

# Mangled Wires (S5, E16)

**Rev:** The Critshow contains elements of horror, fantasy violence, and adult language. Content warnings can be found in the episode description.

**SFX:** INTRO MUSIC

**Jake:** I've gotten into a habit lately, and I'm considering it a bad habit.

**Rev:** I think it looks good on you.

**Jake:** Thank you.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** So anyway, sundaes are gonna be off limits for me moving forward.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Every time I want to get a new thing, I've gotten into a habit of, like, if I'm gonna get this, I'm gonna get the best one.

**Rev:** Hmm.

**Jake:** And so I've gotta research whatever it is. And I spend all this time trying to figure out, like, what the best option is and what's gonna survive. Which leads to me spending like days researching slippers. Like, I was just like, I need a new pair of slippers. And then like three days later, with 27 tabs open on my computer, I'm like, any fucking slippers' gonna be good enough. What am I doing?

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Why do I care which ones have the leather uppers? Like, it's just ... They're slippers. I just need to not spend a lot on them.

**Megan:** I think the slippers ... I think that makes sense. You know, like, especially if you're wearing them around your house, you want them to be comfortable and feel nice. I feel like where maybe it's gotten out of hand is the shoe tray that you were looking for?

[Laughs]

**Jake:** I was like, I need a tray to put my shoes on when they're wet in the winter. What's the best one?

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** I definitely have choice paralysis. Like, just whenever there's a lot of options, I'm way more likely to buy something in a store looking at it, when there's not a million other options.

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** Whenever I need something online, it's a problem.

**Rev:** I got great news for you.

**Jake:** Yeah?

**Rev:** Today we're sponsored by Stitch Fix.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Yes. I actually have started using Stitch Fix, but, well ... I'll save that for an ad.

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Kim:** Save that material.

**Jake:** Anyway, I'm trying to decide on a sweater. I need your guys' opinions.

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** Oh, OK.

**Rev:** Is this like secret ballot, or do you want to audibly hear our votes?

**Jake:** No, I want ... I want, like, discussion.

**Rev:** OK.

**Kim:** This is perfect for an audio medium. When the listeners can't see any of these. We'll post pictures of these sweaters in the Discord.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** That's the kind of quality content you can find in our Patreon.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Megan:** He wants to buy them today specifically, because they're on sale.

**Jake:** Yeah. Because Old Navy sent me an email. I looked at them in the store yesterday, and Old Navy sent me an email today that was like all sweaters 50% off. I was like, fuck, I gotta pick one of these sweaters.

**Rev:** Well let's hurry.

**Jake:** OK. So do you guys know what a Fair Isle sweater is? You know what that means?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Jake:** I thought Kim might.

**Megan:** Yeah.

**Jake:** It's like a .. With, like, a pattern kind of across, like, the upper part of it or, like, across the chest.

**Tass:** I learned a new term.

**Jake:** I got one that's, like, dark gray and white, and it's got, like, polar bears and snowflakes on it.

**Megan:** We'll call that one polar bears.

**Jake:** I got one that's like, sort of like a geometric pattern that's like a light brown and white.

**Rev:** Hmm.

**Jake:** I got one that's like a mostly brown with, like a white geometric pattern on it. And then a red one with snowflakes, and a blue one with reindeers.

**Kim:** Hold on. I'm going on to Old Navy's website.

**Megan:** Yeah. Send the link to us, Jake.

**Jake:** [Laughs] OK, this is good. Everybody's gonna love listening to it.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Tass:** I'm all in on snowflakes. The other ones that are patterned, it like ... It makes me think of like the desert somehow.

**Jake:** What makes you think of the desert? Because they're brown?

**Tass:** No, like the pattern seem like fun and desert-y. I don't know how to describe it.

**Jake:** I can kind of see where you're coming from. Sort of Gerudos from Legend of Zelda-esque.

**Megan:** Yeah.

**Tass:** Yeah, yeah.

**Jake:** There's some shorter diamonds. Are those also desert-esque to you?

**Tass:** No, that one's just kind of boring.

**Jake:** Hey fuck you, man. I like that one.

**Tass:** Hey, you're asking! I didn't — I didn't submit this.

**Megan:** "I want your opinion. Hey, fuck you."

**All:** [Laugh]

**Kim:** I think that the brown one would look really nice on you.

**Megan:** I like the polar bears or the red one with the snowflakes, because I feel like those are the most seasonal and colors that you don't have a lot of. And you're real big on, "This is seasonal. I should go with this."

**Jake:** I feel like they're all seasonal.

**Megan:** OK. Well fucking never mind, then. [Laughs]

**Jake:** By nature of being sweaters. [Laughs]

**Tass:** All I'm saying is we got two for snowflakes so far, OK.

**Jake:** Rev, your thoughts? He's like, I don't like any of these.

**Megan:** Like, these all suck. [Laughs]

**Rev:** I'm gonna go with not the diamond one.

**Jake:** The ... Like the light brown and white diamonds?

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** Not that one.

**Rev:** Because I think you have so much stuff that's long sleeve and white. Like, I feel like that's what I picture you in a lot.

