Reaganology

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by WirelessW

Summary

Reagan does a little research and decides she probably should have looked into this whole "autism" things sooner

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

It was an ordinary day at Cognito Inc. The artificial Sun was shining, the phantom time team was busy working on the next Assassin’s Creed game and Sandy Petersen was giving a talk on the importance of hiding elements of the truth in plain sight. Reagan felt her phone buzz as she waited for an elevator and rolled her eyes, certain it was just another of her father's overengineered crises. Instead, it was a meme from Brett, about the deep satisfaction that could be gained from sorting skittles into different colours. She grinned. Finally, someone else got it.

As luck would have it, she met him on her way to the meeting room. They fell into step together, and made idle conversation as they made their way through the sprawling maze that was the Cognito Inc HQ until she remembered the picture he’d sent. “That was pretty funny, by the way. Kind of surprised, though, I didn’t know you were into that sort of thing. You seem like more the kind of guy who just chugs the whole bag.”

Brett smiled what even she could recognise as his 'trying not to give away the lie' smile. "Oh, you know, it just reminded me of you. Seemed like the sort of thing you'd say, you know."

"Oh! Oh yeah, sure totally." Whatever. He'd probably found it on some dumb facebook page for overgrown boyscouts.

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They kept coming after that, a new one every morning. From a guy using Tinder to show girls his collection of interesting rocks to Kermit the Frog gazing forlornly out the window when a call scheduled for 10 hadn’t started yet at 10:03. It became a comfortable routine, something to smile about before the working day began. "Brett you have been on a roll with this stuff lately."

"Oh, yeah? Would you say you consider them all relatable?"

"Yeah! Yeah, whoever did all this really gets me. Say, where are you finding all these?"

Suddenly he seemed a lot less confident. "Oh, you know, just a subreddit I stumbled on one time."

"Yeah? What's it about?"

He seemed to draw in on himself, and when he replied it was with a mumbled "Uh..usms"

"What was that?" God, he wasn’t falling for one of those online rabbit holes they set up to keep far-right assholes distracted, was he? Glenn was bad enough on his own.

Brett sighed. "It’s a subreddit for autism memes."

She took a moment to digest this. "...man I really gotta look into that, huh?"

[LATER THAT NIGHT]

Reagan looked at the screen, and then down at her beer, and then back at the screen.

"Son of a bitch", she muttered, "Guess that explains a couple of things."

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Going into work the next day was a strange experience. She knew better than to put too much stock in a flimsy self-diagnosis, and she'd arranged to talk to a professional next week. The entire way to the office, she found herself second-guessing what she thought she knew. She'd always hated crowds, was that an autism thing or did she just hate crowds? Was there a meaningful difference? She drummed her fingers on the steering wheel waiting at a red light, then wondered if that counted as stimming and stopped. Then she wondered why she'd stopped, and forced herself to start again.

One of the sites had mentioned how common it was for autistic people to self-medicate with alcohol and oh boy she was just not even gonna touch that one.

She darted into the boardroom and burst out "Brett I think I might be autistic!"

Too late, she realised everyone else was already there.

"So you really do have Asperger's?" asked Andre, "I figured."

"Yeah no shit" agreed Myc, "I barely even know how you guys' brains work but I coulda told you that."

"All the time you spend in people's heads and you don't know how they work?" snorted Gigi.

"You ever been in a plane? Yeah, how's a jet engine work? Could you fix one if it broke?"

Gigi raised one hand to argue but conceded the point.

Reagan sighed. OK. So maybe she'd just accidentally said that in front of all her coworkers. Fine. She began to pace up and down the table, "I haven't had myself diagnosed yet, but I'm pretty sure I'm SOMEWHERE on the spectrum. Not gonna call it Asperger's though, because holy shit we should not be using that man's name on medical documentation."

"Why not?" asked Brett.

"He was a Nazi collaborator."

"Well shit", opined Glenn.

"Like, can you imagine if someone had twins with blue eyes and it's like, ah yes these babies have Mengele Syndrome!"

"Did Dr Asperger at least have a Slayer song about him? Or at least Anthrax."

"Uh, I don't think so, no."

"Lame."

“And the diagnosis is gonna be a little more complicated because apparently a lot of doctors will assess the same behaviour in guys and girls and say the guy’s autistic but the girl has, like 3 other things instead.”

“Fuckin why?”

“I dunno, I got the feeling if I looked into it properly it was gonna be one of those things rooted in historical misogyny and toxic macho bullshit so I didn’t bother.”

Brett shrugged. “Fair. You gonna tell Mothman?”

“Figure I better. And – man, I don’t wanna tell JR. I just feel like he’s gonna be an asshole about it.”

“What, like he is about most things?” asked Myc.

"Yeah, pretty much. Did I ever tell you guys when I was up for promotion – oh.” She stopped as the meaning of that conversation fully sank in. “The eye contact thing. The fucking eye contact thing! Holy shit, I gotta put something bad in his coffee."

Andre perked up. "How bad? One to ten"

"Can you give me a four, four and a half but, like, with ongoing side effects?"

"No problem. He's not gonna sit right for at least a month"

"Love it."

"I can keep the worse version on standby in case he's a dick about it. It's a six."

"Andre, thank you. Next time I find one of your mi-go spore moonshine stills I'm gonna pretend I didn't see it."

"Appreciate it."

She spun on her heel. "Hey, Gigi?"

"Yeah?"

"Can you get the people who did Big Bang Theory working on a historical drama?"

"What kind of drama? Founding Fathers, last days of the Romanovs, what are we talking here?"

"Kennedys. Camelot, 1960s."

"Uh huh. And I'm guessing you want Noel to take some annual leave around about the time they start filming?"

"Oh, would you? That'd be great."

Gigi fixed her with a flat stare. “And you’re sure you’re not just using him for a personal revenge fantasy? Revenge for something that happened years ago, and that at the time you didn’t even know to be mad about it?”

She sighed. “You’re right. I’m letting this get away from me. Still gonna put that stuff in his coffee, though. Fuckin’ eye contact, like seriously?”

“I have no idea what you even mean, but I assume he deserves it.”

“OK great. Well, I just burned a whole bunch of my spoons all in one go so unless anything important is happening I’m gonna head down to my workshop. OK cool bye!” She didn’t quite run from the room, but it was a close thing.

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It took her a while to destress and start working in earnest, but before too long she was hard at work on a problem the weather control department had passed her way.

There was a knock at the door. It didn’t sound like anyone she particularly wanted to avoid at the moment, so she had one of her spare robot arms unlock it. It turned out to be Brett, which was a good start. Then he handed her a coffee, which made him her favourite person in the office. “How are you feeling?” he asked.

“I dunno. Nice to have a name to put on stuff, so I got that going for me.”

“You know, if you look on the bright side there’s probably a lot of messed up stuff your parents said when you were a kid that just went straight over your head.”

She quirked an eyebrow. “That’s the bright side?”

He shrugged. “Well, it’s kind of an if-a-tree-falls-in-the-forest thing, I guess.”

“Huh. Well, I guess sometimes you gotta take what you can get.”

“Oh!” he slapped his forehead, “There actually is a bright side, now I think about it.”

“Oh yeah?”

“You know those dumb memes I was sending you? Well, I couldn’t send the ones that mentioned autism by name, but now I can.”

She smiled. If she was still gonna get her daily pick-me-up before heading into work, then that was fine with her. The fact that one of the camera feeds had just caught JR sprinting desperately for a bathroom was just the icing on the cake.

End Notes

Thank you for reading Reaganology.

I never did get around to watching season 2, now I think of it.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!