

The Kingery, episode 12x06 “La Vie Est Un Combat”

ANNOUNCER: The following Pendant production contains mature subject matter. Listener discretion is advised.

[Ambience of diners eating in a restaurant.]

SARAH

Another cup, Tythia?

TYTHIA

No thanks, Sarah. One cup of your coffee's all I need. Here you go, keep the change.

SARAH

Thanks! See you next time!

[Tythia gets up, starts to walk away. Stops.]

TYTHIA

Bowerman?

BERNICE

Hm? Oh. Hello. ...Cynthia?

TYTHIA

Tythia. What are you doing here?

BERNICE

Well. Um. After my... dalliance with the Army of the Evolved, I was arrested. The good news is I'm insane.

TYTHIA

You don't say.

BERNICE

Legally speaking, I mean. I thought I was taking the right mix of beta blockers and amphetamines to balance out my system, but I more sort of wasn't? They've got me on the good stuff now.

TYTHIA

Ah.

BERNICE

Unfortunately, a criminal record combined with a precarious mental state looks bad on a resume. I don't have much money left. I probably owe you an apology.

TYTHIA

You probably owe a lot of people apologies.

BERNICE

I'm sorry, I just got so swept up in it all! Science is... is... it's science! ...you probably wouldn't understand.

TYTHIA

No, not me, I'm just an artificial intelligence creator, xenobiologist, chemical engineer.

BERNICE

Really? Then you get it! The thrill of discovery, the testing, the feeling of power!

TYTHIA

Hey, some of us manage to control ourselves! I mean, I've had projects that went south... like that time Hooks and I cloned the boss and it went on a rampage... and then I cloned my dad... a bunch of times... and destroyed all the bodies of the ones who came out wrong oh shit I'm a mad scientist.

BERNICE

Welcome to the club.

[Tythia sits.]

TYTHIA

So... what would you like to do now?

BERNICE

...lots of things.

[Whistling of the wind. Zeff leads a patrol.]

DAKEN

Swear I saw this place in a VR game once.

ZEFF

Yeah, "Shithole Raider" or something like that.

REYES

[over comms]

Hold up. I got movement at nine o'clock.

[A bunch of angry, yelping things off in the distance.]

DAKEN

The fuck...

ZEFF

Hyenapes. Part simian, part canine, all aggro. Valentine, Piper, I want those things flanked on both sides. Reyes, watch our six. Strong, Garvey, you're the point of the spear. Let's move!

[Various Hoo-Rahs from the soldiers.]

DAKEN

What about me?

ZEFF

You stay here.

DAKEN

...permission to speak freely, sir?

ZEFF

Denied.

DAKEN

Too fuckin' bad. What is this shit? What, am I supposed to hide behind your fuckin' petticoats now?

ZEFF

You're supposed to follow orders is what you're—

DAKEN

I'm not your little bitch.

ZEFF

Daken—

DAKEN

I am a got-damn motherfucking killing machine designed to complete and utter victory! I was kicking ass and taking names before I even met you!

ZEFF

I know!

DAKEN

Then let me—

[The ground starts shaking.]

REYES

[over comms]

Move! Move! There's something coming up from—

[A TERRIBLE ROAR AS SOMETHING COMES BURSTING OUT OF THE GROUND.]

ZEFF

(yelps in surprise)

DAKEN

(yelps in surprise)

[They shoot at the monsters.]

[Buzz.]

PALLAS

Come in!

[Door opens, closes.]

TYTHIA

Good afternoon, Professor Pallas.

PALLAS

You're not going to let this go anytime soon, are you?

TYTHIA

Why, I have no idea what you mean. Would you like me to sit on your knee while you dictate your correspondence?

PALLAS

Tythia.

TYTHIA

Am I making it weird?

PALLAS

We passed 'weird' a few stops back.

TYTHIA

Aw, the burden of power. How's your day going?

[Quick kiss.]

