

Characters:

Jim - Lab assistant, dating Pam

Pam - Lab project manager, dating Jim

Toby - Head lab scientist. Older man.

Robert - Rival head lab scientist

Katie - Mid 20s. Fresh out of college. Impulsive and spontaneous. Quick learner who isn't afraid to speak her mind.

John - Late 50s. Long-time scientist at the Center, a few months from retirement. Kind heart and a systematic brain.

Locations:

1. Lab at the Roth Lobdow Center for Advance Research
1. Different Laboratory at the Roth Lobdow Center
2. Interrogation room

Time of day:

Doesn't matter

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

**INTRO BUMPER**

Efx: recorder button/tone.

KATIE

(whispering)

Roth-Lodbow Center for Advanced  
Research. Project Cyclops, Day 7,  
about to begin. Entering the  
laboratory now.

Efx: keycard beep. A loud buzz, a metal lock unlatched.  
Door opens, footsteps.

JOHN

You okay?

KATIE

Yeah, fine.

Efx: A purse is plopped down on the table. The audio  
fuzzes for a moment.

JOHN

You know, we've seen a lot of  
strange things together, and I  
think I've gotten pretty good at  
reading your emotions. What's  
wrong?

KATIE

(sighs)

My uncle. He's back in the  
hospital.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

KATIE

All these tests and treatments,  
and they still can't fix him.  
Spend enough time in a high-tech  
lab like this and you forget how  
primitive it is out there.

JOHN

I'm sure the doctors are doing  
everything in their power. Just  
give it time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATIE

I don't know how much time I can afford. Do you have any idea how much this costs?

JOHN

Yeah, I do.

KATIE

I suppose an advance is out of the question. Should I talk to Robert?

JOHN

I may know somebody else you can talk to.

KATIE

No, you've done enough for me here.

JOHN

I didn't say here. Have you heard of the Sygma Corporation?

KATIE

Another research center, right?

JOHN

Henry Walsh is heading up a new project over there.

KATIE

And?

JOHN

He started with us. I shared a laboratory with him a long, long time ago. He worked up the ladder until he had it out with Clinton Lobdow.

KATIE

Vivian's adoptive father?

JOHN

Bingo. Next thing we knew, Henry's desk was empty.

KATIE

I'm getting the impression that Henry might have a grudge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

He has no love for the Center,  
I'll tell you that much.  
Recordings from the lab would be  
very valuable to a guy like that.

KATIE

You think so?

JOHN

If he can help himself and hurt  
the Lobdow name at the same time,  
price is no object.

KATIE

I'm not sure what I have is worth  
selling.

JOHN

Why don't you let him decide?

KATIE

I couldn't do that to you, John.  
You can't be part of this.

JOHN

You need all the help you can get.  
You're eventually going to do  
something with these recordings,  
and I don't trust you to find the  
right buyer. Your life would be in  
danger.

KATIE

I kind of feel like that might be  
the case already.

JOHN

Henry's an old friend. With him, I  
know you will be safe.

KATIE

How do I get in touch with him?  
You know, and keep it off anyone's  
radar.

JOHN

I know an email address, one  
that's not necessarily public  
info.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATIE

John, why are you doing this for me?

(pause)

John?

JOHN

Because...I see so much of my daughter in you. I want to help give you the life I couldn't give her.

KATIE

I don't know what to say.

JOHN

Just promise me you'll email Henry and not take the recordings anywhere else.

KATIE

I promise.

JOHN

Good. Now, how about we get started? If we don't file these reports on time we will definitely start to look suspicious.

Efx: sheet being thrown off a box.

KATIE

Recognize this one?

Efx: wet popping noise.

JOHN

Unfortunately, yes. I suppose nothing surprises me now.

KATIE

Extraction complete, cube is loaded.

JOHN

Alrighty, Project Cyclops. Trial 5-charlie-3. Timestamp is registering correctly. Initiating playback in 3...

2...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1...

Initiate.

Efx: distinctive noise.

THE SABER FORMULATION

IN A RANDOM LAB AT THE ROTH LOBDOW CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH.

In the middle of an argument

Efx: Lab ambience. Beeps. Fans. Glass on glass. Etc.

JIM

You're wrong. Admit it.

TOBY

I'm not wrong; I'm dead on.

NARRATOR

Jim and Toby stood at the same lab table, deep in the bowels of the Roth Lobdow Center for Advanced Research. Everyone that worked there just called it the Center.

As they talked, their eyes and hands carefully measured and weighed various compounds, adding them in the correct order with one deviation.

This time, using heat, they were going to distill the liquid to collect the gas.

JIM

(laughing)

You're not even close to being "dead on"-whatever the hell that means.

TOBY

You just can't admit to being wrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIM

Oh my god, if I was wrong, I would admit it, but I'm not so I won't.

