

Social Commentary for Great Justice

By Psion
For Gregthelongcriercat
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It was a beautifully sunny Saturday, the sun hanging in the noontime position above the city. Inside the small diner, chef and owner Josephine leaned against the counter for a few minutes before her three favorite regulars came in before the lunch rush. Or at least, what passed for the lunch rush at “Joe’s Place.”

Josephine’s restaurant was a fairly small place at the edge of one of Bay City’s middle-income neighborhoods. Tucked away in a small block of shops situated below street level, some city official’s development scheme to maximize commercial space, Joe’s Place was situated next to a late-night bakery and a sign shop. All three of them about ten feet below the shared neon halo that would attempt to lure pedestrians down the concrete stairs to their storefronts once the sun went down.

The interior of the diner wasn’t exactly much, certainly nothing as eye-catching as that franchise down the street that Joe was stuck competing with. One large room with a waist-high counter separating the dining area from the kitchen, restrooms down a small side hallway largely out of sight of most of the eating space, and a taste of décor that was perhaps best described as eccentric. Pictures and murals provided by local artists accented the walls and provided a feeling of contrast to the 1950’s-esque booths and tables filling up the dining room floor. Fortunately, the quality of her burgers more than spoke for themselves, drawing in a small crowd of regulars that were more than enough to keep the big brown-furred raccoon afloat. And as luck would have it, her three favorite customers were coming through the door right now.

First was a plump red-furred vixen, her paunchy figure forming a slight pear-shape, pale blue eyes regarding her surroundings with a curious glimmer as she ran her fingers through her curly red locks. Her dress consisted of a pair of black pants, a white t-shirt, and black vest. This was Alexis Persephone Vinnicks; a clever girl, very inquisitive and one of the few people Josephine knew that embodied the phrase “possessing a rapier’s wit.” Alexis smiled and raised her hand in greeting; Josephine nodded then turned to busy herself with the grill, looking over her shoulder as the bell above the door rang once more and disgorged the vixen’s two friends.

Right behind Vinnicks was someone Joe never could quite figure out. A male feline with a flat brush tail and a stocky, slightly overfed build of sorts barely visible beneath his baggy clothes. Stephen Tyler Andrews, an odd one if the raccoon ever saw one, most of the time he hid his face behind a mask that looked like something the tom-cat acquired from the set of a defunct science-fiction drama, some sort of social phobia or something. But he proved to be harmless enough and the chef quickly took a liking to him when he complimented the “Golden Patriot” dartboard she hung behind the counter. It wasn’t much, just a couple sheets of corkboard nailed together with a picture of the city’s controversial superhero stapled on top. But it made a great target for throwing

darts and an excellent conversation piece, not to mention a nice way to make fun of the Golden Patriot fan club. Yet when Stephen first saw it, he wanted to know how she made it so he could make one for himself... that's when Josephine knew Alexis found the right sort of person to follow her on her misadventures.

Bethany "Kass" Wheson was in a way the opposite of the stereotypical ferret much in the same way Joe supposed Alexis was the anti-vixen. A big-bellied female with blue eyes, black hair, a spiked leather collar around her neck, and a seemingly perpetual frown on her face, Kass was invariably the bruiser of the group. A nice girl underneath it all, or at least Josephine thought so, but definitely enjoyed a good ruckus perhaps a little too much. Her normally stormy mood lightened when she spotted Josephine working at the grill though. The raccoon didn't know if the ferret had the same love of food she did but Kass certainly liked her burgers, happily ordering a Gutbomb burger heaped with toppings and served with a basket of French fries every time she stepped into Joe's Place.

"Hello Alex, you and your friends want your usual?" Joe asked with a wry smile.

"Yes please." Alexis began.

"Yes please." Stephen echoed, his voice clear and distinct despite the mask covering his face, a strange one to be sure but definitely not an incoherent one.

"Of course!" Kass replied matter of fact. Even when she was being polite, the ferret came off as gruff.

