

LEADER OF THE ELVES

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

AUBREY JAICKS	A young, military woman who is really tired of people mistaking her for a man.
ELF CAPTAIN	Captain Butter Pumpkin is the leader of a small contingent of elves currently on assignment to find a leader foreseen in prophecy.
ELF LIEUTENANT	Lieutenant Dewdrop-In-The-Morning-Sun is a somewhat irritating middle manager type of elf whose need to be right outweighs his need to be correct.
ELF SERGEANT	Sergeant Sniggle is an enthusiastic recruit who is excited to be part of the team that is going to locate their future leader.

SETTING

A park bench in modern-day wherever.

SCENE

(A young woman, Aubrey, is sitting on a park bench, eating a sandwich, and tossing some crumbs at the birds. After a few moments her phone rings. She looks at who is calling, and gives a heavy, resigned sigh before answering.)

AUBREY

Hi Mom. *(Hi honey. Am I disturbing you?)* No, I'm just having lunch. *(You're not feeding those filthy creatures, are you?)* They're birds, mom, not filthy cre-- *(I don't know why you waste your time...)* Yeah, it's a mystery. *(Anyway, your father wants to know if you have made up your mind yet?)* Made up my mind about—*(about that reenactment stuff)* It's called reenlisting, not reenacting. *(So are you going to?)* Technically, I—You know what, never mind. *(What?)* I haven't decided.

(Aubrey notices a group of three elves who have entered and are standing on the other side of the stage. They are huddled together, discussing something in hushed tones. They sometimes wave about some kind of parchment, and more often steal furtive glances at Aubrey, who watches them with increasing interest.)

I said I haven't decided. Besides, I'm not finished with my current assignment yet. *(Where are you going?)* You know I can't tell you that, mom. *(Just give me a hint. A mother worries.)* I know you worry, but like I said the last hundred times, I can't tell you where I'm going. *(Can't, or won't.)* Right mom, the Navy sets these policies just to annoy you personally.

(The elves' discussion gets more agitated, and the glances come frequently, until eventually Aubrey gives up on the sandwich entirely and outright stares at the group suspiciously.)

I don't hate you, mom. *(Then why don't you ever come to visit?)* What? *(I said why don't you ever...)* Oh, right, right. I will. *(When? Your father's worried sick about you.)* That's nice. *(What? I said your father's worr--)* Look, mom, I gotta g--. *(So soon? Don't you even want to--)* Yeah, yeah. Definitely. I gotta go. Really. *(But I--)* Bye! Love you!

(Aubrey hangs up and turns her full attention on the elves.)

ELF CAPTAIN

(His voice rises up to audible levels.)

Quiet quiet quiet!! I think she's getting suspicious!

(They all fall silent, and as a group turn to look at Aubrey, who is defiantly staring back at them. There's a pause, then...)

ELF LIEUTENANT

Nahh.

(He tries to get them to huddle again, but...)

ELF SERGEANT

No, no. I think Captain Butter Pumpkin's right. Look.

(Again as a group they turn to look at Aubrey, who is still staring at them. She cocks her head to the side a little, and the elves all cock their heads the same way. She smiles, suspicious and accusingly. They all smile back awkwardly. The sergeant makes a tentative waving gesture at her, and she waves back.)

ELF CAPTAIN

She's definitely seen us.

ELF LIEUTENANT

You shouldn't have waved, you idiot.

(He punches the sergeant on the shoulder.)

Now she's seen us.

ELF SERGEANT

Right, *that's* what g—

ELF CAPTAIN

Shhhh shhh shhh. Everyone stand perfectly still. If we don't move, maybe she won't noti—

AUBREY

I can hear you, you know.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Too himself, but rather loudly...)

Damn.

AUBREY

Can I help you with something?

(The elves share nervous, “do you think we should” glances until the sergeant finally nudges the lieutenant, who then nudges the captain. With the captain in the lead, they – with synchronized steps – walk tentatively over to where Aubrey is sitting, a tight pack who are all but holding each other for moral support. When they get there, they stand in awkward silence. Aubrey raises her eyebrows in a “well, what?” look. The elves respond by replicating the expression, except for the sergeant, who does not believe his eyebrows have sufficient range of motion, and helps them along with his hands. Aubrey shakes her head in bemused disgust, and the lieutenant nudges the captain.)

ELF CAPTAIN

Ah hmm. Yes. Well.

(Pause.)

AUBREY

Well?

ELF CAPTAIN

(Unexpectedly sing-songy and carefree...)

