

WITHIN THE AT-MOST-SPHERE

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

LIMPTON	A would-be bank robber with the intelligence of a wad of chewing gum.
FRAN	The mastermind bank robber who dreamt up this scheme, with all the intelligence of a very intelligent wad of chewing gum.

## SETTING

Two bank robbers are waiting in line at a blood bank.

SCENE

*(Limpton and Fran are waiting in line.)*

LIMPTON

I'm nervous. You nervous? 'Cause I'm really nervous.

FRAN

Would you shut up? You want people to hear you?

LIMPTON

What? I just said I was nervous. There's nothing wrong with that. I bet lots of people get nervous at the bank.

FRAN

No. They don't.

LIMPTON

I bet some do.

FRAN

No, 'cause they know there ain't nothing to worry about.

LIMPTON

Unless you're here to rob the place. Then they'd—

FRAN

Will you shut up!?! What's wrong with you??

LIMPTON

I'm just saying that they'd be nervous then, wouldn't they?

FRAN

I wish I never asked you to help.

*(They stand in silence for a few minutes.)*

LIMPTON

You really think this is gonna work?

FRAN

Of course I do.

LIMPTON

'Cause whenever you see this kind of thing in the movies, they always have real guns.

FRAN

No they don't.

LIMPTON

I'm pretty sure they do. Sometimes they fire them, and you can see people getting shot and everything.

FRAN

They just make it look that way. Trust me. They don't use real guns.

LIMPTON

They look real.

FRAN

Well they're not.

LIMPTON

I shoulda brought my own gun.

FRAN

You don't have a gun.

LIMPTON

*(Pulling out a water pistol...)*

Well I coulda gotten one that looks realer than this.

FRAN

*(Angry whisper...)*

Put it away! Are you trying to blow the whole operation!?!

LIMPTON

*(Putting it away...)*

I think they'd know.

FRAN

That's why we keep the guns in our pockets.

LIMPTON

What if they don't believe us? What if they ask to see our guns?

FRAN

Nobody asks to see a gun. It's not like an ID.

LIMPTON

But what if they do?

FRAN

Then... Then we tell them that they're filled with acid, and we'll burn their faces off.

LIMPTON

Oh. That could work. Nobody wants a burned off face. That would really ruin the *ambience*.

FRAN

What?

LIMPTON

Ambience. You know, the mood. The little bubble that limits how much you can enjoy yourself.

FRAN

What the hell are you talking about?

LIMPTON

You never heard of something ruining the at-most-sphere?

FRAN

Atmosphere?

LIMPTON

Right. The at-most-sphere. That's the bubble I'm talking about.

FRAN

I'm not talking to you anymore.

LIMPTON

Oh, come on, Fran. We have to talk to each other. We've gotta coordinate, right?

FRAN

Fine, but I'm not talking to you until we get up to the counter.

*(They stand in silence.)*

LIMPTON

Hey, Fran?

I'm not talk—

FRAN

I just realized why they call it a counter.

LIMPTON

I said I'm not talki— *(Beat.)* You did?

FRAN

Uh huh.

LIMPTON

I always wondered that.

FRAN

Me too.

LIMPTON

So... so why do they call it a counter?

FRAN

Because the guy behind it is the one who counts out the money.

LIMPTON

What if it ain't at a bank? What about the counters at the grocery store?

FRAN

Then they count eggs or something. And besides, they still count money at the grocery store.

LIMPTON

Not if you use a credit card. What do you say to that, Limpton? What if you're using a credit card?

FRAN

Then maybe—

LIMPTON

And what about in the kitchen? You don't count money in the kitchen, but you still have counters.

FRAN

*(Limpton raises a finger as if about to object, then realizes that he doesn't have any objection. He lowers*

*his finger, and they stand there in silence for another bit.)*

LIMPTON

You ain't that smart.

FRAN

Like you would know smart.

LIMPTON

I know smart.

FRAN

Yeah? Who do you know that's smart?

LIMPTON

My cousin, Jackie. She's smart.

FRAN

Yeah?

LIMPTON

Yeah. Went to Harvard for almost a year.

FRAN

That don't mean she's smart.

LIMPTON

You think someone could hide out in those buildings for almost a year without getting caught if they weren't smart?

