

STARBASE 13

"The Trouble With Truffles"

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September 23, 1999

EXT. SHEL FENSKY'S FRONT LAWN - PRESENT DAY

OLD SHEL FENSKY, (61), has young BILLY (8) by the arm. Billy's bike is on its side in the background.

OLD SHEL  
What the hell do you think you're doing?

BILLY  
Let go, Mr. Fensky. I'm sorry.

OLD SHEL  
You think it's funny to ride your bike across a man's freshly sodded lawn? That's funny to you?

BILLY  
No.

OLD SHEL  
Look at this! Look! Tire tracks everywhere. I'm gonna call your dad! He's gonna pay for this.

BILLY  
You're hurting my arm.

OLD SHEL  
Ehhhh. Get outta here.

He lets go of Billy who picks up his bike and rides away sobbing. Shel begins to repair his lawn.

OLD SHEL (cont'd)  
These kids today, they got no respect. None. It's disappointing to me as a humanitarian. Cuz that's the thing I tried to do with Starbase 13. Teach people respect for each other.

DOCUMENTARIAN  
(off-camera) So you feel that the show had an impact on society?

OLD SHEL  
I didn't set out to make a TV show, I set out to change the world. And I did. Are you saying I didn't have an impact?

DOCUMENTARIAN  
No, I'm not saying...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD SHEL

It wasn't easy, I'm not gonna lie. But nothing worth doing is.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Tell me about it.

Shel sits on his lawn chair and reaches for his highball.

OLD SHEL

It was 1964. The pilot had been picked up and we were set to begin production. I hosted a little pre-party up here at the house...

FADE TO:

INT. SHEL'S HOUSE - A NIGHT IN 1964

A crowd is gathered around a TV in Shel's living room. They are watching the pilot of Starbase 13.

Push into the TV. Bright colors and fakey sets ala Star Trek are evident. Two aliens with their shirts off are being lectured in the Starbase compound by CAPTAIN BRAD PHILLIPS as played by LINK JEFFRIES. One alien has a star on his belly, the other has a circle on his.

CAPTAIN BRAD PHILLIPS

(overacting) Don't you see? Don't you see where your hatred and prejudice will lead you? You people have a star on your belly, you people have a circle. So what?

STAR ALIEN

Are you blind, Captain? He's obviously from an inferior species...

CAPTAIN BRAD PHILLIPS

No! He's the same as you. We're all the same on the inside. We had similar problems centuries ago on Earth. People of different races fighting each other. But we got past it. Just look at my crew. Negroes and Chinamen and regular people working side by side. And you can too. If you just learn to understand each other.

CIRCLE ALIEN

What choice do we have? The alternative...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN BRAD PHILLIPS  
The alternative is annihilation!

STAR ALIEN  
You're right, Captain Phillips. I see that now.

The aliens shake hands.

CAPTAIN BRAD PHILLIPS  
Alright. Now let's have some lunch.

Music swells and credits roll as the crowd in the living room applauds. YOUNG SHEL FENSKY (31) accepts congratulations. His lovely young niece, VICTORIA FENSKY (20), an intern from Brandeis University, is especially effusive.

VICTORIA  
Brilliant, Uncle Shel. Just brilliant. I'm so proud of you.

SHEL  
Thank you, Vicky.

VICTORIA  
I mean, this is such an important point you're making here.

SHEL  
Didn't I tell you? Television can be a powerful instrument for change. You tell your Brandeis professors that. Tell 'em Shel Fensky said so.

VICTORIA  
The story seemed a little familiar though. Wasn't there a Dr. Suess book along those lines?

SHEL  
(busted) The creative process is a mysterious thing, Vicky. Ideas come from everywhere...

In the corner two hunky actors, BOBBY O'DELL (25) and DONNY EDWARDS (28), are engrossed in heavy actor conversation.

BOBBY  
I gotta talk to Shel. My trailer has this funny smell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNY

Uh-oh. You didn't get number sixteen, did you?

BOBBY

Yeah. What about it?

DONNY

Oh, man. Those're Bob Conrad's old digs. He had cats. A whole bunch of cats.

BOBBY

So that's why I've been itching. Which one did you get?

DONNY

Number twelve, it's a beaut. Double-wide, fully stocked fridge. 'Bout a hundred yards from the commissary.

BOBBY

You got a double-wide?

DONNY

Sure, it's in my contract. Didn't your agent...

BOBBY

My agent didn't get me dick. Boy that makes me mad.

The doorbell rings and Shel goes to answer. It's TRIP PAGEL, (37) the shifty network executive. Shel is very nervous around him.

SHEL

Trip, Trip, come in, come in.

TRIP

Why are you saying everything twice?

SHEL

Can I get you a drink?

TRIP

I'm only staying a minute, Fensky. Just want to say hello to the cast and crew.

SHEL

Of course, of co...(catches himself) Let me introduce you. We're all really excited. Don't you love the pilot?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TRIP

No, frankly, I found it simple-minded and didactic. But Irv Lewis loves it so here we are.

SHEL

(whispers to Victoria) Didactic?

VICTORIA

(whispers back) Preachy.

SHEL

Of course a good show takes time to develop...

TRIP

Time to develop? You don't have time to develop, Fensky. After what happened on Double Z Ranch, it's a mystery you still work in this town.

Double Z Ranch. The very words cut through Shel like a knife. He fights for composure.

SHEL

Uh, so this is my niece Victoria. She's interning from Brandeis.

VICTORIA

Hello.