Helloooo.

AUBREY

(Slowly, suspiciously...)

Hello.

ELF CAPTAIN

We are... ummm...

AUBREY

Yes?

ELF SERGEANT

(The words bursting out of their own volition)

Looking for someone!

ELF LIEUTENANT

Shut up!

ELF CAPTAIN

Quiet in the ranks!

(Lieutenant nudges the captain.)

ELF CAPTAIN

(Pleasantly, as if just making conversation now.)

We're looking for someone. *(Then in a rush of words...)* What? It's not you? Oh, well, of course it's not. Right. Clearly. Sorry to disturb. Have a good day. We'll just be—

ELF SERGEANT

It could be him!

AUBREY

(A little offended...)

Him?

ELF LIEUTENANT

Who?!

(The elves all turn to where they came from, looking for someone. They spin back to Aubrey, then back, then back again.)

AUBREY

No. I meant... You know what? Never mind.

ELF LIEUTENANT

I told you it couldn't be him.

AUBREY

I'm not a 'him'.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Genuinely surprised...)

What?

Not a 'him'.

AUBREY

Are you sure?

ELF SERGEANT

Pretty sure.

AUBREY

How can you tell?

ELF SERGEANT

What?

AUBREY

I mean, how can you be so certain?

ELF SERGEANT

Well, the boobs for one thing.

AUBREY

(There is a muttering among the elves of "ooh" and "I see" and "of course" and such. They fall silent for a beat as they nod in understanding. Then...)

What are 'boobs'?

ELF LIEUTENANT

(Aubrey looks at them in disbelief, then motions to hers.)

Ahh, yes.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Nodding in confident understanding...)

Of course.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Boobs.

ELF SERGEANT

I knew that.

ELF CAPTAIN

ELF LIEUTENANT

I knew it first.

ELF CAPTAIN

You did not.

ELF LIEUTENANT

I did so. I bought some last month, just before High Evensfest—

AUBREY

Excuse me.

ELF CAPTAIN

(To Aubrey...)

Just a moment. *(Turning to lieutenant)* You're lying. You were with the troops at—

ELF LIEUTENANT

I'm not lying. I got them at Lowenbrow's Bakery. He was having a sale and—

(The sergeant has noticed that Aubrey is not amused.)

ELF SERGEANT

Sirs!

ELF CAPTAIN

What? Oh. Right.

(They all turn to her.)

AUBREY

You can't buy boobs.

ELF LIEUTENANT

You're not the boss of me.

ELF CAPTAIN

Now just a minute...

ELF LIEUTENANT

I can buy boobs if I want to. It's a free world.

AUBREY

No, I mean tha—

ELF SERGEANT

It *is* a free world, ma'am.

AUBREY

What I mean is—

ELF CAPTAIN

Now just a minute, young lady.

(They all stop. And then meaningfully...)

If that's what you really are...

ELF SERGEANT

Why not just ask her, and then we can be certain?

ELF CAPTAIN

Very well.

(Turning to face Aubrey squarely. The sergeant hands him the parchment, and then takes out another and starts taking detailed notes. Adopting a formal tone, the captain says...)

We are looking for one Aubrey Jaicks, and *(tapping the parchment)* we have reason to believe that—

AUBREY

I'm Aubrey Jaicks.

(The captain gives her a doubting look, then turns to face some invisible audience who is listening to his proclamation...)

ELF CAPTAIN

To be specific, we are looking for *Sir* Aubrey Jaicks, military genius and leader...

(Aubrey makes an exasperated sound. He stops speaking to the air and actually looks at her.)

What? What did I say?

Nothing. Go on.

AUBREY

No. Tell me. What is it?

ELF CAPTAIN

I just get a little sick of that, that's all.

AUBREY

Sick of what?

ELF CAPTAIN

Maybe she's sick of boobs.

ELF SERGEANT

Lowenbrow said that you shouldn't eat too many, because they're very high—

AUBREY

Will you get over the boobs already?

ELF LIEUTENANT

Then what?

AUBREY

I get a little sick of people calling me "sir".

ELF CAPTAIN

Are you saying that you *are* Sir Aubrey Jaicks?

AUBREY

I prefer "ma'am".

ELF CAPTAIN

Defender of the Truth?

AUBREY

Huh?

ELF CAPTAIN

Vanquisher of the Hordes of Mordoth?

AUBREY

What!?!

ELF SERGEANT
(Urgently whispered...)

That's later, sir.