FRAN

I... *(Pause.)* Yeah, okay. That's pretty smart.

LIMPTON

I told you. Oh, hey, we're next. Are you ready for this?

FRAN

Uh huh. I'm, uh... I'm ready. You ready?

CLERK

Next!

*(They approach the counter.)*

Welcome to St. Jude's. Is the first time you've been here?

*(Fran and Limpton look at each other. They weren't prepared for this question.)*

FRAN  
Yes.

LIMPTON  
No.

CLERK

I'm sorry. Did you say—

FRAN  
No.

LIMPTON  
Yes.

CLERK

Well, it doesn't really matter. If you would each be kind enough to fill out this form...

LIMPTON

Wait. We need to fill out a form? Why do we need to fill out a—

FRAN

Let me handle this. *(Turning to the clerk.)* I think you misunderstand.

CLERK

Are you not here for the drive?

LIMPTON

We walked—

FRAN

Shut up! *(To the clerk...)* No. We're not here for a drive. We're robbing the place.

*(The clerk just stares at Fran.)*

You know what that means, right?

CLERK

You're... robbing a blood bank?

FRAN

That's right. We got guns, so don't try anything.



LIMPTON  
*(Whispering...)*

Fran. Hey Fran!

FRAN  
Don't use my real name, you moron.

LIMPTON  
Sorry. Hey... Fra— Uh, Flam. What's a blood bank?

FRAN  
It's a bank. That's just part of the name. St. Jude's Blood. It's like a biblical reference. Like how they used to use St. Jude's blood as money back in those days.

LIMPTON  
They did?

FRAN  
Yeah. Absolutely.

CLERK  
I think you—

FRAN  
Hey! We're talking here. We're the ones with the guns, so we interrupt you. You don't interrupt us.

*(There's a long pause, and then Fran realizes that the clerk is waiting for the okay.)*

Okay, go ahead.

CLERK  
I think there's been a misunderstanding. This is a division of St. Jude's Hospital. We don't have—

FRAN  
Hey! Hey hey. We wasn't born yesterday. Don't try to talk all fancy, and we know you've got money here. It's a bank.

CLERK  
Rrrright. Okay. You're right. Look, I'm not supposed to tell you this, but we don't keep the money here. We have a secret facility where we store all the money.

LIMPTON

I *knew* it!

FRAN

You're not lying to us, are you? 'Cause I gotta gun.

CLERK

No. No lie. I swear.

FRAN

Prove it!

CLERK

Alright, I can tell you where the money is, but you have to promise not to say that I told you.

*(Fran is clearly skeptical.)*

I could get in big trouble.

FRAN

Alright, fine. We promise. Where's the money.

CLERK

There's a building on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. It's right between the public library and the Dunkin Donuts.

FRAN

Hey hey hey!! What are you trying to pull? That's a police station!

CLERK

*(Conspiratorially...)*

It only *looks* like a police station. The bank built it like that so nobody would suspect that that's where we keep the vault.

FRAN

Really?

CLERK

Now here's what you do. When you go inside, go up to the teller in front. They'll pretend like they're a policeman, but the bank's protocol is that they—

LIMPTON

What's a promo call?

CLERK

*(Confused for a moment, then...)*

Protocol. It means... Never mind. The bank won't risk anyone's life in the case of a robbery, so if you just tell the teller that you're there—

LIMPTON

Wait wait wait... Is that why you call them a teller? Because you tell them stuff?

CLERK

Sure.

LIMPTON

So I bet this is called a counter because you count the money, right?

CLERK

Sure. Anyway, tell the police officer that you're there to rob the bank, and they take you right to the vault.

LIMPTON

They won't ask to see our guns, will they?

FRAN

I told you, nobody asks to see your gun. *(To the clerk...)* They don't, right?

CLERK

No. Maybe sometimes if you get a rookie. But if they ask to see your gun, you can just show them the handle, and that should be more than enough.

*(There's another silence as they all stare at each other.  
Finally...)*

FRAN

Great. Thanks. Come on, Limpton. I mean, come on Tony.

*(They exit while Limpton says...)*

LIMPTON

I told you that's why they call it a counter...

*(Lights out.)*