

So there I am. Ready to pull the trigger.

#7 is a Lump flying too damn close to the sun right now. My contacts tell me he's talking about stepping back through space and time. Resurrecting Slime Boy. Bringing back Litter Boy. Observing the Great Mess.

And - more frighteningly - moving forward through time. Exploring that which hasn't yet had the chance to be. It's not right. It's hubris and it will kill us all - or worse.

We cannot colonise the future, nor the past.

People call me a crank. Lumps like me, who resist change, are thought of as ghastly bores. Why don't we get with the times? People ask. Why would we use a smoker when a reactor chest is right there? Why walk when we can fly? Why don't we just. move. on.

I understand that. I know I can be stubborn.

Maybe I am scared of change. After all, Smokers were the pioneers of their day. We have to evolve. Would I rather we were still in the bucket, like the Beer Lumps in #292's paintings? Of course not.

But it's one thing to develop modern reactor chests... and another thing completely to seek to control time. #7 does not wish to be the next great inventor. He wishes to become a god.

And then it happened - and my heart sank.

'I do not wish to be a god, my friend.'

'Who said that!?' I screamed.

But I knew.

'My explorations into space and time will only serve Lumps World, they will not destroy it.'

#7 was in my brain. Listening to my thoughts. Speaking to me.

'Is it not you,' he continues, 'who breaks the dimensional barriers every week with your... oh what's the word... capsules!?'

'You bastard!' I screamed.

'Now, now.' He patronised me, 'There's no need for that tone. Don't make me come in there.'

I look again down the scope, ready to shoot. He's looking right back at me from the centre of the party - hundreds of yards away. Shit, I thought, that's a little unsettling. As if the telepathy wasn't enough.

I'm ready to do it now, for Lumps World. But before I can pull the trigger, two hands are on my shoulder and I'm thrust backwards.

#160 and #165.

Two notorious soldiers of Lumps World are in my attic room with me. Their fluorescent goo heads light up the room a soft green. They are twins. Brown skinned, robo suits. It can be hard to tell them apart, but from my investigations into #7's goons I know instantly which is which: #165's heart shaped glasses and #160's gold teeth give it away.

Not that any of that helps me now, they are equally deadly - and their technology is off the chain.

'What do you want from me?' I yell.

They say nothing, but their gooey heads light up and I am lifted into the air. What is this power?

Suddenly the room fills with light and seems to rip in half, as though the very fabric of Lumps World is being torn up. Is this The Rapture?

Ha.

No. It was not the Rapture.

In fact it was the rather pointless but nonetheless very grand choice of entrance of an old acquaintance of mine...

(Well, after this it's probably fair to say, it was the entrance of an old friend.)

As the dust settled in the now brightly lit attic room which had been my not-so-secret hideout for these last few weeks, I saw the hulking silhouette of #147. As is the nature of his paradoxical life, it was actually his robo glasses I noticed first - not his glowing chest.

In his right hand he held a thin robo weapon - sort-of-pistol, sort-of-walking stick, covered in green flashing lights and emitting a pinkish red glow - and in the other he had a big stick, which he soon plunged into his chest and set on fire. It was some image.

The startled twins turned and begun firing on #147, who floated around like a bare knuckle boxer from the first Great Mess era. Agile and aggressive. Dodging attacks and countering with swings of his fire club and, less often, shots of his own from his gun/walking-aid thing. Soon enough he landed a blow to #165's head, knocking his glasses clean off. Unbelievably, that seemed to blind the soldier completely. I guess they must have been prescription glasses. Who knew!?

As he scabbled around on the floor, #147 and #160 proceeded to play cat and mouse with each other around the room. Knocking all sorts of old junk on the floor and smashing support beams with each misplaced shot.

The banging and the cluddering eventually woke mama up. And in walked #292.

She looked incandescent.

The whole thing suddenly felt laughable. Here I am floating in the air, one of the greatest warriors of our day is crawling around on all fours looking for his glasses, and #147 is chasing the other soldier around with a flaming stick.

The lights went on.

Even the cuckoo in her hat was quiet.

'If this is your idea of laying low in my attic room, we have a big problem.' She scowled at me, dryly, before continuing;

'#7, I know you are listening, so why not show yourself.'

A moment. She can't be serious.

A beat. Another.

Out of thin air. Suddenly there were 6 of us in there.

#7, right in front of my eyes, holding a sparkling pink drink.

'Good evening all.' He smiled.