

VI

Lemme dip a finger in that water to test it. Yeow! You do like it hot don't cha little lady?! Speaking of hot water, when we last left off the Arnold-Tones had just killed a lawman and got themselves in a bit of that watered hot themselves. Now they been around the block a few times and knew better than to raise a holy hell or hullabaloo, so they mostly just got up to resuming their normal routine and daily activities. So off to the malt shoppe it was with them!

“What the heck's a malt shop, grandpa?”

Hmmm. That's right, how could you know? Back before soda pop was perfected and canned for the corner stores, there used to be establishments called malt shoppe's. It was a shop like a store but differentiated itself by spelling shop s-h-o-p-p-e stead of s-h-o-p like a sensible person would. Now these shop-pees offer things like soda and candy to a crowd of mostly teenagers. The nomenclature of malt shoppe came from the use of the grain additive of malt. Back in those days they put it in the drink and sodas and even sprinkled it on top of ice cream. I know I know, it sounds fuckin' nuts! But hey, for every day there's a fad. Shit. I see you and your friends eating kale and ordering smoothies! Yuck! What is that 'cept for rabbit food and fruit stand diarrhea!?

Teenagers of course don't got too much money or sense, so malt shoppe's turned out to be a piss poor business model. But back in the year 2,000 the malt shoppe was all the rage, and you could bet your ass that was the place to be for the Arnold-Tones. They spent many an hour there cracking tunes on the jukebox, cavorting about and finger blasting their lady friends in the sitting booths.

So on this particular day they waddled on in, swinging their arms like apes and snapping their fingers. Like most days they got to dancing when they heard one of their favorite tunes by King

Coleman or the Silhouettes, and they weren't having a smidge of regret towards capping the copper.

When there was a break from the spinin' 45's the Arnold-Tones got a bit dark and morose.

Cantor reasoned, "We gotta stay off our corner for a while."

"Yeah I guess you could say we are in kind of a pickle," to which Song raised up a pickle and took a bite."

"A real jam," agreed Nightingale as he spread some grape jelly across a piece of toast.

Croon reasoned with the gang as he was want to do, "Okay. So we killed a copper and now we gotta stay off our own turf. Aw, shucks but who cares! We'll make out like we always do. On top and singin'!"

"But we're never on top!" says Song.

The gang "Yeah's" but Croon bristles, "Heck. That never stopped us before. We're the most winningest losers the world ever did see. Maybe the crowds don't buy our record on account of their bigotry. And sure we live like hobos. But we got our talents, our songs, and chicks still dig us, man."

"Chicks, grandpa?"

Hey kiddo, that's how they talked back then. Though the Arnold-Tones were victims of discrimination in their own right, they were blind to their own male gaze and the various sexist ways they reinforced the patriarchy. Here. Here's the soap bar, I ain't warshin your buns.

Sexist they may be, but I'll get you back on the side of the Arnold-Tones. Fer after they griped for a spell, they got ta doin' what they do best. Croonin' and cajolin'! Fingers snappin', four part harmonies, toe tappin – why the boys belted into song and got the whole shoppe a hoppin!

"Drink your troubles away...

...at the malt shoppe!

Maybe you lost your homework...

Maybe you killed a cop!

I need me a soda pop to wash my sorrows away cause I blew the play in the big game...

...Also we killed a cop.

A peace officer lies dead with a heavy head in his final bed...

...cause we killed that cop!

Shoo-bap-doo-dop-a-wop- golly olly op!"

And that was much how their music went. Ahump! Sorry, your, grand-pappy can't sing it quite as well as they could.

The kids all around the shop-pee enjoyed it of course and the Arnold-Tones settled into a booth to share a malted vanilla milkshake with a strawberry on top. They shared it with four straws. Sure they were thick as friends go and were sweet on each other but mostly they shared their shakes outta poverty. As they were chugging along wouldn't cha know it a new character approached and injected himself into the narrative....

"Wait, a new character?! I can barely keep track as it is."

C'mon, dummy. Four crooners that basically have the same personality and a clown that is more mystery than defined traits? Buck up and pay attention, kiddo.

So this fella approaches the table and he sticks out like a sore thumb in this joint. One, he ain't a youngster and two he's got several degrees as he is very *learned*. They'd come to learn he was named Dr. Flaygoil.

"Hello. I'd like to introduce myself. I am Doctor Flaygoil," the Doctor splined to the gang. He extended his hand out in an introductory fashion and the boys all looked at each other then put their four hands in and shook his fist about.

