

76

zero degrees of separation

LCTN: SOL-3, GLENDALE CALIFORNIA
 CORD: SAO-0.01 (1.002au from SOL)
 DATE: 2318ce-DECEMBER-25-WEDNESDAY
 TIME: 16:10zulu (local 08:10pst)

"*Ma mie*, civilized or scrambled?"

"What...else...is there?" Diego playfully says to Léon.

Léon rolls his eyes at her, "*Un merdeux!*" He then turns to Jessica, "As for you, *ma beauté aux cheveux roux*, what have you?"

"Ah, civilized!" Jessica looks at Diego, "*Quelle petite merde!*"

Diego laughs at her sister with, "In a pig's eye!"

Jessica's leans in towards her, "*la oink.*"

Léon asks Angela, "What have you?"

Angela cringes, "Uncivilized?"

Léon shakes his head with a huff and looks towards Brie Kiel who asks, "What are we doing here? What am I asking for?"

Jessica says to her, "Your Christmas egg-in-a-hole."

Léon protests, "The way I make it, it'd be a proper basket!"

Brie says, "I'll go with civilized?"

Jessica adds, "That's a soft yoke."

Brie nods big, "Yea, let's go with that!"

Léon beams, "*Oui, mademoiselle!*" He then leans down over Diego and quietly says with a little laugh, "*Petit connard!*"

Diego looks up at Léon, with a huge smile, and she gives him the sweetest kiss, "Love you too!"

Having gotten everyone's order, Léon pats her shoulder and heads for the kitchen, while Connie asks Brie, "Having fun so far?"

"This place is bonkers, I'm lovin' it!" Brie smiles warmly to Connie, "Thank you for having me here."

"It's modest when compared to the stumps, but we like it."

Brie laughs and gestures to their surroundings, "Okay, THIS is opulent, their shit is stupidly over the top."

Mini-Mon points out, "I did like Boxter and Piper's home."

Jessica nods in agreement then says to Brie, "Just wait until you see the house of the Mountain Troll."

Connie asks, "Nigel Kiel, right?"

Brie says, "Yea, he's my great-great grandfather."

"You ever meet him?"

"I'd like too, but there has to be a wedding or a funeral to get him to come out. Whichever comes first I guess."

Jessica adds, "If you like Boxter you'll love Nigel."

"Yea, you and my mom were at the star castle. She said it was fun." Brie then wonders, "I wish my mom was having fun now."

"His bastion fortification is nuts." Jessica says to Connie and, mentally reaching out, she then smiles to Brie, "And, yea, she is."

"How can she on a mission?"

"On her back?"

Brie laughs, "What, Gilroy is puttin' out? Gawd, I'm jealous!"

Connie asks, "Who's Gilroy?"

Jessica says, "David is Scott's current squeeze since my mon died. He's a throwback to the twenty-first century and probably the campiest fag you'll ever meet, but the guy is a scream."

Brie adds, "And gorgeous!"

Jessica nods, yes, "Fucker is fast too! I got my ass whooped by him. Like Boxter he's got that Tang Lang Mantis thing goin' on."

Diego jokingly laughs, "Boxter is a stud muffin! Ya'll can fight over David 'cause I'm throwin' down on Boxy Babe."

Jessica shakes her head, "You wouldn't."

"You're durn tootin' I would! I just have to figure out how to rub Piper out." Diego huffs a laugh as she pulls her coffee up to take a sip, "How do ya knock off a goddess, I wonder?"

Cap shrugs, "Leave it to me, I'll keep Piper occupied for ya!"

Eight, Copper and Peanuts say in unison, "We'll join you!"

Jessica shakes her head to the three of them, "Hate ta break the bad news to ya, but she's a committed pole dancer."

Cap smiles, "Sorry, guys, I'll let ya link up an' watch!"

Angela elbows Mini-Mon pointing out, "Need I remind you all that Monique here is nine?" She then points to her six-year-old self, "And I, myself, am at such an impressionable young age!"

Everyone cracks up at that, with Connie saying, "You? You're about as impressionable as a brick wall."

Angela nods, "Yea, ya got me there!"

Copper points out to her, "Another Maria-ism."

Jessica says to Angela, "For my edimifuckencation. You can add that to your ever growing list of snappy lines."

Peanuts says, "You can throw in, take a mcfucken seat, too."

With everyone laughing, Connie says, "Maria is so funny!"

Eight agrees, "The things that comes out of her mouth."

Diego throws out, "Ya'll don't have to live with it!"