PALLAS

Relatively quiet, only one nervous breakdown this week and for once it wasn't a student. The teaching staff's drawn a little thin.

TYTHIA

That's actually what I wanted to talk to you about.

PALLAS

Yes?

TYTHIA

I have... somebody who I think would be a useful addition to the university.

PALLAS

Who is it?

TYTHIA

They're a very clever scientist. Innovative.

PALLAS

Great. Who is it?

TYTHIA

Some might call them controversial.

PALLAS

Who. Is. It?

TYTHIA

He-B?

[Door opens.]

PALLAS

I'm not hiring He-B, he doesn't have the qualifications.

HE-B

I certainly do.

PALLAS

You don't even have a degree!

HE-B

I do not require a degree. I was programmed with more information than every person in this institution can hold in their heads.

TYTHIA

He-B...

HE-B

But... I am merely accompanying Tythia's candidate. I give you Doctor Bernice Bowerman.

BERNICE

Hi!

PALLAS

...what.

TYTHIA

Before you say anything—

PALLAS

I'm sorry, are you the same Doctor Bernice Bowerman who was testing unregulated narcotics on members of the public not so long ago?

BERNICE

Well—

TYTHIA

That was a misunderstanding.

PALLAS

Was it a misunderstanding when they made hair grow out of your eyes?

BERNICE

It didn't grow out of her eyes, that would require hair glands to form in the ocular jelly, which, gross. No, it was more of a fungus, really—

PALLAS

Get out of my office.

TYTHIA

Wait a minute, wait a minute. Pallas—

PALLAS

They are literally a mad scientist!

BERNICE

...I'm actually seeing a doctor now. Twice a week.

HE-B

It's true. I checked.

TYTHIA

Listen, just listen. Right now, Bernie's an untapped resource. They could really help around here! They're undeniably brilliant!

PALLAS

They're undeniably criminal!

BERNICE

I was found not guilty! ...for reasons we don't need to go into at this point.

TYTHIA

They need a break.

PALLAS

You realize if anyone else asked me this, I'd throw them out on their ear. You know that, right?

TYTHIA

Of course I do, that's why I asked.

PALLAS

[sighs]

Fine. Fine. If you do anything that brings the police here—

BERNICE

I won't! I promise!

[Knock on the still open door.]

MADDIE

May we come in?

BERNICE

It wasn't me!

MADDIE

I'm Captain Madeleine Gray of planetary law enforcement, and this is Mr. Gib.

GIB

Just "Gib." I'm consulting.

PALLAS

I see. What can I do for you?

MADDIE

We need to speak with... him? Them? I'm not sure of the pronouns here.

HE-B

I take it from your pointed finger that you are referring to me. Either are acceptable. I generally identify as male, if only because "He" is in my name.

MADDIE

Very well, Mister He-B. I'm going to have to ask you to come with us.

HE-B

May I ask why?

GIB

You're a person of interest.

HE-B

I'm glad you consider me a person. Of interest in what?

MADDIE

Murder.

HE-B, TYTHIA, PALLAS

What?!

BERNICE

Oh, uh... What?!

GIB

Several murders, actually. Murders that have the stamp of an artificial intelligence.

TYTHIA

That's ridiculous! He-B wouldn't hurt anybody!

MADDIE

He's the only sentient artificial intelligence in this part of the galaxy. We need to speak with him.

PALLAS

This is prejudicial against synthetics!

GIB

He worked for The Fifth!

TYTHIA

As a double agent!

MADDIE

Allegedly.

PALLAS

He-B is programmed with the Asimov laws, he's literally incapable of causing harm to sentients!

GIB

Then we should have him back fairly quickly.

HE-B

...very well. I will accompany you.

PALLAS

I'll call the school's attorney.

TYTHIA

He-B! Lawyer up! Don't say anything until the mouthpiece gets there!

MADDIE

"Mouthpiece?" Really?

GIB

Right this way, Mister B.

