



## CASPAR

Susan Howe, David Horvitz, Vera Lutz, and a short story by Travis Jeppesen

CASPAR'S FRIENDS ALL WANT HIM DEAD. IT'S BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE THE SHAPE OF HIS EYEBROWS. THEY WANT HIM DEAD AND YET HE WON'T DIE FOR THEM. HE'LL DIE FOR SOMEONE ELSE, NOT FOR THEM. HE DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO DIE. HE HAS TO FIND SOMEONE TO DIE FOR. AND SO HE'S STILL ALIVE. THE TREE HAS LIGHTS IN IT.

CASPAR LIKES TO STAND AROUND A LOT. SOMETIMES HE GOES PLACES. CASPAR'S THE TYPE WHO'S ADDICTED TO EVERYTHING. THE SKY, FOR INSTANCE.

OUTSIDE, SOME OLD PEOPLE WERE POKING AROUND IN THE DIRT. CASPAR STOOD BY THE WINDOW STARING OUT AT THEM UNTIL ONE OF THEM LOOKED UP AND SAW HIM STARING. CASPAR THEN LOOKED AWAY.

CASPAR IS STANDING IN THE KITCHEN HOLDING A SHARP LETTER OPENER. HE HAS TO EXPLAIN TO THE KID STANDING NEXT TO HIM WHO WANTS HIM DEAD THAT IT'S NOT A KNIFE, IT'S A LETTER OPENER. KID ASKS WHAT A LETTER OPENER IS. "SEE, BEFORE YOU GOT MESSAGES ON YOUR PHONE, PEOPLE USED TO HAVE TO USE PAPER." KID STILL DOESN'T GET IT, SO CASPAR STABS HIM IN THE FACE.

OUTSIDE, THERE'S A WORLD OUT THERE. THE WORLD HAS A YELLOWISH TINT TO IT OF LATE. NOBODY CAN SATISFACTORILY EXPLAIN WHY. SOME EXPERTS CALL IT A DUST STORM. THE RELIGIOUS FANATICS REFUSE TO BELIEVE THIS. TO THEM, IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN CHRIST'S MAGNIFICENT ANT FARM HAVING MANIFESTED ITSELF FROM THE SICKLED ETHER OF BROWN NIPPLE SENTIENCE. NOW IF THAT SOUNDS LIKE QUITE A LOT TO MANAGE CONCEPTUALLY, YOU SHOULD MEET MY COUSIN ANGUS. HE'S THE SAME ANGUS WHO PUT ALL THOSE COLORS IN CASPAR'S HAIR AND NOSTRILS.

CASPAR IS SICK OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. BUT HE ALSO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THE BLEEDING BOY IN THE KITCHEN, THE ONE WHO THINKS THE INTERNET ORIGINATED IN AN EGGHELL. THE REALITY HE WAS CHASING THAT FALL WAS BEING DUBBED IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE; HE HAD TO DOWNLOAD THE SUBTITLES SO THAT HE COULD FINALLY UNDERSTAND HIMSELF. A TEEN BLEED ACROSS THE SCREEN. THOSE TEENAGERS HAVE AMAZING HAIR BUT DON'T HAVE THE VALUES TO SUPPORT IT. CASPAR WANTS TO EAT PLASTIC BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW. IN A WAY, THEN, HE'S THE SAME AS THEM.

CASPAR CAN NEVER BE A TEENAGER AGAIN. THAT'S HOW HE GOT HIS OWN REALITY SERIES. CASPAR FOLDS UP THE SKY AND FARTS ON IT. HIS FRIENDS COME RUNNING OVER. CASPAR, WE DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE ANYMORE!

BUT ONE DAY I WILL, HE TELLS THEM. AS SURE AS THE DAY IS YELLOW AND MY HAIR'S A RAINBOW AND THE NIGHT SKY'S NAMED AMBER AND ALL THE BIRDS ARE GAY.

AFTER THAT, ALL HIS FRIENDS RAN AWAY.

NOW IT'S CASPAR'S TURN TO RUN AWAY—FROM THE CAMERA THAT'S BEEN FOLLOWING HIM EVERYWHERE, BROADCASTING HIS EVERY GESTATION, HIS EVERY GESTICULATION. HE GOES INTO A BAR, EXPECTING A PUNCH LINE; NEITHER PUNCH NOR LINE ARRIVES. THE FLOOR IS MADE OF ELBOWS. A NEW KIND OF PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR FERRETS. THE OLD MAN ON THE STOOL NEXT TO HIS WAS BORN WITH AN EXTRA ARMPIT. CASPAR DECIDES THE OLD MAN WILL BE HIS NEW FRIEND, TO REPLACE THE ONES WHO RAN AWAY.

THE OLD MAN SAYS: "I LIKE MY WOMEN LIKE I LIKE MY SOUP: NOT TOO THICK, NOT TOO WATERY."

AS CASPAR CONTEMPLATES THE SEMANTICS OF THAT STATEMENT, A FROZEN POPSICLE THE SIZE OF A REFRIGERATOR CRASHES THROUGH THE CEILING AND CRUSHES THE EXTRA-ARMPITTED GENTLEMAN.

THE FERRETS SCATTER AND HIDE INSIDE THE BOTTLES.

CASPAR FEELS HE HAS NOTHING FURTHER TO SAY IN THIS SITUATION, SO HE DECIDES TO GO BACK INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, WHERE THE CAMERAS AND THE TEENAGERS ARE WAITING FOR HIM.

CASPAR CONSIDERS GIVING THE GIANT POPSICLE THAT JUST KILLED HIS BEST FRIEND A GOOD LICK, BUT DECIDES AGAINST IT. AS HE LEAVES THE BAR, HE HAS NO REGRETS. HE ALREADY KNEW WHAT FLAVOR IT WOULD BE ANYWAY (THE POPSICLE WAS DARK GRAY).

WITH THE WORLD FINALLY RETURNED TO HIM, CASPAR CAN NOW REJECT IT FOR WHAT IT IS.

"AND WHAT IS THAT?" ASKS THE REALITY PRODUCER STICKING A MICROPHONE IN CASPAR'S FACE. TO WHICH HE REPLIES: "SEETHING MAGGOTRY OF SILK FROTH STUCK ON AN OMELET-EYED POSTAGE STAMP."

TRAVIS JEPPESEN

(SEMANTIC)  
FOR GO