TRIP

Very nice.

SHEL

And that's Bobby O'Dell and Donny Edwards over there. And oh, this is Dickie Holliday.

TRIP

Ah, yes. The black guy.

DICKIE HOLIDAY (26), the black guy, doesn't know how to react to that. He turns to Shel.

DICKIE

Shel, I want to talk to you, man.

SHEL

In a sec, Dickie. So, look, Trip, mingle, have fun. Victoria will show you around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

She leads him away.

TRIP

I'm only staying a minute.

Shel is still fidgety over the conversation with Trip. He grabs a drink from a waiter's tray and chugs it. He walks onto the porch. Dickie follows closely behind.

DICKIE

Shel, Shel. We gotta talk.

SHEL

(sweating) What is it?

DICKIE

My love scene, man, you cut my love scene in the first episode!

SHEL

Yeah, uh, look, Dickie, the network just isn't comfortable with that right now. I guess that idea didn't test well in the South.

DICKIE

But you promised me.

SHEL

I know, I know, we'll get it in.

DICKIE

Shel, I'm not a token am I? I'm looking at this script and you cut a bunch of my lines, too. When I turned down that Sydney Poitier movie to be in this show, you promised me I'd have a meaty role.

SHEL

Dickie, Dickie, 90% of acting is non-verbal. You can't get hung up counting lines, okay? Now I'm with you, man. I'm down with your people.

DICKIE

Well. I thought you were...

SHEL

I mean, look, didn't I hire your Black Panther buddies to be my bartenders?

Cut to the bar. Trip is there and has ordered a drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PANTHER ONE

What the hell do you mean "Black Russian"?

TRIP

It's a drink. Take it easy.

Cut back to Shel and Dickie.

SHEL

You know what I'm about, Dickie, you saw the message of tolerance in the pilot. But this isn't easy breaking new ground here. I'm sure thirty-five years from now minorities will be all over network programming, but right now we gotta take it one step at a time, okay?

DICKIE

Alright, Shel. Alright.

SHEL

Okay? Now gimme some skin.

Shel and Dickie exchange an awkward soul-brother handshake.

SHEL (cont'd)

Okay.

Cut to Bobby and Donny.

BOBBY

A golf cart?!! You got a golf cart?!!

DONNY

Of course. Can't arrive on the set all sweaty.

BOBBY

Well, why don't I have a golf cart? I sweat too.

DONNY

Oh, yeah, it's a real sweet ride. It's got this little orange flag on the back and everything. My driver says it handles like a dream.

BOBBY

Your driver?!!!

Cut back to the party. Trip approaches Shel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

TRIP

Well, Fensky, the cast looks pretty good.

SHEL

Thanks, Trip. Thanks, Trip.

TRIP

Just one question. Your lead? Where the hell's your pal Link Jeffries?

SHEL

He'll be here.

TRIP

Cuz I gotta tell you, we have some concerns. He still hitting the sauce? We won't stand for luses on our shows.

He takes a mighty tug on his Black Russian.

SHEL

Now, don't you worry. Link's been in Switzerland all summer, drying out. I've been on the phone with him every day. He hasn't touched a drop in months.

There's a commotion at the door. Cries of "Link! Link"

SHEL (cont'd)

Oh, here he comes.

The crowd parts and Link Jeffries walks into the room. He's put on weight. A lot of weight.

LINK

Shel, baby, I'm home.

SHEL

Hey, Link...

Link gives him a big hug.

LINK

I gotta tell you, buddy, you kept me going over there. Those phone calls, telling me to find other outlets?

SHEL

I didn't mean fast food outlets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

LINK

Ha! What a sense of humor on this guy. Point is I'm clean, I'm sober and ready to work.

SHEL

Great. Uh, this is Trip Pagel from the network.

TRIP

I'm a big fan, Link.

LINK

Tripster, this show's gonna be your ticket, baby.

He notices the buffet.

LINK (cont'd)

Hey, nice spread.

He heads over to the table and begins to gorge. Shel sweats under Trip's glare.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STARBASE 13 SOUNDSTAGE - NEXT MORNING

Victoria, Shel and Trip are huddled in Shel's office.

SHEL

What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?

VICTORIA

It's gonna be okay, Uncle Shel.

TRIP

I tell you what you're gonna do, Fensky, you're gonna replace him.

VICTORIA

Oh, no.

SHEL

I can't replace Link. I go back with the guy, way back. Hell, I killed his career once, I can't do it again.

VICTORIA

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHEL  
 (ignoring her question) He'll start  
 drinking again. I can't be responsible  
 for that.

Through the window he waves to Link who's at the craft  
 services table loading up.

SHEL (cont'd)  
 Look at that great, lovable...fat guy.  
 I'm the Godfather of his son--what's his  
 name?

VICTORIA  
 Harvey.

SHEL  
 Right, little Harvey. I can't do it.

TRIP  
 Well, Irv and the others are on their way  
 over for rehearsal. You better think of  
 something.

SHEL  
 I will. I'm a television genius, right  
 Vicky?

VICTORIA  
 Right.

TRIP  
 (to himself) The genius that ruined  
 Double Z Ranch.

SHEL  
 I'll think of something.

Trip exits. Dickie Holliday walks in.

DICKIE  
 Shel about this new revision...

SHEL  
 What, Dickie? What?

DICKIE  
 Well, it's just...now I don't say  
 anything until the second act. And then  
 it's only, "Captain Phillips, look out!"

(CONTINUED)