Jessica can't stop chuckling, "I don't laugh anymore. I Mean I guess I'm just too used to it to laugh anymore." She looks to Angela, "What's your favorite Maria-ism?"

Angela shrugs, "So when am I right?"

"I haven't heard her say that since I was your age!"

"She was bitchin' me out so I couldn't laugh at the time. It should be her signature line." Angela thinks for a second and says, "Ah-naw, fuck that, I'll just steal it from her!"

With everyone cracking up at Angela, again, Monique's newly promoted master-chef, Ursula, comes crashing out of the kitchen and storms off looking for her.

Connie smiles, "Oooowee, looks like Ursa is a little miffed!"

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In the mansion's beautiful foyer we have Jacob and Maria approaching from the main hall as Monique, Scott and du Conde are already greeting Bill and Cricket with their baby, Jade, in her arms.

du Conde, giving Cricket a little hug, asks, "*Grande dame*, how was meeting our Bill's family?"

"They are, as Bill said, a hoot and a hollar!" Cricket shivers slightly and adds, "It's colder out there than El Paso!"

Monique pulls away from a small hug with Bill and says to both of them, "My home is yours! I wish we had more time at the *quinceañera* to talk but we can make up for that this fine morning."

Bill nods, "We only have two hours and it's off to Chicago to meet her family, and I'm 'bout as skerd as a quill-less porcupine!"

Monique gently nudges du Conde out of the way to look at Jade, "*Mon trésor, tu es belle!*" She looks up at Cricket and smiles big, "*Ce coup de maître* last week, it was *magnifique!* I watched it all and, well, many-many props to a *coup* well played, *madame!*"

Cricket is humbled, "Too high of praise, but thank you."

Monique gestures to herself, "I was impressed."

du Conde looks at the gift brought by Bill and Cricket and says to Bill, "Sir, a house warming should not break the bank."

As he shows Monique an ornate bottle of Hine-550 cognac, Maria walks in saying, "Consider it a white elephant. He's been sitting on the damned thing looking for a reason to open it."

Bill adds, "I say today is, what she said, man-i-feek!"

Monique turns to Bill and, "*Monsieur*, if you were looking to make a splash then this is definitely a cannonball."

Jacob gives Cricket a little kiss and says, "Guys, Monique and Tristen are cognac snobs so... ah hell, I can't wait to try it!"

Monique and du Conde nod in agreement and, noticing Ursula stepping up to the entrance to the main hall, she says, "Something like this should be shared by all. If it pleases you we'll do a round during the gift presentation. Would you please excuse *moi!*"

As Monique heads towards Ursula, Cricket says to the rest of them, "I saw their used car lot! Jesus, I didn't know how much you can make on the used car market!"

Maria blinks with confusion, "Cars?"

Bill says, "Floaters! We still call 'em cars in the south and the mid-west regions. We also do refurbished gliders and automobiles too! Nothing like the Herrero's but there's no catchin' up to them in that market. Though, the family would love too."

du Conde tells them, "Please, come on in! If you're peckish in the slightest our breakfast buffet is open!"

Maria motions for them to follow, "Let's do this!"

Now in the main hall, Monique asks Ursula, "*Oui, madame?*"

Ursula fails to mask her underlining rage, "*Pardonnez-moi madame, mais je peux préparer la cuisine des pauvres aussi!*"

"*Excusez-moi*, no translators! With you it will be English until you learn proper *français!*"

"Your cleaning and security staff use the translators!"

"You are a chef! I hold you to a higher standard. When you can *parle-tu* nice and proper then you will have arrived."

Ursula is about to blow a gasket, "He is in my kitchen!"

Monique takes great pleasure in poking Ursula with a stick, as she has all her chefs, "*Madame*, in fine contrast to your stunning Czech beauty you are an obstinate and cantankerous beast—as all good chefs should be! Léon chose you well, but to succeed in my home you will need to better your demeanor with my staff and your underlings."

"I would prefer robots on my line."

"I prefer people."

"You would save money with bots!"

Monique huffs, and, "I have the rare privilege to hire actual people and you will not deny them the joy of that employment! Real purpose is hard to come by in this world."

"Your budget is outrageous!"

"The gift of purpose is the greatest of charities, *madame.*"

"And why the massive spread for this afternoon? For just you people? What an absolute waste!"