Efx: Door opens and footsteps

NARRATOR

Pam walked into the lab, smiling at Jim, her boyfriend, and then at Toby, the head scientist of the project.

PAM

How we doing in here, boys?

TOBY

Hey, Pam.

(to Jim)

My doctorate outweighs your masters degree, Jim. I think I'll take the doctor's advice over the lab assistant's.

JIM

Pam, you're right on time to settle an argument, and I'll have my doctorate in two weeks, Toby.

TOBY

And?

JIM

And then you'll have to call me Doctor Lab Assistant.

PAM

(laughing)

Doctor Lab Assistant. Oh, I like the sound of that.

TOBY

Yeah, you would.

PAM

What's the argument?

JIM

Toby says that-

TOBY

Shhhhhh. Don't spoil our judge in your favor. Write down the two words and let her make a ruling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIM

Fine.

TOBY

Fine.

Efx: fast writing on paper followed by a page being torn from a notebook

JIM

Done. Here.

NARRATOR

Pam attempted not to roll her eyes, failing miserably.

This same scenario had played out multiple times over the previous weeks, typically going in Toby's favor.

PAM

(sighing)

Yeah. Sure. I'll look up the wiki and make a ruling.

(Efx: computer keys typing and mouse clicks)

Okay...

Right, here we go. Ready for the official ruling??

(In unison)

JIM

Yes.

TOBY

Yeah.

PAM

Alright then, and I quote:

(read like a school teacher)

There is no universally agreed plural of "platypus" in the English language. Scientists generally use "platypuses" or simply "platypus". Colloquially, the term "platypi" is also used for the plural, although this is technically incorrect and a form of pseudo-Latin; the correct Greek plural would be "platypodes".

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PAM (CONT'D)

(In unison)

JIM  
So I was right.

TOBY  
So I was right.

JIM  
What? Weren't you listening?

TOBY  
Yeah. She said that platypi is  
used for the plural.

JIM  
Yet it's technically incorrect.  
Platypuses is what scientists use.  
You're a scientist, aren't you? We  
work in a lab, right?

TOBY  
Pam, what's your ruling?

PAM  
Jim's right.

TOBY  
Oh, come on. You're dating him. I  
insist on an impartial judge.

PAM  
Denied.

TOBY  
Fine. I'll go over your head to  
the Supervisory Board.

PAM  
(laughing)  
I can't even get an appointment  
with them. They've been balls deep  
in Robert's program.

JIM  
What's he working on again?

TOBY  
Several projects, but I haven't  
heard a thing about any of them.

PAM  
Me neither. All I've gotten out of  
anyone is that it has to do with  
headphones and human subjects.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TOBY

Huh... didn't know Robert was far enough up the totem pole to swing human trials. Where's he from again?

PAM

Robert? California, I think.

Apparently he's getting anything he asks for. Lucas has already cut funding to some of the other projects and even cancelled several contracts.

JIM

Weird.

PAM

Mid study.

(At the same time)

JIM

No way.

What?

TOBY

PAM

Yup. I heard it straight from Erin. Her contract was cancelled and she was only two weeks away from finishing up.

TOBY

(quiet)

Damn. Must be something huge.

PAM

Must be is right.

JIM

Are we in jeopardy?

TOBY

Of course not. The board wouldn't cut our funding.

(silence)

What...

(silence)

Do you know something that we don't?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PAM

No, but I wouldn't be too confident in how strong our position here is.

TOBY

You're serious?

Efx: start a boiling sound effect here

PAM

Yes.

TOBY

There's no way. They flew me in from Florida.

PAM

I don't know what to tell you.

TOBY

Jesus. I never thought the board would have the nuts to fly me in just to cut me.

PAM

Anything's a possibility. That's why it's so important that we buckle down and focus on our goal. Keeping to that track, what's on tap for today? What were you both working on before it all devolved into an argument on platypi versus platypuses.

TOBY

We-FUCK.

Efx: frantic movements and footsteps. Loud beaker explosion (glass exploding? shattering?). Everyone coughing and wheezing from the fumes.

PAM

(woozy)  
I can't... I can't...

Efx: body hitting the tile

TOBY

(woozy)  
No.

Efx: body hitting the tile

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JIM

(woozy)  
Everyone going to sleep on me...

Efx: body hitting the tile

NARRATOR

Jim was the first to come back to consciousness three hours later. His head pounded like he'd had too much to drink the night before and his tongue was swollen as if he'd been chewing on it.

He sat up slowly, careful of the glass on the tile and inside his head.

Efx: moans, glass moving against tile as Jim attempts to get up

JIM

(hung over)  
Jesus, my head.  
(Efx: more glass movement)  
Pam? Oh God, Pam. Wake up. C'mon.

PAM

(coughing)  
Jim?

JIM

Yeah, it's me. Are you okay?