With a practiced swiftness, the raccoon went to work cooking up three burgers, engaging her guests in idle conversation while she listened for the doorbell to jingle again. Yet no one else stopped by while she worked, hopefully that didn't mean today was going to be a slow day...

Vinnicks leaned against the counter while her friends got a seat at their usual booth in the corner, idly watching the chef work as she waited for their order to come up. Josephine Meadows was a cook fresh out of culinary school, not much older than the trio, and taking a big risk starting her own restaurant without too much money to her name. Still, for those that admired such things, the raccoon's body was without a doubt the best endorsement for her cooking anyone could come up with. Black hair tied back into a neat little bun, bright hazel brown eyes, and a broadly built body. Joe was a big girl, easily bigger than even Kass, and most of her weight was concentrated below the waist in a bottom-heavy pear. A plump belly struggled in vain to provide a counter-weight to her thick hips and enormous butt, there was no doubt that if Meadows couldn't keep the restaurant open there would be a fairly successful career in professional wrestling waiting for her. And while Alexis' boyfriend Stephen was good around her, the fox didn't doubt that some of the other male regulars would mind seeing the raccoon in spandex tights.

Her body blocking the vixen's view of the stove like a bad Grocho Marx joke, Josephine moved surprisingly quickly as she cooked three burgers on a flat top grill,

sliced and diced the toppings on the nearby wooden counter, and fried the French fries in a bubbling fryer filled with oil. A heavenly aroma of fried food soon filled the room as their lunch came together.

Alexis smiled as Josephine finished putting their order on a tray, the vixen paying their tab and taking the burgers, soft drinks, and three steaming piles of fresh French fries to their usual corner booth. Orders were handed out and the three friends began to talk amongst themselves about college and their jobs or the search to find one. Times were tough in the city and they didn't seem to be getting any better any time soon. Jobs were few and what ones that exists were low-end service and manufacturing jobs, people were moving in with family or friends that managed to find work, and crime was starting to become a problem; as much because of the Golden Patriot as in spite of him. And in the middle of it was the three of them, just three adults in their early twenties trying to get by and have fun without incident. Speaking of which...

"So, we have an afternoon to ourselves. How do we want to spend it?" Alexis asked while thoughtfully munching on some French fries. The vixen had no idea what Josephine used instead of the usual cooking oil preferred by the franchises but damn was it good.

"How about we go to the mall and laugh at the assholes getting in line for whatever they're putting on sale now?" Kass replied before biting into a thick burger covered in pickles, onions, lettuce, and tomato and dripping with condiments. Between the diversity of the toppings and the sheer size of it, the Gut Bomb lived up to its name. There was no doubt that thing was going to blow up into a huge brick inside the ferret punk's well-padded belly and leave her with a nice full feeling until dinner.

Stephen shrugged, having no complaints about their choice as the trio finished up their lunch and went out to catch the bus. The bus stop was strewn with trash but otherwise fairly non-descript, just a little glass and steel hut with a recent bus schedule sheltered from the elements by a metal frame and a glass plate. A few minutes later a boxy blue and red city bus pulled up and stopped at the sidewalk, the stench of exhaust wafting up from the street, causing sensitive furry noses to twitch in disgust, as the vehicle disgorged some passengers; a few seconds later the trio squeezed together into a bench in the middle of the bus. A few minutes later the diesel engine roared defiantly as the leviathan people mover began to take its occupants to the mall to kill time and do some shopping....

The mall was bright and cheerful, skylights letting in the afternoon light as the crowd of weekend shoppers flooded the shops for a big clothing sale or the new release of the latest electronic gadget. It was still fairly early in the afternoon, meaning most of the shopping crowd had yet to arrive. Yet while Hot Topic and the GAP were largely empty except for bored store clerks and shelves of over-priced denim jeans, a line was starting to form outside of the local Gamestop. Posters for the latest Call of Duty video game lined the store windows as an attendant wheeled out a huge digital clock already

counting down to the game's midnight release, the huge lime green numbers staring at the trio as if it was silently challenging them. The electronic timepiece glared at them, mocking them, daring them to criticize the glorious moment it was counting down to as it was carefully hung over the store entrance.