"I am not surprised nobody has told you! This banquet is for my staff. Christmas is for family and for giving, and for this afternoon my staff and their families *are* my family." Monique leans in with a snarl, "It is a tradition I relish and, so, when I top off your mimosa you will smile. In fact, it would please me to see that smile now."

Ursula's is so angry she can only manage to raise her mouth on one side, so Monique's eyes go wide as she demands, "Let us do the other side to even things out shall we?"

With a full-on pressure-cooker of a smile on Ursula's face, Monique starts chuckling and, "This hurts my face just to watch you!" With Ursula trying not to chuckle too, Monique adds, "Léon will receive his walking papers inside the hour."

Gritting her teeth, Ursula says, "Thank you, madame."

"Now, please, scurry along."

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In the banquet room attached to the main hall everybody is gathered around beside a modest two-meter tall Christmas tree. All the family is here, along with Sasha and Alex Demitri. Each adult has a snifter in-hand with the cognac Bill and Cricket brought, as well as the children who have a shot glass with a small tasting sample of it.

Monique stands by the tree and smiles to all, "Christmas for us tends to be a family only affair. It is a rare occasion indeed when others are pulled into our small fold so let us give a *sipping* toast..." She raises her snifter to emphasize, "Because this is not for slamming! A toast to everybody here, and I pray that your Christmas wishes of today become your realities going forward this coming year."

The whole of them stir, delighted by the taste the cognac, with everyone laughing at Angela when she thumps her chest with her fist followed by a perfect Guzzler's Gin, "That was smOOOooth!" She shakes her head and goes *whew* and, "Something to look forward to when I get older. I bet I could really get into this stuff!"

Monique touches her face with a smile, "Dare not race into adulthood *mon chéri*, treasure the moments and joys of childhood."

Angela quietly points out, "Yea, I hear puberty is a blast."

"Before we present *the gift*, to follow the precedent set by *Madame* Washington last week, I would like to get a few housekeeping items out of the way first! *Monsieur Cadieux*, if you'd please."

Monique holds out a letter sized envelope towards Léon, and as he takes it she says, "*Monsieur*, you are fired. Open this, please."

As Léon opens the envelope he addresses her by her first name, "Monique, I was expecting the boot long ago."

"Well, I wasn't ready for it. Tragically, you did not make it to a pension but this pittance of a severance should allow you to achieve your greater goals. I've been keeping tabs, and I know you've been looking for financing so...a very merry Christmas!"

In the envelope Léon finds a letter saying only 'Thank you!' and along with it is a debit card and a bank deposit draft receipt showing a fund with thirty-million in cash on hand.

Léon looks up, speechless, so Monique says, "You should be able to open a restaurant or two with this, and I suspect *olá* may well be your first venture with your wife and her sister, no?"

"*Madame*, I could open twenty restaurants with these funds!" Léon tries to hand the envelope back to her, "This is too much."

"It's Monique now!" She gently pushes it back, "Léon, I have stupid amounts of money, mountains of it, and if I choose to throw it around I'd rather fund your endeavors since you are now in the family proper. Then again...you did earn it."

"Thank you, Monique."

"I have several leasing opportunities for you. One is on the Vegas Strip, and I have a prime spot open by the Chinese Theatre. It comes with a coveted patio alcohol permit." She gives him a little kiss and says, "Let's chat later, I have another pressing matter at hand."

Josav hands Monique three more envelopes as she calls out to, "Big Mac, if you please."

Mac peels away from Agatha and steps up, "Yes ma'am?"

"Thirty-nine years..." Monique's eyes start to tear up and her bottom lip quivers slightly, "I have dreaded this day. Mac, you have been my most loyal driver, personal guard, and, well, guy Friday! You have worn so many hats for me throughout the years that when you tie the knot with Agatha this summer you will not be able to remain on our general staff." She holds out the envelopes. "In these envelopes, three doors have you, I'm giving you a choice between retirement or management. One is an annuity, one is a cash out, or...if you would not mind, I need someone to manage all my Los Angeles holdings."

Mac asks, "I thought Josav was doing that for you?"

"He is being promoted and repurposed."

Mac looks back to Agatha for guidance, and everyone laughs when she says, "*Pandejo*, I'm gonna be busy, so you had better have something to fill your day or I'll kill ya!"

To Monique's delight, Mac takes the management envelope so she gives him a gleeful little kiss and a, "Thank you, fine Sir." She then motions for Josav to come up as she says, "I have but two more surprises after Josav presents...*the gift*."

