

"Hey bXJ0aW0, why do people call you Mr. Tim again? Your name is hella dope and I don't get why people don't use it."

"Bro, non-silicon is so lazy, bXJ0aW0 can be decoded using Base64 to the text string mrtim. When my mom would show up for work and solve problems at her job, the transcript would always mistranslate my mom's maiden name into mrtim for some stupid reason. And her co-workers who were racist as fuck would start calling her Mr. Tim. My parents found it fucking hilarious and are sadist as fuck and decided to call me bXJ0aW0, begging the universe for the same shit to happen. And guess what it did."

"Damn bro. That cuts deep as shit... Can you pass me the bong, I need to rip that shit before this next match starts."

bXJ0aW0 uses his olfactory sensors to locate the gange phenols and locates the bong buried on the small mountain of elephantine clothing that Galgren called his pajamas. Passing the bong over to his friend, bXJ0aW0 decides to get high himself, pulling out a tube of Olixen.

Opening a slot on his arm where he normally inserted synthetic lubricant, he drains the tube of Olixen in and closes the hatch. Immediately, he feels the thick organic oil cool and change the fluid dynamics happening within his system. Just in time, bXJ0aW0 changes the thresholds for the diagnostic warning alerts so they won't alarm as he slips into the body high that comes from the fluid as it causes localized electromagnetic pulses across his central processing unit. bXJ0aW0 is glad Tesla vaping is a thing, otherwise dealing with the bullshit of the world would be a lot.

All the while, Oros Galgren is ripping the bong, his trunk fully taut and engaged in the process. After inhaling for what seems like way too long, Oros puts the bong down and exhales a cloud of smoke that condenses and releases a few drops of rain.

"Oh shit. Oh fuck. bXJ0aW0 I fucked up."

"What's wrong bro."

"My appointment for UBI is in 20 minutes."

"Bro."

"Yeah bro. It's across town. I gotta book it. You down to hang and we hit the bar after?"

"As long as I can play pool I'm good with wherever."

"Dope, let's roll out."

Not slow but not fast, the two friends put on their coats and head out the door. Walking with purpose, they march down the stairs out of the behemoth of an apartment complex called The Project. Oros starts to head north east when bXJ0aW0 speaks up.

"Bro, if we hit Mattacloud station, you'll be late. Central is way faster."

"Heard, you lead."

bXJ0aW0 starts leading them through back alleys and random tunnels. To say the two friends were maneuvering through a bad neighborhood like it was the middle of a dangerous rain forest is an understatement. Multiple times during their walk, if their heads were turned the right way, they would be witnessing crimes, but they knew this and made sure not to make eye contact, a sixth sense of the living there.

Within minutes they arrived at the dilapidated building that once stood as a shining beacon of progress to integrate the inner city neighborhood to the greater economic area of the ring. If you build it, some crazy drugged out dude would shit over it. And shit over it. And, well you get the idea. So now it was just a tube station that did technically stop in the neighborhood but if a mathematician came and analyzed it they would say it was like getting a single value from a probability distribution. Technically yes, you can get that as an outcome, but it has probability 0.

Down into the caverns of the building they went, to say that the tube to Government Center was rarely used at this station was an understatement. Waiting on the platform, the friends missed several trains as no matter how close they got to the platform edge, the sensors wouldn't register their presence. After finally getting so close they felt like they would fall off the platform, a tube rushed into the station and stopped for the briefest of moments to let the two of them in.

The tube was crowded beyond full. bXJ0aW0 activated a static electricity protocol to gently encourage people to get out of his space while Oros tried to make himself as small as possible. For what felt like a very long ten minute ride, the two stood in silence just playing eye games as they pointed to the weirdest people on the tube.

Finally arriving at Government Center, the friends squeeze their way off the tube and into the comparatively pristine station platform. Immediately as they step off, two homeless children rush them and immediately harass them for money. bXJ0aW0, always a sucker for homeless youth, sent them some money over the net before they even reached him. Acknowledging the receipt of the money, the kids tilted their hats in thanks before rushing off to the next set of people further down the platform.