"Fuck, it's that time of year again?" Stephen asked rhetorically in a barely audible hiss. Alexis shook her head while Kass choked back a snort. "Every damn year, without fail, how can people be so stupid to buy the same game over and over again?" The cat grumbled.

"Same kind of idiots who keep rushing to buy the latest Iphone when it only gets replaced by a newer, slimmer model three months later." Alexis replied, shaking her head again. "Forget it, let's go get some milkshakes at the food court." She suggested, leading the others away from the growing crowd of fanboy drones.

The mall food court was fairly typical of the concept, an open space filled with mass-produced tables and chairs surrounded by a ring of outlets representing a variety of fast-food franchises. Regretfully there wasn't anything like Joe's Place, hardly any of the fry cooks and cashiers could be bothered give a fraction of the sort of care Josephine put into her cooking, but as franchises they did run the occasional special or hand out the occasional coupon booklet for people looking to stretch their purchasing dollars.

This week a local chain called "Slurp-n-Go" was having a "buy one, get one at half price" special on their milkshakes. The kiosk did a brisk business selling milkshakes, smoothies, and slurpies, becoming well known for larger than average serving sizes; their small was someone else's medium and so on. Between that and the excellent taste of their products, Slurp-n-Go did almost as much as Josephine when it came to adding inches on Alexis and Kass's waistlines. Five minutes later, the ferret returned with three large milkshakes. Drinks in hand, they began to indulge in one of their favorite hobbies, walking around and talking about the mall.

"So they opened a Cinnabon up where the old Virginia Barbeque used to be. Can't say I'm surprised they closed considering they charged twice as much for half the food as other places. Want to see if the cinnamon buns are any good?" Alexis began, observing the latest addition to the food court's lineup.

"Nah, I prefer that little bakery that just opened up next to Josephine's, Little Treats. You know, the place ran by that kangaroo Cassie Witherspoon?" Kass replied, shrugging dismissively at the suggestion.

"Oh yeah I remember her now, how are the pastries there?" Alexis blinked as she mentally recalled the little bakery right next door to Joe's Place. The vixen was always curious about it but hadn't found the time to step inside yet.

"Every time I go in, I swear I feel like I leave five pounds heavier. I don't know what she does but God is it delicious." The ferret smiled, eyes briefly glazing over as she

recollected the cookies, donuts, and other delicious treats Witherspoon baked fresh every day. “And she’s awesome... one time I was there she chased off a pair of vandals with a metal rolling pin. Not sure how she’d feel about Stephen though, probably wouldn’t think he was round enough.” The group’s heavy added with a grin.

“I’m sure we’ll get along just fine. I mean I get along with Josephine well enough.” Stephen countered.

“Yeah but Joe’s more of the ‘fat and happy’ stereotype, Cassie feels more like a bigger me.” Kass rebutted, still grinning as she recalled the memory of a fat kangaroo beating up some punks with a rolling pin.

“Yeah, well I get along with you don’t I?” The masked feline reiterated.

“Maybe we could go drop by Little Treats after we’re done here, pick up something out of whatever Witherspoon has leftover at the end of the day?” Alexis suggested.

“Yeah, I mean it’s not like we’re stupid enough to wait in line for nine hours for them to release the same game they released last year.” Kass replied, noticing only too late that they had finished walking around the entire mall and ended up right where they started before making the decision to go get milkshakes... in front of the Gamestop where an even bigger line of Call of Duty fans had gathered to wait for the midnight release. Some of the fanboys in line were starting to look at the hecklers with an annoyed expression on their faces. A few of them regarded the plush vixen and her two friends with a scowl that could flash-freeze a lukewarm cola, a storm of the metaphorical variety was beginning to form outside of the Gamestop at that moment.