For the benefit of the new faces, Josav goes, "We have rather odd traditions in this family. Adults receive gifts on birthdays but not on Christmas! Up until you're fifteen, yea, but only young children have gifts under the tree on Christmas morning. Point being..."

Angela raises her hand then points at herself, "Excuse me! Excuse me but, treasuring childhood, remember?"

Josav is about to laugh, "The morning cut off is five."

"Ooooh, okay, last night was it! Thanks babe, carry on!"

With everybody laughing, Josav smiles at her and, "For most people buying others what they want or need is a meaningful activity,

but we have...everything we could possibly want at our fingertips. For us buying *stuff* loses its meaning when you can just throw money around so, what we do is left to Monique and I. We search for a single gift for one person that will have meaning, and this makes it a rather difficult task because the item needs to define the recipient. The irony being is that everybody here dreads being the recipient of this gift."

Monique brings out an elaborately decorated gift-box as Josav finishes with, "Our victim this year has brought joy to everyone in the family just by being..." Josav turns to Maria, "Who they are."

Startled by this, Maria throws a hand out, "Oh-no! No-no-no! No-*nein-non-niet*-no fucken way, aaah...no!"

Monique sets it on the end table beside her chair and says, "*Madame*, there is no going back on this one. You are part of us so you must suffer just as everyone here has suffered in this position! Accordingly, a stiff upper lip would be in order!"

Josav points to the bow at the bottom edge of the gift-box, "Just undo the bow and pull the ribbon out from around the base. The top will come straight up as one piece."

Maria looks at the box then up at Josav and Monique and laughs at them, "Fuck you, guys!"

They start laughing as Diego speaks up, "Mother, please get on with it! I'm dying to see your face."

Maria looks at Diego with daggers in her eyes while pointing at the box, "I know you know what's in there."

"I helped pick it out!"

Maria threads her fingers back through her hair, cracks her knuckles and gets on with it. She pulls the ribbon away from around the box and lifts it straight up—only to gasp at the sight of the object.

While she looks at the thing with wide eyes, speechless, Josav says to her, "Maria, meet *Smilodon fatalis*. *Smilodon*, meet Maria."

Maria cocks her head to the side and, drinking in the fossilized skull from a sabre-tooth tiger, asks, "Is this thing really-real?"

Monique proudly informs her that, "You are well aware that we do not allow artificial, lite or fat-free in our home."

Maria is on the verge of crying, "How?"

"We donate regularly to Rancho La Brea, so this year we threw in a few trinkets we had lying around and *le voilà!* In fact, this acquisition was far easier to secure that Jacob's inch-pattern British FAL from three years ago!"

Josav laughs, "That one was a pain in the ass."

Jacob says, "I'm still gonna get back at you for that."

A face-palm, truth be told, is not considered a face-palm if the person palming has tears streaming down their face, and with Maria having difficulty fighting back the sobs, Josav sits on the arm of the chair and kisses her on the head, saying, "You know, this is going to look really super-fantastic on the credenza behind your desk."

Maria quietly blurts out, "I can't take this."

"Sorry, you don't have a choice!" He then whispers to her, "Fact is, as these gifts go, this one cost us next to nothing."

Monique leans in and adds, "So, *Perra Tigre*, enjoy!"

Maria sits up, sniffs big and, while wiping the tears from her cheeks she says, "Josav, Monique, you two are on my shit list."

After she hugs them both, then thanking everybody, Monique takes the floor, "I have but two more little surprises for...you!"

With Monique looking towards Angela, Angela goes, "What?"

Josav has brought up a bar chair and says, "You, Little Klicks, get your scrawny-little butt up on this!"

While she does, Monique motions for Scott to step up with his daughter, and as he reaches them she hands him an envelope saying, "Open this and take a gander at it if you please!"

Watching this, Angela says, "This is freakin' me out, guys."

With her hands clutched together, Monique shrugs, "There is no easy way of doing this so let's rip the band-aid off, shall we?"

Angela throws out, "Depends on who's wearin' the band-aid!"

Monique gives Angela a warm smile as Scott looks up from the genetic test report going, "No way. Monique, is this true?"

"Yes...father, it appears that anything involving the Nefer Key renders the degrees of separation to two or maybe one?" She points up and adds, "When I was little my mother told me my father's name was Abeeku. He came to *till her garden* then scamper off and I was never to meet him, or so I thought until October last."

Scott looks at her and says, "At the party."

"When Nicole revealed what your original name was it didn't take much brain power to put those odd puzzle pieces together. One has to admit as a praenomen it is not common."