PAM

I think? Where's Toby?

JIM

Uhh.  
(Efx: more glass movement.)  
Behind the counter.  
(to Toby)  
Toby.  
Hey, Toby, wake up!  
(Efx: slapping Toby's face)  
Toby.  
(Efx: slapping Toby's face)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

                  TOBY  
                  (coughing and coming  
                  to)  
What happened?

                  JIM  
The relief valve pressure was set  
too high and the gas cylinder  
blew.

                  TOBY  
It what?

                  JIM  
It blew up and for whatever reason  
the hood malfunctioned too. We all  
passed out from the fumes.

                  TOBY  
I feel like I drank a whole bar.

                  PAM  
Same. What formulation were you  
both testing today?

                  TOBY  
The Saber Formulation.

                  PAM  
Why wasn't the relief valve  
pressure set lower?

                  TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
Because you distracted me with  
that Robert nonsense.

                  PAM  
What?

                  TOBY  
I didn't say anything.

                  JIM  
Yeah, you did. You said that Pam  
distracted you with all that  
Robert nonsense.

                  TOBY  
Oh. Sorry. Guess the fumes still  
have me a little high?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

PAM

I'll say. We can come back to that later. Right now we need to focus on getting out of here and into safe air.

TOBY

There's no need to worry about air quality. The Center didn't skimp on any of their labs. The fumes were out of this room almost as fast as they were expelled.

JIM

All that expense didn't stop the hood from malfunctioning.

TOBY

Good point.

PAM

We should be fine for now. I can hear the vents running in the ceiling.

We just need to get away from this glass. I'd rather not have to fill out more paperwork than necessary for this mess.

We need to notify the director of the accident.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

We'll lose funding if she does that. What do I do?

JIM

Not sure. Find a new job someplace?

With all your lab experience, I'm sure that won't be too hard.

PAM

Yeah, but I doubt they'll cancel our contract.

They won't be happy, but they won't cancel us. Besides, they've kept Gabe around for this long and he's had several projects go belly up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

NARRATOR

Toby didn't speak for a long time,  
instead, he sat on the floor  
trying to figure out what was  
happening.

PAM

Jim, can you go ahead and start  
cleaning up? I'm going to call the  
director and let him know what's  
happened.

JIM

Yeah, no problem. You sure you're  
okay to get up?

PAM

Yeah. I can take care of myself.

JIM

(laughing)  
Right. Didn't say you couldn't.

PAM

Nothing about this is funny, Jim.

JIM

Yeah. Got it.

TOBY

Uh. Guys?

JIM

Yeah?

PAM

What's up?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Can you hear me?

JIM

I'm talking back to you, aren't I?

PAM

Same.

You feeling okay? We can always  
send for a doctor if you need one.

TOBY

(snorting)  
I am a doctor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

JIM

See? He's totally fine.

TOBY

(sharply)

Will the both of you keep quiet  
and pay attention? I think I  
discovered something and I need  
your help.

NARRATOR

Jim and Pam turned to face Toby,  
whose face was a bit too pale. He  
was staring down at the lab table,  
eyes crawling over the wreckage of  
the destroyed experiment.

PAM

What's going on, Toby?

NARRATOR

Pam knew that Toby only got that  
tone in his voice when he was on  
to something big and there was no  
way she was going to allow herself  
or Jim get in the way of whatever  
that discovery was.

TOBY

Watch my lips.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Don't take your eyes off of them.

JIM

Okay. Watching.

(At same time)

PAM

(quietly)

Oh my God.

TOBY

(quietly)

Huh.

NARRATOR

Everyone was quiet for a while,  
lost in their own thoughts.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Will this get the board off our  
backs?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

PAM

Yeah.

Yeah, I think it will.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Fantastic.

JIM

Will what get the board off our backs?

TOBY

You try, Pam.

PAM

Alright.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

This is what's gonna get the board off our backs.

NARRATOR

Jim's brow furrowed. He couldn't believe what he was seeing even though it was right there in front of him.

JIM (THOUGHTS)

(garbled speech: I  
imagine this as  
sounding like  
someone losing cell  
reception where  
parts of words, and  
sometimes whole  
phrase, just fall  
away completely.)

PAM (THOUGHTS)

I didn't catch that.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Me neither. Try again, Jim.

JIM (THOUGHTS)

(garbled speech)

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Dammit. So it's not 100%...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Okay, before you start coming up with limitations, let's relax and enjoy the fact that we now have the abilities to read each other's minds.

That's kind of huge...

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Yeah, I guess I just wanted... I don't know what I wanted.

JIM (THOUGHTS)

(garbled speech)

PAM (THOUGHTS)

It's not working, Jim.

JIM

Dammit.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Why can't he do what we can?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

I'm not sure. We'd probably need to experiment with it a bit more.

PAM

Hmmmm.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

We can probably schedule some time tomorrow.