“Well...” Vinnicks attempted to begin. Saying this was awkward was certainly the understatement of the month.

“Well why wouldn’t you want to camp in line? It’s Call of Duty: Ghosts! And we’re going to be the first to play it!” Someone in the line retorted haughtily.

“Except it’s going to drop in price by about ten dollars in three months and the servers are going to be so full at launch you won’t be able to play for the first few weeks anyway.” Kass rebutted nonchalantly. “Besides, isn’t it just the same game as Black Ops 2?”

“No it’s not, Ghosts is going to be completely new! They added a dog and aliens!” One of the gamers, a panda sitting in a camping chair and playing Angry Birds on a smart phone to pass the nine-hour wait until midnight, called out. Dressed in a notarized t-shirt proclaiming the game’s title across his chest, it was pretty obvious what he thought of the next Call of Duty game. The amount of “righteous” indignation in his face would have been intimidating were not Alexis and her two friends not painfully aware that this whole argument was about a video game.

“A dog and aliens?” Kass rebutted. “Really? That’s all it takes to get you excited?” The ferret asked incredulously. “Wow, maybe I should learn to develop my own video games, I’d be rich in no time.” She added, clearly resisting the urge to smirk as the consumerist fanboys almost jumped up out of their place in line to get at her. Behind her Alexis rolled her eyes, already she could tell this conversation was going nowhere fast.

“Why don’t you go play your buggy Battlefield?” The panda shot back. While certainly not telepathic, Stephen reached the same conclusion that Alexis had; this was really not going to go anywhere.

“Perhaps we should get going. Did you want to show us that bakery you were talking about Kass?” Stephen suggested quickly. “We aren’t really doing anything here anyway.”

“Sure, beats arguing with a bunch of idiots more burnt out than an Xbox with the red ring of death.” The ferret replied glumly, clearly she was hoping to get into one fight before they left the mall.

“Hah, fatties probably spend so much on food they couldn’t afford a copy anyway.” Another gamer, a skinny weasel that looked like he couldn’t be bothered to break away from his controller long enough to make himself a sandwich, catcalled as they started to leave.

Really? Really? You ran out of material that quickly? The masked feline thought to himself as he automatically turned right back around and rebutted. “Oh look at how clever you are, let’s make fun of the fatty fatties for being fat. Your parents must be so proud of you for being such a bottomless fountain of creativity and wit. I mean really, what are you? Still in fucking junior high?”

“Actually, yes I am. And what are you, a chubby chaser?” The weasel countered effortlessly.

“Yes, of course I must be. Clearly my annoyance has nothing to do with the fact that you must have a very limited supply of wit if you must resort to fat remarks less than five minutes after the initial jabs have been made. No, having the three of us leave does not mean you won. Unless of course you define winning by successfully proving that you can’t argue for shit then yeah, you won spectacularly.” Stephen replied expertly, unloading both metaphorical barrels into his verbal opponent.

There was silence after that. For a moment the three of them thought the other group was going to let the matter drop, Alexis and her friends certainly were considering it. And indeed, the weasel opened and shut his mouth a few times before he decided he didn’t have anything to add and gradually went back to glaring at the masked feline and

his two overstuffed friends until they left. Unfortunately it didn't look like a few of them were quite willing to let it go...

"Have you high and mighty PC gamers even played the game?" The panda asked accusingly.

"Nah, we're more into Left 4 Dead. Though since you insist, maybe we'll go pick up the original Modern Warfare on Steam for twenty dollars, as it was probably the last game before the franchise finally jumped the shark and became the official series of Golden Patriot fans everywhere." Alexis replied; getting a few glares from the fanboy drones.

The CoD fanboys snarled as they looked at one another, Stephen could tell that losing their place in line was starting to look like it would be worth it. On reflex the feline was starting to back away slowly, he could fight but it wasn't necessarily something he enjoyed. Out of the three of them he was generally the one to try and resort to talking before breaking faces. "Hey come on guys, it's just the same game every year with a slightly better graphics engine. Is it really worth getting all that worked up over?" He began even though he already knew the answer.