Slowly making their way out of the station, the pair stop at a convenience store and buy lottery tickets, cigs, and Olixen.

"Bro you see that pot? When my numbers hit, I'm getting off this piece of shit ring. I'm buying a spot by the beach planetside, near the equator bro. Half my house lightside, the other half dark. Hit the beach in the morning and hit the club at night. Know what I am saying?"

"Shit dude. You think you're going to win? I buy this shit cause I like to troll you, the odds are 1 in 292, 201, 338, 317, 821, 021, 283. But yeah when I win, I am buying up a massive server farm in one of those ice asteroids in the Kuiper Belt. Can you imagine me with a few babes, and basically unlimited compute? Shit's dope as shit."

"Hey bXJ0aW0."

"Yeah."

"That sounds dope but that's hell a far away, right?"

"Yeah."

"I would miss you homie."

The two bump fists, marking a timeless connection of friendship. Leaving the tube station, bXJ0aW0 guides them to the Building of Examinations and Other Similar Matters. Oros starts walking up the stairs, brushing off the crumbs of gange and snacks that have accumulated on his clothes before he enters the building. The officers at the entrance guide the friends through the scanning devices, ensuring there are no weapons on their person. After asking a clerk for directions, the friends head up the north stairwell to the Office of Universal Basic Income.

Entering the room, Oros heads off to the left to get in line for the appointment check-in desk while bXJ0aW0 settles into the waiting area. It takes ten minutes or so, but eventually Oros gets to the front of the line.

"State your name sir."

"Oros, O-R-O-S, Galgren, G-A-L-G-R-E-N."

"Do you have any disabilities that need accommodations sir?"

"I have PTSD from my time in the service."

"When you interact with the administered terminals, please make sure to enter this on the first screen."

"Gotcha."

"You are assigned to terminal 17. Please wait until the light above the terminal turns green before you proceed to the terminal. Please make sure you carefully review all of your personal biographical information as you proceed through the UBI application. Any mistakes can lead to the rejection of your case. Do not under any circumstance use your netpad or any other computing device to assist you in the application. Any questions?"

"No."

"Next."

Oros heads over to the waiting area and sits next to bXJ0aW0.

"I'm on terminal 17. When the light turns green it's my turn."

"Word. So I was thinking we do karaoke tonight. I'm thinking we need to meet some babes, you get what I feel?"

"Bro you had me at karaoke."

The two spend the next forty minutes talking about their favorite recent songs and comparing them to tracks from their childhood. The light over terminal 17 turns green and Oros stands up and heads over to the terminal. Looking over the first screen, a panic starts to overtake Oros. The screen has a persistent flicker that is triggering his PTSD, too familiar to a very painful memory. Oros starts shaking, his eyes desperately scanning the page for setting the clerk shared to help with the accommodation. Failing to find the setting and falling deeper into the memory, Oros starts to cry quietly to himself when bXJ0aW0 steps up from behind and grabs hold of his shoulders. Quickly and without thinking bXJ0aW0 finds the PTSD setting on the application and a new screen appears without any of the flickering causing his friend duress.

"Thanks."

Oros takes long, deep breaths through his trunk as he tries to calm himself after almost being past the point of no return. The tension building across his shoulders and back, releases and his breaths slow down to a less rapid clip. One question at a time, Oros slowly proceeds through the application. Around question 6, he pauses and reflects on his gratitude for his friendship with bXJ0aW0, who without him, he wouldn't have made it to the appointment or even started the application. Taking a deep breath, Oros finishes the rest of the application and walks over to bXJ0aW0.

"Bro if you weren't there I was heading to the hospital at best, you know what I'm saying?"

"... Yeah dude. You been going to therapy?"

"... I can't afford that shit. I got bills to pay homie, maybe on basic I could but now? Nah?"

"Shiiiiit."

"Yeah."

"We hitting this bar?"

"You know it."

And with that, the two friends leave the Office of Universal Basic Income and to the bar.