




PRINCE (cont.)

What do you mean, "If I have to?" Do you *want* to destroy my planet?

BILL

Yes. I'm sorry, but yes. An asteroid this size is a city-killer. If it were bigger, it would pose a continental or global threat. There would be no debate. We'd blow it up.

PRINCE

Which city is my asteroid going to hit?

BILL

Or ocean or cow pasture. We don't know. That's what we're waiting to find out. We send the dimensions home; they determine the trajectory. Lydia, any response yet?

LYDIA

Not yet, Captain.

PRINCE

So right now, you're waiting to see which city it's going to hit? Why does that matter?

BILL

That's just how things are back home. That's how our leadership thinks. (Beat.) It makes no difference to us. We're stuck here anyway, waiting for either impact or detonation.

PRINCE

I've been to Earth. I was young. I met a pilot. He was stranded in the desert with a broken airplane. He spent time with me, and we fixed it together.

LYDIA

(To PRINCE.) Would you like to listen to the one-minute news report while you work?

BILL

Dammit, Lydia.

PRINCE

No, thank you.

LYDIA

In Washington today...

PRINCE

Lydia, what's it like on your planet? Are the people happy?

LYDIA

The overall global rate of reported happiness is around 70%, which represents a declining trend over recent years.

PRINCE

What about young people? Are the young people happy?

LYDIA

(Hesitates.) Overall, no. Decreased face-to-face interaction, coming of age during a global pandemic, and hate-based rhetoric from political leadership have led to a sense of division and isolation among youth.

PRINCE

Like an asteroid belt.

LYDIA

You seem depressed. Would you like to hear a joke?

PRINCE

No, I'm happy. I have my rose. She needs me to take care of her, and I need her so I have something to take care of.

LYDIA

I understand. You spend time with your rose because she is important to you.

PRINCE

No. She's important to me because I spend time with her.

(PRINCE finishes tinkering with the strut component and returns it to BILL.)