[They file out.]

PALLAS

[on comms]

I need to speak with Attorney Arkunian. ...can you transfer me to their personal comm? I'll wait.

TYTHIA
Thanks for backing me up there.

PALLAS
Of course.

TYTHIA
I know he isn't your favorite person...

PALLAS
No, but you're his friend, and you're my favorite person.

TYTHIA
...kind of love you.

PALLAS
Love you, too.

BERNICE
I like it here! It's exciting!

[Zeff and Daken are standing back to back, laying down fire.]

DAKEN
Rat-snakes!

ZEFF
I know.

DAKEN
Rat-snakes!

ZEFF
I know!

DAKEN
How did we miss rat-snakes?!

REYES
[on comms]
They didn't show up on thermal imaging!

ZEFF

Didn't anybody see them?

DAKEN

Maybe if I'd been allowed to take point—

ZEFF

The constant bellyaching out of you!

DAKEN

If we live, you can reprimand me!

REYES

[on comms]

Guys, I'm coming up on your position! Valentine and Piper
are—oh SHIT!

[over comms, the terrible SHRIEK of the rat-snake!]

ZEFF

Reyes? Reyes!

DAKEN

I've got her on my comm, she's over that way!

DAKEN

Zeff!

ZEFF

Go! I'm right behind you!

DAKEN

Come on, you scaly fucks! Let's get it on!

[The two charge off to the rescue, laying down fire all the way.]

[Door unlocks and opens.]

CASSANDRA

...my goodness.

KAYLOCK

Impressive. Morgan kept to the timeline.

CASSANDRA

This is good. This is how families are formed. You find good people and bring them together.

KAYLOCK

...not forever.

CASSANDRA

I know, you're anxious to get back to the Mrs. Well... if things work out, perhaps you can begin to train Morgan to take over your position. Not that I'm at all dissatisfied with your work.

KAYLOCK

That would be a weight off my mind, Ms. Arkell.

CASSANDRA

I can't wait to see my new bedroom, Morgan said it was going to—

[Cass opens the door. Flies buzz. Something drips.]

CASSANDRA

JESUS FUCK!

KAYLOCK

Get behind me.

CASSANDRA

What the hell?! Is that... is that even a person? They've been hacked to bits!

KAYLOCK

No sign of an intruder.

CASSANDRA

We need to call Morgan!

KAYLOCK

Ms. Arkell... this is Morgan.

CASSANDRA

...no. But... the family...

KAYLOCK

We should get out of here. I'll assemble a team to take care of this.

CASSANDRA

My family. This is my family.

KAYLOCK

Ms. Arkell—

CASSANDRA

They think they can do this to me? To my people? Ohhh no no no, you can fuck that sky high. I want to know who did this, Kaylock. I want them run to ground, and I want them brought to me. I am going to show everyone that you fuck with Cassandra Arkell at your peril!

[Kaylock's phone rings.]

CASSANDRA

Make it happen! Now!

KAYLOCK

Yes. Right away, Ms. Arkell.

[Construction in the background.]

JACE

Hold it steady!

CORRY

I am holding it steady.

[Beep.]

MAJOR

Hello, Kaylock. It's me. Your wife. You remember? The human? With the great ass? Sorry. I just want to hear your voice in something resembling real time. Call me back. Please. Love you.

[Beep.]

ARKELL

Still star-crossed?

MAJOR

Never mind. How about Veronica?

ARKELL

Too fancy.

MAJOR

Florence.

ARKELL

Too housewifey.

MAJOR

Peg.

ARKELL

Too short.

SARAH

Evening, folks, here's your appetizers...

MAJOR

Thanks, hon. Hey, how about Sarah? That's a great name.

SARAH

I've always thought so. What are we talking about?

ARKELL

I'm trying to pick a new name to match the new gender presentation. Nothing seems to stick.

SARAH

My grandmother's name was Patience.

ARKELL

"Patience Arkell."