JIM

Does this include me?

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Of course it does, Jim.

JIM

Why aren't either of you talking anymore?

PAM

(attempts to speak,  
turns into a garbled  
mess)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Wait. I can't speak now? I can only communicate using my mind?

JIM

You try to talk, Toby.

TOBY

(attempts to speak,  
turns into a garbled  
mess)

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Same for me.

I wonder if the fumes we all inhaled damaged parts of the left brain hemisphere while enhancing... I'm not sure. Frontal lobe... ish?

So basically while Pam and I gained the ability to communicate telepathically, we also lost the ability to use normal speech due to the damage.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Is this permanent?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

I can't know that.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

As if being with Jim wasn't hard enough, now I won't be able to explain away things like-

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

(interrupting)

Pam. Keep a hold on your thoughts. They're leaking out.

JIM

No, Pam. Finish it. Explain away things like what?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Jim, it doesn't matter. They were just stray thoughts.

I'm sure you have all sorts of stray thoughts, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

JIM

Not really. Pam, who was the last person you had sex with?

PAM (THOUGHTS)

Toby.

Shit.

JIM

Toby, huh?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

Jim, it's not true. She was just thinking of the person standing in front of her. It's not what you think.

JIM

I'm standing in front of her.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

He knows now, Toby. We might as well tell him the rest.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

The rest?

JIM

Oh, this should be great. I can't wait to hear what the rest is.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

I don't even know what the rest is.

NARRATOR

The three paused for a moment. No one sure what was coming next except for Pam.

PAM (THOUGHTS)

I'm pregnant.

(silence)

Well? Doesn't anyone have anything to say?

(silence then  
sighing)

I think it's Toby's.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

I don't even care.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

PAM (THOUGHTS)  
You should if it's yours.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
You don't even know if it's mine.

Efx: Glass crunching as Pam steps toward Toby

PAM (THOUGHTS)  
But what if it is?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
Guess that makes you a slut,  
doesn't it?

JIM  
Watch yourself, Toby.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
I'm just saying. A slut's gonna be  
a slut and I don't want anything  
to do with that.

Efx: Glass crunching as Pam steps toward Toby

PAM (THOUGHTS)  
Toby, please.

TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
What are you doing?  
(Pam is trying to hug  
him. What follows is  
an accident.)  
Get your fucking hands off me!

Efx: Glass crunching as Pam rushes towards Toby. Toby  
pushes her and she falls

JIM  
What the hell's the matter with  
you? Oh God. Pam?  
(pause)  
Fuck, she hit her head on the  
table. Why'd you have to push her?  
(pause)  
Ah, she's seizing. Call someone!

TOBY (THOUGHTS)  
No.

JIM  
What are you doing? Call someone  
for her!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

No, I don't think so. She'll be fine.

JIM

Fine? Are you not seeing what's happening here?

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

This will ruin everything.

All my hard work and dedication.  
Up in flames. My discovery will go  
to someone else.

Robert.

JIM

Quit worrying about your career  
and keep her from cutting herself  
in the glass. I'll make the call.

Efx: walking away

TOBY (THOUGHTS)

No, you won't.

Efx: wrestling noises, punches, glass, etc. Gurgling  
noise after Jim stabs Toby in the throat with glass. Toby  
dies.

NARRATOR

As soon as Toby placed his hand on  
Jim's shoulder a fight broke out.  
Jim turned on Toby, attacking him  
with speed and strength. Toby,  
fearing for his life, picked up a  
piece of glass. Jim smiled and  
rushed him, catching Toby's wrist  
easily and redirecting the shard  
into Toby's own throat.

JIM

(panting)  
Look what you made me do.

Efx: sits in glass

NARRATOR

Shortly after watching Toby quit  
breathing, guards entered the lab  
and escorted Jim to an  
interrogation room.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He'd seen the same type of room a million times on cop shows. There was a table in the center and mirrored glass on one of the walls. He thought that it was probably a double-sided mirror.

He was right.

On the opposite side of the mirror sat a man. His name badge read: Robert, and he was from California. He scribbled notes on the pad before him, waiting for the company interrogator to arrive.

Efx: writing noises

ROBERT (THOUGHTS)

The Saber Formulation built on the previous work substantially. All subjects displayed extensive paranoia of one another.

The only surviving subject did not lose his ability to speak. He claims that he was able to hear the other subjects' thoughts, direct evidence of the intense delusions that the Saber Formulation causes in even small doses.

I will need to play with the formula to ensure that when this is used on a population, every member will lose speech and the paranoia will cause them to rip each other apart.

Once perfected, a weaponized formulation could be used on an enemy population with extreme efficiency. Or on our own population in case of a riot or other political cause.

This will fetch quite a bit of money for the Center.

**OUTRO BUMPER**

(CONTINUED)