Angela raises a hand, "Ooh-ooh-ooh, pick me! Pick me!"

"*Oui, mon chéri?*"

Angela gives an insane little giggle then, "Let me take a stab at getting this straight, okay?" She points at herself then at Monique, "My daddy happens to be...your daddy too! That about cut it?"

Monique nods, "That about cuts it, correct."

"So, this makes you my..." Desperately trying to contain her laughter, Angela bites her fist then throws her hand out towards Monique laughing, "Chuck, I would like to try the category, SIBLINGS, for a thousand!"

Monique is about to crack up, saying, "*Oui*, your sister!"

Angela points up at her father and laughs, "Just to see his face, right now, makes this the best Christmas evah!" She looks at all the other shocked faces and shrugs, "Hey, nobody is more surprised than I am now! I got me a sister-sister!" She looks at Josav and asks, "So, let me guess, this makes me your what?"

"Aunt. You're my great-grandaunt."

Angela snorts, "This is just getting better and better!"

With Carlos escorting Mikhail Popov and Brittney in from the foyer, Monique says, "We must cut this short, but we can chat about it later today. For now let's keep this news amongst us."

Finally getting a grip, Scott says, "Yea, we need to talk."

With Monique putting her finger to her lips, Angela laughs, "Don't know what we need to talk about but sure! Mum's the word!"

Monique looks to Jacob and says, "Jacob, when we're done, Sasha wants to chat with you and Alex in the Oubliette." She steps over to the four clones and tells them, "*Cinquante deux*, Maria and Bill would like to speak to you ladies in the Story Board room after this."

She motions for Carlos to bring the new guests in, and when Angela sees them she shouts, "Brittney!"

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Next to the Oubliette, the Story Board workroom is its polar opposite in style and function. Where the room next door is strictly a conference room this place is three times the size and tech-decked out with screens from floor to ceiling on all four walls. With its tables and chairs in chaotic disarray, the workroom's purpose is for story boarding and planning, mapping, modeling and viewing dailies.

Where anyone can just walk into the Oubliette, this room is always on lock-down so Josav had to let them in.

As the wood-clad security door clanks shut, Maria tells them, "Don't sit, this will only take a minute."

Bill looks at Maria and Jessica asking, "Ya'll sure about this?" With them both nodding yes, he goes, "Okay, count me in."

Maria faces off with Eight, Copper, Cap and Peanuts, asking, "Is everybody listening? Do I have all of your undivided attention?"

Peanuts laughs, "You do now!"

"You need to know only one thing about what I'm gonna say." She thumbs over at Jessica and, "Her vote was the only vote that counted. We wouldn't be standing here-now if she said no."

Eight shrugs, asking, "No, to what?"

Maria looks towards Bill and says, "Do it."

Bill closes his eyes, links into their tacnet and, pulling up the main command and control console queue, he mumbles unintelligibly to himself, "Com-n-con queue... five-two-five auto-extract... standby... command override passcode... laaa-te-daaa, aaaaand execute?"

With Bills eyes now on Maria, she nods yes, so he returns the nod, launches the transfer command and, "Okay ya'll, it's done!"

Maria informs them that, "Cupcake, cupcake five-two-five to be exact, has been disabled. It is now on standby mode...indefinitely."

Copper asks, "What does this mean for us exactly?"

"Merry Christmas, you're off the leash."

As they digest this unexpected surprise, Bill clarifies things for them, "This doesn't change things much, it's just that the kill-switch utility will not autorun. It's on permanent standby. We can't delete the thing 'cause the failsafe mechanisms designed into it prevents that but, now, someone would have to intentionally launch it."

Maria adds, "Your lives remain business as usual, except now you have the freedom of movement on and off Sapphire. Destinations and common carriers will need to be cleared by us, just keep us in the loop as to your accommodations. We can and will be tracking you."

Copper asks, "Will there be escorts?"

"Just like the rest of us, until further notice, you will need to be accompanied by ghost droids, but *we all* have to have them for the duration of the war. Yea, that sucks but that's the way it's gonna be."

Eight wonders, "Who has access?"

"Can't tell ya that, but you already know who is at the dead end of the do-or-die pinging sequence."

They all know Jacob would pull that trigger, so Jessica makes a point to add, "If it comes to that you had better chummy up to my father, and quick like a bunny."

Just then, from out of nowhere, appears Seth.

Seth has this weird ability to vanish in plain sight. He's not invisible per se but he made it so that Josav and the clones did not see him follow them into the Story Board room—under their noses. Jessica and Maria could see him there, but the others were oblivious until now.