"What are you talking about? Every game they add new zombie maps, weapons, and stories." The fanboy argued, clearly getting more agitated as the conversation wore on. Apparently there was one case to be made about excessive violence in video games right in front of them.

"Actually there are about a dozen games that do the zombie thing better, the weapons are pretty ordinary except for one or two weird ones that you get in zombie mode, and really, a new story? The game has been following the same threadbare, unoriginal propaganda plot for the past four or five games." Alexis countered before turning to her friends. "Hey guys, remember the original Half-Life? Or how about Quake II?"

"Ewww, you're a retro-gamer? What are you doing with that old garbage?" Another consumer waiting in line replied with obvious disgust.

"Because it's still fun after five years and doesn't require a five hundred dollar console to run?" The vixen replied rhetorically. A few of their opponents on this verbal sparring had begun to grit their Mountain Dew and Doritos stained teeth. Their breaking point had just been reached; it wouldn't be too long now...

The first one to decide in favor of giving up his seat for this real-life multiplayer brawl was the panda. Lunging at Kass, he attempted to aim low and send her for a loop with a gut punch. That turned out to be a mistake on his part. Were the punk ferret a thinner girl, the Gut Bomb she ate at Josephine's would have added some badly needed color to the panda's black-and-white t-shirt. As there was roughly a foot of soft, cushioning blubber between her furry pelt and her actual stomach, what would have been

a vomit-inducing blow merely massaged out a brief episode of indigestion she happened to be feeling at the moment. Her opponent finally realized just how well padded she was when all his attack did was elicit a satisfied belch reminding her of her previous meal.

As his fist sank into her gut like a pillow full of marshmallow fluff, the surly black-and-white mustelid flashed a rare smile before punching her opponent squarely in the face, her hammy fists revealed just how much power rested behind them as she knocked the panda off his feet and squarely on his butt. There was nothing quite like a good brawl against to put her in a grinning mood.

The other CoD fans were joining them before Alexis could even blink. One moment Kass was knocking over the panda, the next the ursine fanboy was back on his feet and all his friends were charging the three of them. To her opponents' credit, they did at least correctly identify who was the biggest threat in the vixen's group. After seeing her shrug off a fairly strong punch, for a gamer at any rate, like it was nothing, half the consumers number focused their efforts on taking down the corpulent brawler. Her generous paunch wobbled like gelatin as her belly fat softened the blows to her torso. For whatever reason, not one of her opponents thought to hit Kass in the head where there was significantly less padding to get through. Of course, the ferret was quick to capitalize on this, making sure to knock them all out with a solid punch squarely to the face. Bones cracked ever so softly as she made sure all her hits rang true.

Stephen was glad he seemed to luck out with getting only one to fight. Unfortunately the zealous gamer girl was an enormous brown bear about as wide as Kass was. Hitting her proved to be difficult as she quickly showed that not only was she as well cushioned against blunt trauma as the ferret but she also knew how to hit as hard as Kass did. Not to mention that she had a nice row of sharp teeth that made punching her in the jaw a tricky proposition...

Out of the three, Alexis was probably the most "balanced" fighter. Stout enough to cushion some of the hits to her torso and able to give as good as she got, yet not quite as ponderous as Kass was, she held up pretty well against her two opponents. Especially when she managed to trip one up and make him slip on the polished tile. The other was pummeled easily enough; a few good blows to the face and upper torso took care of him.

Finished with her opponents, Kass turned to help Stephen deal with the she-bear, taking her out with one well-placed haymaker. Further down the mall thoroughfare, security was making its way to the Gamestop. The three turned to one another and briefly glanced at each other before taking off in a run; it was time to go, quickly...

