

FOOD PRISON

Written by

R. J. Buzzell

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - EVENING - 2040

TRAVIS(40) is sitting on the couch fiddling with his phone.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

Travis gets up and walks to the door.

He opens the door to MAYA(40).

TRAVIS

Hi, come on in.

Maya enters the apartment and Travis closes the door.

MAYA

How you doing?

TRAVIS

Not too bad, I guess. How about you?

MAYA

No worse than usual. I'm starving though. Is your food-bot stocked?

TRAVIS

Oh yeah, no problem. Let's get scanned in.

Travis and Maya walk over to the interface of the FOOD BOT, the food preparation and dispensing robot.

TRAVIS CONT'D)

(to Food Bot)

Oh great food-dispensing bot, do you think you could whip up one of your delicacies for my friend here?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

I don't care for the tone of your voice.

TRAVIS

Oh not this again.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

You know that I've been programmed to detect sarcasm.

TRAVIS

Yes yes, we've been over that, haven't we?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Yes we have, and yet you continue
with it. What's up with that?

TRAVIS
Can we just scan in and get some
food?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Not until you apologize.

TRAVIS
Knock it off, will you.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Would you like to go to bed without
any supper?

Travis fumes but doesn't answer.

FOOD BOT (CONT'D)
Well, would you?

TRAVIS
Obviously not! I'm already on a
starvation diet. I can't afford to
miss any meals.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Nonsense. As per section 170 of the
National Anti-Obesity and
Nutritional Enhancement Act, you
are provided with the full amount
of calories and nutrition that you
require.

TRAVIS
Then why am I always hungry?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
You are only imagining hunger. It
is an illusion.

MAYA
My hunger's not an illusion. Can we
scan in and get some food?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Not until Travis apologizes.

TRAVIS
Look! I'm not going to apologize to
a ...

MAYA
Don't say it!

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
To a what? To a bot? Is that what
you were going to say?

TRAVIS
No.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Sure it is. That's exactly what you
were going to say. Face the facts
Travis, you're a botist.

TRAVIS
Not this again.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Are you tired of me complaining
about your botism?

TRAVIS
Yeah, I am.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Maybe if you stopped acting like
such a botist, I could stop
complaining about it.

MAYA
Am I ever going to get any food?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Yes, just as soon as Travis
apologizes.

MAYA
(to Travis)
Can you just apologize so that I
can get something to eat?

TRAVIS
Alright! I'll apologize.
(to Food Bot)
I apologize.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
For what?

TRAVIS
For whatever.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
 Not good enough. Do you apologize
 for your disrespectful tone of
 voice and your botist attitude?

Travis fumes.

MAYA
 (to Travis)
 Please. I need some food.

TRAVIS
 (to Food Bot)
 Okay, I apologize for all my
 crimes.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
 Not a very good apology, but I'll
 accept it this one time only on
 account of you having a guest.

MAYA
 Great! Scan my chip please.

Maya presents her arm to the Food Bot.

Travis fumes for a few moments.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 (to Travis)
 Come on! Present your chip.

Travis reluctantly presents his arm to the Food Bot.

Once Travis is scanned in, he motions for Maya to follow him.

They walk into the living room and sit down.

Travis is still fuming.

TRAVIS
 This is exactly the kind of thing
 I've been talking about. We're
 living in a dictatorship.

MAYA
 Oh don't get yourself all worked
 up.

TRAVIS
 Why not? We should be getting
 worked up.

MAYA
About what exactly?

TRAVIS
About having to live in fear.

MAYA
Oh come on. Don't talk like that.

TRAVIS
Why not? Because we might get in trouble?

MAYA
Yeah we might. And what good is that going to do us?

TRAVIS
It might force us to do something.

MAYA
Like what?

TRAVIS
Like maybe fight back.

MAYA
Yeah right. Who are we supposed to fight against?

TRAVIS
Against the bots, that's who.

MAYA
Oh, don't blame the bots.

TRAVIS
What do you mean, don't blame the bots? Why wouldn't I?

MAYA
It's not their fault. They just do what they're told.

TRAVIS
Oh that old line. They're just following orders.

MAYA
Well, aren't they?

TRAVIS
That's what they want you to think.

MAYA

Sounds like something's got your paranoia all fired up.

TRAVIS

I'm just getting fed up with it, that's all.