"I just had to introduce myself. I have seen you boys around the neighborhood and heard your singing, count me amongst your fans."

"Great! That makes for one!" says Cantor.

“I purchased your 45 revolutions per minute vinyl recording at the corner drug store which features your A-Side single “Mommy Don’t Butter My Bacon on a Thursday” which I just adore but if I do say so I find the B-Side of that record “Grueso Cha-Cha” even more fantastic!”

Nightingale delights, “Thanks Mister, those are some of our most best songs.”

Song is amazed, “Can you believe it? Someone knows our music.”

“And they still like it!” agrees Croon.

“Now boys, forgive my candor, but I had to interject myself into your sphere of artistic assemblage to query you on just how you are not the most famous Doo-Wop combo group in all of the world.?”

Cantor agrees, “We often wonder the same thing.”

Croon adds that, “We owe it all to the racism and small minded bigotry of our times.”

“Yes it is true,” Flaygoil continues, “The masses can be trusted to be stupid and short of sense. But I know my young friends, that a change is in the air.”

Then the Doctor raised a single finger to emphasize his point.

“The world is tired of division by colored lines. They will no longer be mollified by the divisions imposed on them by the ruling elite. The sick dogma of divide and conquer will no longer be the guiding principle that herds the masses through a sad existence.”

Four hands on a milkshake, the Arnold-Tones raise their glass in agreement:

“Here here/ Yeah! / The man makes sense I think . / I cheer in agreement”

Dr. Flaygoil smiles at his well-received acceptance amongst the Doo-Wop group.

“May I take a seat?” The Doctor queried.

“I think it’s bolted down,” said Cantor.

“He means he wants to sit!” countered Croon. “Sure, sure please, Doc.”

Croon points to the chair and Flaygoil sat down.

“To the point, I want to buy you boys a round,” the Doctor said, offering to buy the singers some malted milkshakes.

To which Cantor replied, “Sorry, Mister Doc but we already got a milkshake.” This naturally got the ire of Croon, who elbowed his Hispanic pal in the ribs.

“It’s a come up you ding-a-ling! *Always accept* a come up!”

“We’d love to take you up on your offer,” graciously accepted Song, “please join us in drink and conversation, friend.”

And so as the drinks flowed the whole group exchanged pleasantries and getting to know you’s. Doctor Flaygoil ingratiated himself to the Arnold-Tones with his persistent cordiality and habit of making unfailing eye contact with whomever he wers speaking to.

Then the Doctor dropped the hammer down.

“Let me get to the point, boys.”

And the crooners were rapt with attention. Naturally, interested in a good point as much as anyone.

“I am tired of making science for nimrods, and the racist masses that don’t deserve it. I have seen my inventions be misappropriated for ends that don’t justify the means. I can see it already, my latest invention, being abused and bent towards the machines of war, tyrannical capitalism and reality television. No! I say. For once my creation must better serve mankind!”

Curious, Nightingale asked the Doctor, “What is it you made?”

“Why I made the most important thing of all! A point! A point that my new invention would not be abused. A point that I would not go down in history as a mad genius whose work was molested to usher in a dark age. No! My precious invention must be used to elevate humanity rather than to shore up the power of a ruling elite.”

Well the Arnold-Tones were at the edge of their seat, that is until Song fell right off his and tumbled onto the floor. “I can’t take it, I gotta know, Doc. What is it?”

“Well, dear lad. It is what it is. At the end of the day I know how to do but one thing.” The Doctor raises his hands dramatically. “I know how to create...My mind is oriented towards seeing possibilities, problems...and arm wrestling with science until nature itself bends to my unwieldy will. So what do you say boys....are you with me?”

“Yeah!” Cantor excitedly throws an agreeing fist in the air. The rest of the Arnold-Tones turn and look upon him with judgment.

“Doctor, what the heck is your invention?!” asks Croon.

“Lord, child. Haven’t you been listening at all?! I’ve made none other than the Temporal Unfurling Retromorphosis Device!”

“Cool!” exclaimed Cantor like he had a clue.

But Nightingale asked, “What the heck is a Temporal Unfurling Retromorphosis Device?!”

“Well, the acronym and familiar term for it is TURD,” explained Flaygoil.