Security sent the next several minutes chasing them through the mall, nightsticks raised over their heads and threats of violence on their lips as they ran after three surprisingly quick punks. If there was one thing Alexis and her friends had plenty of practice at running away from tactically superior forces like five angry security guards that looked eager to earn their pay. The punks gave chase through the mall proper, plowing past other pedestrians and knocking people over in their attempt to escape,

tripping up their pursuers along the way. Eventually they reached the food court, bumping tables and knocking over trays of food as they continued to put some space between security and themselves, causing one guard to slip on a puddle of spilled soda and pratfalling on the tile floor like a cartoon character, groaning as he lay dazed on the ground. Finally, slipping through aisles of trendy clothes they wouldn't be caught dead in even if they could fit in them as they navigated through a JC Penny, they exited the mall through an anchor store and slipped away in the busy crowds of the city outside; just another day for Alexis and her group of anarchist friends....

Cassie Witherspoon sighed as she started to close up for the day. While today was hardly a failure for the Little Treats bakery, it wasn't really a fantastic success either. Once again, it looked like she would just barely break even. The stout kangaroo couldn't understand why, her only real competition in the area was that Cinnabon that just opened in the mall. Perhaps she should look into advertising in the local paper again. She had just turned her back when the doorbell jingled, signaling the arrival of the last customers of the day in her tan tile foyer. Putting on her best smile, Cassie waddled back out of the kitchen to her spot behind the glass counter about half full with unsold pastries that would likely be thrown out in a few hours. Well... some of them at any rate as she felt her broad pastry-fed hips brush against the polished counter holding up her cash register.

"Hello welcome to Little Treats, I'm Cassie Witherspoon how... oh hello Kass, so nice to see you. And are these friends of yours?" The kangaroo flyer asked with a warm smile as she recognized one of her better customers with a relatively zaftig friend in tow and... Witherspoon silently bit back the thoughts that were forming as she spied the feline with them. No, no, he couldn't be THAT kind of person if he was with Kass and the nice-looking vixen. Besides, at a second glance she noticed there was a bit of bulk to him. Hardly enough to please a lady like the vulpine he came in with but perhaps if he started coming in here a few times a week...

"Yeah Cass, this is Alexis and her boyfriend Stephen. Neither of them has been here before so I thought I'd drop by before you closed and see what I could do about cleaning you out." The ferret laughed. Cassie smiled and chuckled with her. A nice girl, for a gruff brawler but the kangaroo one did not get a "proper" belly like the ferret's by eating salads and resisting sweets. And well, if the girl liked to eat, Witherspoon saw no reason to inhibit her. Fatfurs of the world unite and all that wonderful feel-good jazz.

"So how has your day been and what can I get you?" The baker asked, crossing her arms as she leaned against the counter. Stephen realized Kass wasn't kidding about Witherspoon. The tan furred kangaroo was big, nearly four feet wide at the hip, and extremely bottom heavy for her relatively average height. Brown hair was tied back into a neat bun while cool blue eyes regarded the three of them with a professional cool. Yeah, the feline could believe this woman would have fought off vandals with a metal rolling pin. She probably could have won too from the look of the forced smile on her face. Yes, this was definitely a slightly larger Kass if Bethany was a kangaroo...

“Oh you know the usual. Stop by Joe’s Place for lunch, go to the mall, try to stay out of trouble, then come here before we head home for dinner.” Kass replied as she leaned forward to look at what was left for sale. Alexis and Stephen crowded up against their friend as they joined her. Several minutes later they had picked a selection of cookies, donuts, and sweet rolls that were marked down at half-price. Even though they weren’t as fresh as they would have been that morning; Kass was right, the kangaroo was good.

Several minutes later, they said good-bye to their new friend. The ferret hung around a few minutes more to purchase the last dozen donuts to take home with her before leaving Witherspoon’s bakery with a wave. Support two local artisans, get into a fight with a bunch of fanboys, win said fight with a bunch of Call of Duty fanboys, avoid getting arrested, all in all it wasn’t a bad day...