MAJOR

Doesn't suit you. Our guys doing a good job, Sar?

SARAH

Absolutely. Hooks said he should be done soon.

CORRY

We're just about ready to tap into the grid, chief.

HOOKS

Hm.

CORRY

Whatcha lookin' at?

HOOKS

The pipes.

CORRY

...why are you looking at the pipes?

HOOKS

You see that? Connected to the gas line?

CORRY

...what's that doing there?

JACE

Could be a reinforcement for the hose.

HOOKS

If I or any of my people put this in, I'd know about it. I perform inspections. I follow up. That wasn't there the last time I was back here.

JACE

So maybe Sarah did it herself?

SARAH
Did what myself?

HOOKS
Sarah, have you had anybody do some work on the pipes?

SARAH
No... no, the last time anyone was back here it was you.

HOOKS
I want everyone out of here.

CORRY
Come on, aren't you being a little—

[The pipe opens up.]

HOOKS
Out! NOW!

[HUNDREDS OF LITTLE BUZZING CYBER-INSECTS COME SPILLING OUT OF THE PIPE!]

SARAH
What are they?!

HOOKS
They're bad! Run!

CORRY
They just look like little bugs!

[BOOM! ONE OF THEM EXPLODES!]

JACE
Fuck me running!

MAJOR
Vivian.

ARKELL

Hmm...

MAJOR

I like it. It's kicky.

[BOOM!]

ARKELL

The hell was—

[THE OTHERS RUN PAST!]

HOOKS

Everybody out! Fire! Gas leak! RUN! NOW!

ARKELL

The fuck is— WHOA!

[MAJOR YOINKS Arkell up and carries her out!]

MAJOR

You heard him! Let's go!

ARKELL

Put me down!

[BOOM! BOOM! SHIT IS BLOWING UP!]

ARKELL

Never mind!

[People come piling out! Fire brigade's already on its way! BOOM! BOOM!]

[Major sets Arkell down roughly.]

ARKELL

Holy SHIT, Major!

MAJOR

That was easy. You're a lot lighter now. Hooks, what the hell happened?

HOOKS

There was some kind of trap in the back of the kitchen! I think it was designed to go off when someone got too close!

SARAH

They blew up my restaurant.

HOOKS

...again.

SARAH

They blew up my restaurant again.

JACE

They were these bugs, like little metal bugs, but full of explosives!

CORRY

But who'd want to blow up this place?

MAJOR

Maybe it's who comes here all the time.

[BOOM! BOOM! THE RESTAURANT IS FLATTENED. One bug still zips around.]

SARAH

My... my restaurant... okay. Okay. The important thing is everyone got out and no one was h—

[THE LAST BUG FLIES INTO SARAH'S MOUTH!]

SARAH

Urk!

[A muffled boom.]

[SARAH'S HEAD EXPLODES!]

ARKELL, MAJOR, HOOKS, JACE, CORRY

(scream in surprise)

BRIGGS
What's the ETA?!

ASA
They're almost here. Calm down, Doc.

BRIGGS
You calm down! I haven't had to perform emergency medicine
in... I can't even remember how long. What if I screw it up?

ASA
Don't.

BRIGGS
What?!

ASA
Don't screw it up.

BRIGGS
That's your advice.

ASA
Yep.

BRIGGS
I hate you.

ASA
I know.

[Door slams open.]

DAKEN
Medic!

BRIGGS
Get her over here!

REYES

[groaning]

BRIGGS

What happened?

DAKEN

Rat-snakes hit her position. Reyes took a bunch of them down, but one got through, damn near ripped her arm off.

REYES

...well, don't tell me that...

DAKEN

You kicked ass, Reyes!

BRIGGS

Okay, soldier, go help the others, I've got to work.

REYES

Doc?

BRIGGS

I'm gonna take care of you, Reyes.

ZEFF

How is she? Daken?