Okay. Okay, granddaughter, I can see that makes you laugh. I am just reporting things how they were and as they happened. TURD may mean somethin’ to you on the playground, but remember that Flaygoil was a pure mind of science and didn’t mean for to say nuthin’ untoward by using that word. If we stop so as you could laugh at every innuendo or sopho-moronic aside, we’ll never get through this story in time.

“What do you mean ‘in time?’”

Anyhow, Song got the gumption to finally get to the point and say, “Doctor Flaygoil. Just tell us once and for all what is this TURD?!”

As if he weren’t clear enough, Flaygoil reiterated, “It’s a time machine.”

“Duh! We got that, right guys?” Cantor asked.

Croon cuts to the point, “And what’s this got to do with us?”

Flaygoil explained, “I want to use this technology for good before the government and corporatists could get their hands on it. I also need a few test subjects. When I look at you young men...I see bravery and gumption that only four juveniles with nothing to lose could possess. I also see individuals for whom the world has been unjust towards. Talented artists that deserve greatness and recognition. So it is you, the Arnold-Tones for whom I suggest be the first human subject to travel through time!”

To this the Arnold-Tones share a round of gasps, surprised at the audacity of Flaygoil’s plan and an event which could represent a turn in their fortunes.

“We’re in!” exclaimed Cantor.

“Hold on just a sec, the last time I was a guinea pig was Halloween when I was five and you all know how that turned out.” Nightingale said as he shoots his pals a knowing look.

“Well let’s think about this, fellas. If we were to travel to the future...a world without bigotry and discrimination, we could present our music to people in a fair and even playing field,” reasoned Croon.

“You convinced me, I’m in.” agreed Cantor.

“I might be convinced, but I need to call my lady friend first.” The rest of the Arnold-Tones *OOoooo* and *Aaaabbbb*, teasing Nightingale as he stepped off to call the woman he was sweet on.

As the rest of the crew talked in the background, Nightingale nervously punched in the number on the telephone – yes I know what you’ll say.

“But you said they didn’t have phones then Grandpa.”

I know! They had things called public payphones back then. They were everywhere in the year 2,000.

So any kahoot, Nightingale dropped in his coin and placed on phone call to his favorite dish. At the other end of the line? The woman that picked up? Madre Cantor. That’s right the mother of Arnoldo Cantor is the woman Nightingale was sweet on, so you can imagine why he’s keep it on the

D.L. So she picks up, she's at home on the couch just watching T.V. and eating popcorn.

Nightingale hymns and haws to her, declares his love and begs her for her advice. Y'know what though. She could barely hardly even be bothered, maybe that show on the TV was just too interesting. He was hopin' for her to tell him this was all a crazy plan.

A boy like him can't just up and travel to the future! He was hopin she would declare her love and beg him to stay. Heck they could move in together. But no...all he heard was the gnawin' on that popcorn and the laugh track off the T.V. comin' through in the background. All she pretty much had to say was –

“Is okay. Is okay. Our romance, it burned too hot and bright anyhow.”

When Nightingale declared his love for her, her only reply was, “I know.”

Dejected, Nightingale returned to his crew. “Okay guys, I'm in. Lets go get the future!”

“Hold on a sec, I gotta call my lady friend too.”

“Yeah, and I got a sweetie to conference with as well.

Song and Croon both chime in and move to take turns at the payphone. Oh boy, I just gotta laugh at this bit and you'll prolly never believe in it.

“What grandpa? I wanna get to the time travel and not this gooshy stuff.”

Ha haw, I just can't hold this bit in it is too good and funny. So Song goes first right, putting his nickel in the talk box and engaging the contraption. Well a ring a ring a ring and guess who answers on the other line...Ha! Is Madre Cantor again. Yup, and if you haven't figured it, Arnoldo's mama was goin' behind his back and dating not just Nightingale, but also Song. I figure they had ta musta had some kinda inklin of what was goin' on, and either enjoyed their steamy affairs so much they couldn't ta been stirred to speak of it, or maybe their friendship went just that deep that it didn't matter for nothin'. Well, you may well could guess that Song's interaction went much the same way,

her bein' all aloof while Song was a little love struck pussycat. Ha! She even turned up the remote on him during their conversation.

Then after Song gits back to his group, it's Croons turn to use that phone. You could bet Doctor Flaigail was getting real perturbed right about now, why for a man with a time machine he sure had a short stretch of patience. So Croon is makin' that call now.

“Grandpa. Is Croon also going to call Madre Cantor and declare his love and get sad?”