ELF CAPTAIN
Eventual Vanquisher of the Hordes of Mordoth?

AUBREY
I...

ELF CAPTAIN
And Leader of the Elves.

AUBREY
Excuse me?!

ELF CAPTAIN
Leader of the Elves.

AUBREY
Leader of the...

ELF SERGEANT
(Being helpful...)
Elves, ma'am. That's us. We're elves.

ELF LIEUTENANT
Some of the elves.

ELF CAPTAIN
Yes, obviously not *all* the elves.

ELF SERGEANT
Not by far.

ELF CAPTAIN
I mean, if we were all the elves, then I would already be the leader, wouldn't I?

ELF LIEUTENANT
He would.

ELF SERGEANT

He's Captain Butter Pumpkin.

(Captain makes a little bow.)

And I'm Sergeant Sniggle.

AUBREY

Offff course you are.

(Lieutenant ah-hems.)

ELF SERGEANT

And this is Lieutenant Dewdrop.

AUBREY

Dewdrop.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Lieutenant Dewdrop to you.

AUBREY

Dewdrop.

ELF LIEUTENANT

It's short. For Dewdrop-In-The-Morning-Sun.

ELF SERGEANT

(Leaning forward conspiratorially)

But we call him Dewdrop-the-Attitude-And-Get-Over-Yourself.

ELF LIEUTENANT

I told you—

ELF SERGEANT

(Continuing undeterred)

Or sometimes Dewdrop-Your-Head-In-The-Toilet-And—

ELF LIEUTENANT

Captain, I demand you make him stop!

ELF CAPTAIN

At ease, sergeant.

Yes sir.

ELF SERGEANT

ELF CAPTAIN
(Returning to business...)
So for the record now, are you or aren't you Sir—

No 'sir'...

ELF SERGEANT

—Aubrey Jaicks?

ELF CAPTAIN

If I say yes?

AUBREY

ELF CAPTAIN
Then you will take your rightful place as ruler of the Little People.

Ruler of...

AUBREY

The Little People.

ELF SERGEANT

Little People.

AUBREY

That's us.

ELF LIEUTENANT

ELF SERGEANT
And plenty more where we came from.

There's more of you.

AUBREY

Oh yes.

ELF SERGEANT

Oh goody.

AUBREY

ELF CAPTAIN

Well, let's have it. What's your answer?

AUBREY

Well I *am* Aubrey Jaicks, but...

ELF CAPTAIN

That cinches it, then. Come along...

AUBREY

I think you have the wrong person.

ELF CAPTAIN

Doubtful.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Hopeful.

ELF SERGEANT

Show her the scroll, Captain.

(He shows it to her, and she scans it over.)

AUBREY

Look, I agree that that's my name, but...

ELF SERGEANT

Then you have to be the one.

AUBREY

I don't think—

ELF SERGEANT

That's what Aubrey *means*, after all.

AUBREY

Ruler of a group of psychotics who—

ELF LIEUTENANT

Hey hey hey!

ELF CAPTAIN

There's no call for getting nasty.

ELF SERGEANT

Ruler of the Elves.

AUBREY

That's not what my name means. I was named after—

ELF SERGEANT

Look it up.

(There's a hesitance as they all stare at each other.)

On your little bingley-bingley thing.

AUBREY

On my *what?*

(Sergeant steps forward and taps her cell phone.)

AUBREY

Oh.

(Sergeant smiles politely.)

Bingley-bingley...

ELF SERGEANT

Thing. Right. Go on. We'll wait. Look it up.

AUBREY

On my...

ELF SERGEANT

Bingley-bingley thing.

(She stares at him, but he just stares back, kindly, patiently.)

AUBREY

I can't believe I'm doing this. *(She types something into the phone.)* Aubrey... derived from... with... meaning... *(She looks at them.)* I don't believe this.

ELF SERGEANT

See?

AUBREY

Why does weird shit like this always happen to me?

ELF CAPTAIN

So this is not the first time?

AUBREY

No, although it may be the weirde—

ELF CAPTAIN

Who was it?

AUBREY

What?

ELF CAPTAIN

Someone already approached you, didn't they? Was it the Mordothians?

AUBREY

Was who the what?

ELF CAPTAIN

It better not have been those little North Pole fuckers. They already have a leader.

AUBREY

Are you talking about Sant—

ELF SERGEANT

(Quickly, urgently...)

Shh shh no no no. Don't say the name. You don't want to get him started.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Continuing in his deliberation...)