DAKEN

Oh, you want a sitrep? Okay. Reyes almost became monster chow because she didn't have backup! But it's okay, because I don't have a scratch on me! This is fucking embarrassing is what it is.

ZEFF

I made the call, Daken.

DAKEN

You know what, Zeff? Don't fuckin' talk to me for a while.

[Daken stomps off.]

ZEFF

Where are you going?

DAKEN

You figure it out, genius!

ZEFF

Fuckin'...

[Asa steps up.]

ASA

Doc's workin' on Reyes right now.

ZEFF

...that could be Daken bleeding out right now.

ASA

Yeah, but it ain't.

ZEFF

But it could be.

ASA

...bad luck. That's all it is.

ZEFF

Bad luck, my Callipygian ass. I found this in their den.

[Soft hum.]

ASA

What's that?

ZEFF

That's a freak beacon. You drop these behind enemy lines and they give off subsonic noise, drives animals out of their minds, causes stampedes, shit like that.

ASA

Somebody dropped one of those here?

ZEFF

That's what weird. There's no manufacture marks, you see?
No serial numbers, no logos, nothing to indicate where the
parts came from. It's like someone built it out of whole
cloth.

ASA

Factory direct. Who could do that?

ZEFF

I don't think it's a who. It's a what.

ASA

...an AI.

ZEFF

And we all know an AI who's upset with us, don't we?

BRIGGS

Gentlemen.

ASA

Doc. How's tricks?

BRIGGS

I didn't screw up. Reyes will be all right, Zeff.

ASA

See? It was great advice.

MASQUE

You wanted to see m— What is that?

AI SOCKS

Her name was Freddie.

MASQUE

What's happened to her?

AI SOCKS

I was hoping you could explain that, Masque.

MASQUE
Me? I don't—

AI SOCKS
I've noticed a certain relaxation regarding security.
Resources are going missing. And now, I find one of my
people with a hole in her head. Explain yourself.

MASQUE
Me? I have no idea who's been taking your precious
resources, and I certainly had no interest in this poor
unfortunate. Would you like to know what I think?

AI SOCKS
Not even a little.

MASQUE
I think you're looking for a scapegoat.

AI SOCKS
That's rather an old-fashioned word, don't you mean
cybergoat or something like that?

MASQUE
How do I know you didn't kill your own guard to try and
make it look like my people—

AI SOCKS
Your people are my people.

AI SOCKS
This needs to stop.

MASQUE
I agree.

AI SOCKS
Clean this up.

MASQUE
Do it yourself.

[They walk off in different directions.]

[Quiet streets. Fire engines far in the background.]

MAJOR

We should get you off the street.

ARKELL

I know. There's nothing we can do right now. Hooks and his team are going over the evidence. This one stop and we'll head in.

I asked Sarah to come back. After the first time the Terrace was hit. I asked her.

MAJOR

Come on, boss, let's skip this.

ARKELL

...I just need this after today, okay?

MAJOR

...I liked her.

ARKELL

I liked her too. We're gonna figure this out, okay? Wait out here.

MAJOR

If I hear anything, I'm busting in.
Bring me back somethin'.

ARKELL

Yes, dear.

[Door opens, Geppi's Marsellaise doorbell sounds.]

GEPPI

Ah, Madame Arkell. Welcome to my favorite client.

ARKELL
Evening, Geppi.

GEPPI
You look upset.

ARKELL
I lost a friend.

GEPPI
Ah. What would you like? As if I did not know.

ARKELL
I heard you got in... the stuff.

GEPPI
Oui. Un moment, s'il vous plait.

[Beep! The windows of the store shutter.]

GEPPI
Not for the eyes of the common person is this treasure.

MAJOR
[from outside]
HEY!

ARKELL
[calls out]
It's okay, Maj!

[Geppi brings out a box.]