Hold on there hold on there, let a story unfold in its own time. Y'see Croon Just needed that closure. He had to call the girl he was sweet on and figure out whether he could leave her for a trip into the temporal unknown. Don't cha care for Croon? Don't cha wanna know that him, and these other boys have and yearn for a kinda happiness?

“Argh! It's going to be Madre I just know it!”

He's callin' and twiddling that phone cord in his fingers like one does when they get to feelin' nervous and stuff. Whelp a woman on the other end picks up, you wouldn't believe it...you just couldn't believe it. Croon too was also calling Madre Cantor.

“Alright, I totally get it. All of the Arnold-Tones, except for Cantor were dating Cantor's mom. Right?”

Thas about the shorthand of it.

“Got it. So I'll just take away from that that they had a weird and unhealthy close relationship and I don't need more detail.”

All three them fucked the lady, and she had more lovers on the side too.

“Grandpa, that's alright. I know they slut shamed women back in your time but we just don't do that in the year 2,010. Can you just move on now please? I want to know what happened! After the three resolved things with Cantor's mom, they all agreed with Flaygoil to travel to the future right?”

Now I'm gonna rub my chin here in consideration, a bit disappointed as I am to have rushed through that last bit of the story. So I'm a tempted to just not give you the cherry on top which is this bit right here...Don't roll your eyes kiddo. Well, fine. Y'know your old grandpa is a sucker for eye rollin' and teenaged sassy sarcastics.

Whelp, once they got back to Flaygoil, pow- wow-win as they was in the old malt shoppe. Flaygoil got all unpertinent, and hasty to boot.

“Can't you children make up your mind!? This is the opportunity of a lifetime, to be the first men to travel through time! Not to mention, the personal benefits you could derive from such an endeavor.”

After putting their heads together and whispering, Croon delivered their decision to that old Doctor Flaygoil:

“Doc,” he said,” While we truly appreciate the offer, we decided there would be no shortcuts for the Arnold-Tones. We just want to stick it out and try our hand at making it in music biz in our own imperfect and bigoted time.”

This rejection was unexpected for the doctor and he got to lookin' pretty down faced, but time worked out for him just then. For ya see the malt shop-pees old bat of a waitress came up at just that moment. She was pullin' out the notice for payment to hand to them Arnold-Tones, but got to lookin' at their faces as she done such. Well that awnry old woman turned up her nose, pulled her pencil from behind her ear and got to pointing it at each of them Arnold-Tones in an irate fashion as she got to hollerin' at them.

“You dirty Doo-Woppers! Four straws? You were sharing that milkshake across colored lines. I warned you all before, the plates in this eatery are a segregated zone. After all, this is a place for decent, God fearing chow hounds! Y'all get out and never come back again!”

The faces of the Arnold-Tones dropped in pure depression.

“A dead cop. No corner and now no malt shoppe,” lamented Cantor.

“The year 2,000 really is super shitty,” realized Nightingale.

“Hey, this Doctor Flaygoil is still standing there right in front of us listening! Maybe it’s not too late to change our minds?” enthused Song.

“Yeah! That stitches it. Doctor, we’ve made up our minds. Send us to the future where there won’t be any more racism and we can be big time Doo-Wop stars!”

Exhausted by the exchange, Flaygoil said, “Fine. Hurry and follow me...I think my time may have expired at the parking meter.”

The Arnold-Tones shuffled out that darn door following Flaygoil and passing that mean ass racist waitress as they went. Each Arnold-Tone just slapped a wallet down upon her hand .

Croon said, “Keep the change.”

Then Song is all like, “We won’t need money where we’re going.”

It was a pretty ballsy display but didn’t impress that old waitress much other than she was pretty happy to have four whole wallets all to herself. Out on the street Dr Flaygoil just had to scratch his head.

“Knowing nothing of the future why would you do that? They still use money in the future. In fact my temporal probe revealed that in the temporal interim reverse inflation takes place and the dollar stretches even further!.” The Arnold-Tones just shrugged it off though, heck they reasoned they’d be famous Doo-WOp stars in the future anyhow, right?

Oh look. My darling little granddaughter fell asleep at some point as I was tellin’ the tale. Whelp young lady, I ain’t repeatin’ shit so I hope some of that last bit leaked in through osmosis. Here I’ll just kiss you on the forehead and bid you goodnight. We’ll pick up our tale at some point tomorrow.