I bet it was those damn Keeblers.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Papa Keebler's always on the prowl for a little—

AUBREY

It was not the Keeblers! It wasn't anyone!

ELF CAPTAIN

But you said...

AUBREY

(To herself...)

I can't believe this is happening.

ELF CAPTAIN

Oh?

AUBREY

This isn't real. This can't be real. All I wanted was a peaceful twenty minutes for lunch before going back to work.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Suddenly hopeful)

Peace? You want peace?

AUBREY

And maybe just a smidgeon of normalcy—

ELF CAPTAIN

Well then you better get off that bingley-bingley behind of yours and start leading, because until we defeat the elves of Mordoth there isn't going to be any peace, I can promise you that!

AUBREY

I've never even heard of Mordoth!

ELF CAPTAIN

What?

ELF LIEUTENANT

Never heard of...

ELF SERGEANT

It's right next to Soggy Bottom. In Dweebleburg? Beneath the Valley of the Shimmying Nords?

AUBREY

I have literally no idea what you're talking about.

ELF CAPTAIN

This is an abomination.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Kids these days...

ELF CAPTAIN

This is what happens when they take geography out of the curriculum.

ELF LIEUTENANT

A disgrace, I say.

AUBREY

I know geography.

ELF LIEUTENANT

Apparently n—

AUBREY

I just don't know all these crazy places you're talking about. The Valley of the Dweeblesomething?

ELF CAPTAIN

The Valley of the Shimmying Nords. *In* Dweeblesburg.

AUBREY

Dweeblesburg.

ELF SERGEANT

They make the best pie there.

AUBREY

Pie. Right.

ELF SERGEANT

Do you like pie?

AUBREY

Do I like... Of course I like... (*Shaking her head suddenly.*) No. No, no, no.

ELF SERGEANT

How can you not like pie?

AUBREY

I *do* like pie, I just don't believe any of this. Now who are you? And don't say Pumpkin, Dumbdrop, and—

ELF SERGEANT
(Snickering...)

Dumbdrop—

AUBREY

—And Giggle.

ELF SERGEANT

She called you Dumpdrop...

ELF LIEUTENANT

She called *you* Giggle.

ELF SERGEANT

Dumpdrop.

ELF CAPTAIN

Silence!

(Everyone falls silent. After two or three beats, a last uncontainable snort of amusement escapes the sergeant, and then everyone falls silent.)

Now are you going to become our leader or not?

AUBREY

No.

ELF SERGEANT
(Trying to capture this accurately in his notebook)

Is that ‘no’ to ‘you are going to become our leader’, or ‘no’ to ‘you’re not going to become our leader’?

AUBREY

I’m not going to become your leader.

ELF SERGEANT

So then you are going to do it? Yippee!!

AUBREY

What? That’s not what I said!

ELF SERGEANT

If you said ‘no’ to ‘you aren’t going to be our leader’, then that means that you *are* going to do it! I knew it. I just knew it!

(The sergeant starts to spin around in joyful little circles, and the others just watch him condescendingly. After a few moments, the captain motions to the lieutenant, who takes the sergeant aside and tries to settle him down.)

ELF CAPTAIN

You’ll have to excuse Sniggle. He’s... excitable. Now, if you don’t mind my asking a question...

(Aubrey makes a resigned, “you might as well, because this is crazy enough already” look/gesture...)

Why not?

AUBREY

You can’t seriously—

ELF CAPTAIN

Let me finish. *(He pauses.)* Okay, there. I’m finished. Go ahead.

AUBREY

I—

ELF CAPTAIN

That was a joke. I’m not really finished. Good one, though, right? Now...

(There is a long pause, and then...)

AUBREY

I—

ELF CAPTAIN

I just told you I’m not finished.

(Aubrey looks confused.)

Got you again, didn’t I? You’re up against a master, you know. Now...

(Again the long pause, but this time Aubrey waits. The silence goes on, with the two patiently waiting each other out. Eventually Aubrey takes out her phone and starts to look something up.)

ELF CAPTAIN (CONT)

Damn those bingley-bingleys. Fine. You win. Now back to the question. Why would you walk away in our hour of need? If you truly are Sir—

ELF SERGEANT

(From afar)

Ma'am!

ELF CAPTAIN

--Aubrey Jaicks, then you are destined to be the Ruler of the Elves. Why would you turn your back on destiny?

AUBREY

Maybe because I don't believe any of this.

ELF CAPTAIN

But look at it logically. What have you got to lose?