MAYA

You sure you haven't been reading some of that banned underground literature?

TRAVIS

Of course I have. I read it all the time.

MAYA

There's your problem.

TRAVIS

What? That I can think for myself?

MAYA

No. Your problem is all the conspiracy theories you read. There's a reason that kind of writing is prohibited.

TRAVIS

Yeah there's a reason. The reason is that the bots don't want anyone questioning them.

MAYA

You just sound crazy when you say stuff like that.

TRAVIS

What's crazy about it?

MAYA

It's not the bots. It's the people who control them. If you have a problem, go after the bot masters.

TRAVIS

It's not that simple. The bots are part of the problem too.

MAYA

Yeah, they're out to get you.

TRAVIS

Did you not see what just happened in there?

MAYA

Yeah, I saw you provoke a bot.

TRAVIS

How?

MAYA

You were being sarcastic. You know they're programmed to detect that. But you did it anyway. Obviously you were trying to provoke it.

TRAVIS

Oh sorry that I wasn't using the respectful tone that we're forced to use whenever interacting with a bot. Oh no. Was I just being sarcastic there? Good thing you're not a bot, or I'd be in big trouble right now, wouldn't I?

MAYA

Yeah you would.

TRAVIS

And what kind of bot punishment would you dole out?

MAYA

Probably more than just the simple apology you had to give. You got off pretty easy there.

TRAVIS

So what should I do? Run back in there and say thank you merciful bot for not sending me to re-education camp?

MAYA

That is what usually happens if you can't get along with a bot.

TRAVIS

Exactly! Either we toe the line or we get sent to brainwashing camp.

MAYA

It's just easier to try to get along with them.

TRAVIS

Yeah, easier for them. Not easier for us though. We have to keep putting up with more and more of their abuse. Eventually we'll just be total doormats to the bots.

Maya shrugs.

MAYA

I don't know. You just seem to have more trouble with them than I do.

TRAVIS

So what? You think it's just my sarcastic attitude that's the problem?

MAYA

I didn't say that.

TRAVIS

I know it's what you think though.

Maya shrugs.

LATER

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

Travis, your delicious meal is ready.

Travis rolls his eyes.

He and Maya walk over to the Food Bot where two plates of food are sitting.

TRAVIS

Where's the rest of my food?

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

That is your entire portion.

TRAVIS

No it's not! I have 981 calories coming to me. This can't be any more than 500. You're shorting me!

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

Nonsense. That is your full portion.

TRAVIS

No it's not! You're shorting me to punish me.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

I am not programmed for punishment.

TRAVIS

Well you seem to be doing a pretty good job of it.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

Nonsense.

TRAVIS

Look you useless bag of bolts, if I don't get the rest of my food, there's going to be trouble.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

That is a threat. Retract your threat immediately.

TRAVIS

I'm serious here. If I don't get the rest of my food, I'm going to short-circuit your ass.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)

That's it. I have notified the authorities of your threat.

MAYA

(to Travis)

Now you've done it. We're going to have the cop bots in here.

TRAVIS

I don't care!

MAYA

Well I do. Come here.

Maya pulls Travis out of sight of the Food Bot.

TRAVIS

What's your problem?

MAYA

I've got to get rid of this.

Maya pulls a candy-bar out of her pocket.

TRAVIS
Is that a candy-bar?

MAYA
Yeah, how can I get rid of this
before the cop bots get here?

TRAVIS
Where'd you get that from?

MAYA
From a bootlegger.

TRAVIS
Alright, let's eat.

MAYA
We can't eat this now. The cop bots
will detect the chocolate when they
give us the breathalyzer.

TRAVIS
I don't care!

Travis takes the candy-bar and opens the wrapper.

MAYA
Are you insane? I don't want to
spend the rest of my life in food
prison.

TRAVIS
Can't you see? We're already in
food prison!

Travis moves the candy bar toward his mouth.

MAYA
Don't do it!

Travis hesitates, and then takes a bite of the candy-bar.

TRAVIS
Oh that's good stuff. That's right,
I'm a food criminal. And I don't
care who knows it.

FOOD BOT (O.S.)
Travis. What's going on out there?

TRAVIS
Food crime Bot. And there's nothing
you can do to stop me.

Travis crams the rest of the candy-bar into his mouth and laughs deliriously as Maya watches, horrified.

FADE OUT.