creaking stop. Cus stops screaming, instead whimpering softly in pain)

Mo: Ruining our fun...

Hun: It was about to get good too....

Derry: Friends, it seems as though the play did its work of stirring the passions. Cus, we thank you for bearing the pain of this role so that our community can bear witness to a moral lesson. You are excused for the day.

Libby: Here, Cus. Come with me...let's get you out of this costume. We'll get you some pain relievers, and something for bruising.

Cus: Thank you...(begins to rise from the table. The table finally breaks with a loud wooden crack, toppling Cus to the ground. The C levels burst out laughing. Libby helps Cus up, and they leave the room)

Derry: A fine conclusion to the evening. The tragic end is brought about by following the dictates of our flawed egos. (sinister) From the convincing performance of our lead actor, I hope you all can imagine the consequences of stepping outside of the community's bounds. Tomorrow will be a day of rest and enjoyment. I have no more lessons to impart. Sleep well, my friends. I am looking forward to a delightful Saturnalia...