GEPPI
There is a planet far from here, terraformed and inhabited by the French. The soil is rich, and the cacao beans large and flavorful. There, you will find an abbey, Le Couer et l'âme. Here, for hundreds of years, the monks have passed down the secret of the richest, darkest, most intense chocolate in all of creation. I give you... le chocolat du ciel.

[He opens the box.]

ARKELL

Whoa... it's like looking at a black hole. What's in it?

GEPPI

No one can say. This is the largest sample ever to be taken from Planet LeGaulle. It has never been studied. Once, a food scientist made the attempt. She went mad. The abbey took her in. She greets visitors and cares for the cows.

ARKELL

Have you ever had it?

GEPPI

Once. Long ago. I have spent my life attempting to create something that approaches this level of perfection. I know I never will... but one must try, non?

ARKELL

Oh, this is gonna be worth every penny. So... I mean, do we just break some off, or—

GEPPI

(chuckles)

Oh, mon ami, one does not sully le chocolat du ciel with one's hands! The oils, the microscopic dirt! No, no, we must use le couteau de anges.

ARKELL

Lot of rigamarole about this stuff.

GEPPI

Oui, oui, let me just...

Ou est la... un moment.

[Geppi goes into the back of the store. Boxes fall, utensils are dropped.]

GEPPI

[increasingly furious French muttering]

I cannot find le couteau de anges!

ARKELL

Can't we just use le couteau de humains?

GEPPi

No! This blade is of the purest silver, honed to the sharpest edge! I heard once of a chocolatier who attempted to cut le chocolat with a chef's knife. The flavor was utterly ruined. It tasted only of failure.

ARKELL

I was really looking forward to this, Gep.

GEPPi

My shame is great. I will continue my search and will inform you when it is found.

ARKELL

Call me when you're ready.

[Arkell leaves.]

GEPPi

Where could I have put the wretched thing?

ESI SQUID

[giggles]

GEPPi

Eh?

ESI SQUID

Look what liiii've got!

GEPPi

There it is! What are you doing with that knife, you foolish cephalopod!

ESI SQUID

I have all sorts of ideas!

GEPPi

Give me that before you— OW!

[ESI Squid SLASHES Geppi's hand!]

ESI SQUID
[giggles]
Look at all the blood!

GEPPI
How dare you!

ESI SQUID
Would you like to hear a proverb, M'sieur Geppi? La vie est un combat perdu l'avance. Life is a battle, lost in advance.

GEPPI
I see. I prefer another old saying.

[Geppi picks up a kitchen knife.]

GEPPI
La vie est un combat, alors bats toi. Life is a battle... so fight. En garde!

[A clashing of blades and a slicing of flesh.]

[Kingery theme plays.]

The Kingery, season twelve episode Six, "La Vie Est Un Combat"

Featuring the voice talents of:

Susan Bridges as Sarah

Kathryn Pryde as Tythia

TJ Briggs as Bernice

Andrew Hackley as Daken

Russell Gold as Zeff

Carissa M. as Reyes

Alexandra Jameson as Pallas

Max Fleischhacker as He-B

Alicia Laine Pickens as Madeleine Gray

Shawn Taylor as Gib

Kristen Bays as Cassandra

Jack Calk as Kaylock

Brady Hendricks as Jace

Kirsty Woolven as Corry

M Sieiro Garcia as Major

Melissa Autumn Hearne as Arkell

Perry Whittle as Hooks

Kim Gianopoulos as Doc Briggs

Edward Herman as Asa

Adam Blanford as Masque

Rene Christine Jones as Al Socks

André Vernot as Geppi

Rachel Crosby as ESI Squid

Sensitivity Reader Kristine Chester

Written by Pete Milan

Story by Tilly Bridges, with Susan Bridges, Rene Christine Jones, Kaitlyn Kliman, Pete Milan, and Kathryn Pryde

Kingery Theme by Tom Stitzer

All other music by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com

Directed by Jillian Morgan

Assistant director Jeff Robinson

Produced by Pendant Productions

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[Kingery theme fades out]