AUBREY

I... *(She stop and thinks about it.)* Huh.

ELF CAPTAIN

Do you see what I mean?

AUBREY

Well...

ELF CAPTAIN

Consider. If you abdicate your throne, what will you do instead?

AUBREY

Go back to work, I guess.

ELF CAPTAIN

Doing what?

AUBREY

I can't tell you that.

ELF CAPTAIN

No need. *(He looks at the parchment.)* You're an analyst.

AUBREY

How'd you know that?

ELF CAPTAIN

You do what? Sit in front of a big bingley-bingley all day long.

AUBREY

How'd you know that?!

ELF CAPTAIN

It's written right here.

(He shows her the parchment.)

You stare at a bingley-bin—

AUBREY

This is classified information. Where'd you get this?

ELF CAPTAIN

From our SNEAK team, of course.

AUBREY

SNEAK team?

ELF CAPTAIN

Super. Nerdy. Elves. At. Keyboards. SNEAK.

AUBREY

Elf hackers.

ELF CAPTAIN

You really think you're the only one who can work a bingley-bingley? Our experts can reprogram your toaster to make potato salad. But back to the point. Is that really what you want to do with your life?

AUBREY

I don't know. Maybe...

ELF CAPTAIN

Sitting in a dark room, tippy tippy tap tapping away?

AUBREY

I want to make a difference.

ELF CAPTAIN

Yes. Yes! Make a difference! Right! That's what I'm offering! That's what this is all about. What bigger difference could you make than leading the elves to victory? And freedom!

ELF SERGEANT

And pie!

AUBREY

I... I don't know...

ELF SERGEANT

They have denied us pie!

AUBREY

This all seems...

ELF SERGEANT

Taken away our custard liberties!

AUBREY

So...

ELF SERGEANT

Lead the people!

AUBREY

Weird...

ELF SERGEANT

Confection or death!!

AUBREY

What is *with* him?

ELF CAPTAIN

He takes dessert very seriously.

AUBREY

So I see.

ELF CAPTAIN

Can you really say that being an analyst compares to the glory that awaits you when you lead an entire people to victory?

(Aubrey is clearly tempted, but then...)

AUBREY

Look. It doesn't matter. I work for the Navy. They aren't going to just let me tromp off and lead a bunch of elves—

ELF SERGEANT

The glorious elven people!!

AUBREY

Whatever. Leading a bunch of elves – however glorious – is not an on the list of accepted reasons for early discharge.

ELF CAPTAIN

But if you could...

AUBREY

If I could... I'd... consider it.

ELF CAPTAIN

Hardly a firm commitment there, Sir Aubrey Jaicks. Maybe you're not really the—

AUBREY

Fine. Look. If I could, I would. But I can't, so it doesn't matt—

ELF CAPTAIN

Done! Dewdrop, the encrypted bingley-bingley please. Secure line.

(Lieutenant takes out a phone, taps a few keys, and then hands it to the captain.)

Fluffy Toadstool? This is Captain Pumpkin. The Unicorn is in the Basket. I repeat, the Unicorn is in the Basket. Commence Project SNEAKYBOOTS.

AUBREY

I... I... I don't know. Look, I know I said...

(Aubrey's phone dings, and she looks at it.)

Oh my god.

(The captain gives her a knowing look.)

AUBREY (CONT)

It's from the Navy.

ELF CAPTAIN

(Not at all surprised.)

Is it really?

AUBREY

I've been released from service. On account of...

ELF CAPTAIN

Do tell...

AUBREY

This can't be right.

ELF CAPTAIN

Oh?

AUBREY

It says I'm too tall...

ELF CAPTAIN

Really?

AUBREY

And that I like cats too much.

ELF CAPTAIN

They're quite picky, your Navy.

AUBREY

I don't even like cats.

ELF CAPTAIN

Huh. Well, shall we?

AUBREY

What?

ELF CAPTAIN

Shall we get going, your majesty? Your people await you.

AUBREY

What did you say?

ELF CAPTAIN

I said that your people aw—

AUBREY

No, no. Before that.

ELF CAPTAIN

I said ‘Shall we ge—

AUBREY

After that.

ELF CAPTAIN

Your majesty?

AUBREY

That was it.

ELF CAPTAIN

Is there a problem?

AUBREY

Ummm... no. Your majesty.... I think I can get used that.

ELF CAPTAIN

After you, your majesty.

(Captain motions, and they head off stage...)

AUBREY

Way better than ‘sir’...

(All exit, lights out)