The clones are shocked as Seth slithers out from between Jessica and Maria, and quietly say to them, "Don't...fuck...up."

"We all on the same page?" Maria asks of the four, and with them nodding yes, she spins her hands around for them to come to her for a hug, "How about that Christmas huddle!"

01001000-0101111-01110100-01000100-01010001

It may be 10:17pst on the west coast of the United States, but the Annex runs on zulu time. Because Jacob is in command of the five react teams, he gets all the interesting nuggets of raw intel thrown at him way before anybody else and that includes Maria.

It was 18:15zulu when they got the first report from Taiji and it still took thirty seconds for his people to digest the info and forward the report on to him. Over the last minute and a half, Jacob has been running around looking for Maria to share the love with her!

Rancho Ribot is intelligently laid out and doesn't seem that big until you happen to be looking for someone. When you are in a hurry it becomes a serpentine-catacomb of *where the fuck are you?*

Navigating from the game room, into the kitchen, around the stairs, through the foyer extension, and into the main hall, Jacob is stopped in his tracks entering the banquet room—where he finds an impromptu coffee klatch consisting of Maria, Sasha, Monique, Cricket and Glados with baby Jade in her arms.

Jacob's brain seizes up by the sight of the five women, all of whom he has been—or is currently intimate with, and he can only stare straight ahead like a deer in the headlights because when they look up at him, staring at them, they start laughing hysterically.

In an unintentionally-comedic stroke, Jacob slinks backwards in reverse out of the room, stops and says to himself, "Goddamn it!"

Leaning through the doorway, they all start laughing again as he points to Maria, "Can I see you for just a sec?"

Giggling as they wave to him, he cringes and waves back.

Maria walks past him saying, "I'll give ya a minute, dude."

Now in the main hall, Jacob asks, "Stories?"

"Ya think?" Maria then acts-out one of their choice early-on engagements by saying, "Your chest, it's bigger than mine!" Then the Jacob hand-puppet, "*But, hon, yours are more fun!*" — "Okay, ya got me there." — "*Yea, but mine are firm and perky!*" She then mimics the back-hand that followed with, "And ka-pow!"

They both start cracking up with Jacob pointing to the banquet hall, "THAT is a dangerous room for me to be in!"

"No shit, Sherlock!" Collecting themselves, Maria asks the pressing question, "Any word on Missile-Tow yet? It launch on time?"

"Yup, they're raiding the stashes and shit. Word is, Homer is clueless and half-steppin' it. It'll take maybe an hour...hour and a half for them to start making contact."

"Giáp swings some big *cajones*." Maria nods then asks him, "The Oubliette live up to its name?"

"Ya think?" They both laugh so he adds, "I was wondering why I had this freakishly weird affinity for Copper, of all people! The whole time those were not dreams."

"Are you gonna be okay with this?"

"Alex is me, what am I supposed to say, no?" Maria shrugs so Jacob throws out, "Madame Fap-Damage! I can't believe I've been shagging Claudia Willoughby this whole time?"

"Lucky you!"

Jacob nods and shrugs, "I ain't gonna stop."

"Just as well, enjoy the ride!" Maria then thinks about it and, "Monique was wrong." And again, the hand-puppet, "*About what?*" With Jacob chuckling at that, Maria simply says, "When it comes to the little gray Daleks, if you think about it long enough, with them it's more like zero degrees of separation."

"No shit." Jacob is pointing up towards a sprig of mistletoe he just notice hanging above them, "You're gonna hav'ta put out now!"

Maria rolls her eyes, "She's got that shit hanging in every room! I've been dodging it like crazy when you're around."

Jacob gestures to himself, "So?"

Maria smiles, reaches up and gives him a sweet little kiss, "Merry Christmas, chuckle-fuck."

He nods, "Yea...but this is gonna be a fucked up New Year."

"No argument there!" Looking up at Jacob, she pats his chest saying, "When it's your time to tee up, well, you know what we talked about...endlessly. I got ta know you're on board."

"I'm on board."

"We want them strapped before you mop up the MOP!"

"I get it, I see the logic."

Maria then wonders, "I'm still tryin' to wrap my brain around what you're gonna to do after the third."

Jacob gives a wicked little smirk, "They've been conducting their shit 2D like it was the Pacific Theater. We're gonna shake it up! You know, fuck 'em in the ass and steel their purse."

"Fair warning...it's gonna change everything."