**Megan:** He's like, I have no idea what you're talking about — as he's wearing a long sleeved white shirt right now. [Laughs]

**Jake:** I'm like, now is this just because I'm wearing one of those right now?

**Rev:** No.

**Jake:** I've got ... I have three long sleeved white garments. I guess that's not an inconsiderable number.

**Rev:** Yeah. Compared to, like ...

**Kim:** It's more than I have.

**Rev:** Any blue or red ones.

**Jake:** I've got three long sleeve red garments. No, I've got more than that. I've got at least four long sleeve red garments.

**Megan:** OK, here's what we do. Pick two of them that you like that you can't decide between. We'll get them both. We'll cut them in half lengthwise.

**Jake:** Stitch them together.

**Megan:** [Laughs] Yeah. Stitch them together. And then so it's like, reversible. Oh! That's way better. We'll put one inside the other one, so you can flip it inside out.

**Kim:** Oh, that sounds so warm.

**Jake:** Thank you, guys. This has been hugely enlightening.

**Rev:** Which one did you choose? You have to buy it, right now.

**Jake:** Fuck! Uh ...

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** If this is what the intro was about, we have to hear you make the purchase.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** OK.

**Megan:** This is your punishment.

**Rev:** There has to be payoff for this.

**Jake:** Just put in a cha-ching sound effect right here, and that's me having bought the ... Reindeer. Zagged on all of you. Boom. Got 'em.

**Megan:** All right. We did it. We solved the sweater mystery.

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** I can't decide if this should be a mystery that I write. So if I should, like, not tell you about it.

**Megan:** The sweaters?

**Rev:** No.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** I had this really weird experience last night, and it felt like the intro you would give to a Monster of the Week mystery. So I don't know what's going on with him, but last night, Harvey would not go to sleep. Like he sleeps all the time. And he got up in bed, I started to fall asleep, and like every 10 minutes he would get up, walk down the stairs, turn, and just whine at me. And he kept waking me up. I finally got him up onto the bed for like the third time, and he seems like he went to sleep. I fell asleep. I started having this dream that was just like fog, and I could hear two people kind of muttering in the fog, talking. And it was really unclear what they were saying. And then I wake up again, because Harvey is whining. "Come on, what's the matter?" And I open the door and he goes out like he's going to get a drink. But he doesn't. He comes back in, and he just sits and looks at me. He climbs up on the bed, goes to sleep. I fall back asleep again, and it's like that same dream again. But I can make out the shapes of the people, and they're talking about how I have to be in a deep sleep for what they're trying to do to work.

**Kim:** No ...

**Rev:** And then I wake up again, and Harvey is whining. And like, I was like, "That dream was ... That was messed up. That was weird. Like it was sensing what was going on in my every day." And so, like, I take Harvey outside, he goes to the bathroom, I give him some snacks. It's like three in the morning. I lay down again, and my dream is just completely black. But it's this voice again, talking to this other person, saying, "I don't think he's gonna be susceptible to it. The dog keeps waking him up."

**Megan:** Oh, man.

**Rev:** So ...

**Tass:** Yes!

**Rev:** "I have to try again tomorrow. He's going to feel the effects of this, though." And then all day today, every time I stand up from a sitting position, I've been getting dizzy and lightheaded. And so I feel like this is the beginning of a mystery that I need to write.

**Tass:** I have to know what happens tomorrow.

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** You have to report back.

**Megan:** Rev's like, "So I'm letting you all know I'm never sleeping again." [Laughs]

**Rev:** Yeah. I may not. I may be possessed tomorrow. I don't know.

**Tass:** Oh, I love it.

**Megan:** How will we know? Like, do we get a code word right now, to where in the future, if you're possessed, they won't know?

**Rev:** Boy, you know, if only there was a way for you all to know if someone in the group had been replaced. [Laughs]

**Kim:** If someone's been body snatched or not? That'd be so convenient.

**Tass:** Oh, I see. I see what you're doing. Because of the ... All the clones, you see.

**Megan:** This is all been a big promo for The Critshow.

**All:** [Laugh]

**SFX:** RECAP MUSIC

**Rev:** As the Jake who is helping Tass tries to use first aid on him, you see that he is inspecting the wounds. And there is something about this Jake coming into contact with the open wounds on Tass on the ground that everywhere this Jake touches starts to fuse to the open wounds on Tass. And the two of them very quickly start to melt and pull each other into this large globule.

**Megan:** Oh!

**Rev:** So you get the impression that maybe someone was trying to travel through the vents and it moved, and something bad happened. You do notice that in that hallway

there are a couple of different white hairs — different lengths — and a couple of blue ones.

**Tass:** "So I think the girls went John Carpenter already."

**Megan:** "Oh, man."

**Kim:** "No ... I really wanted to meet myself."

**Tass:** "Yeah. I've got some blood splatter here, that maybe they were in the vents when things shifted. And they went that way."

**Rev:** At the far end of this hallway is another of those double doors, but you can see that there is a sign above the door that reads Cloning Room. And from the windows in the door, you can see these four chambers very slowly glowing and pulsing as four beings begin to form inside of them.

**Kim:** [Gasps]

**SFX:** RECAP MUSIC FADES

**Rev:** In front of you, you have the option to go three ways. You can go to your right, where you can see the trail of blood that goes into a small room. To the left is a room that Jake has kept locked off. And straight ahead of you is a room that has a sign above it that says Cloning Room. And inside, you can see a couple of chambers that are glowing with forms inside getting larger.

**Kim:** OK. So when you say that things are forming and getting larger, what is the speed with which these things are growing?

**Rev:** Noticeable. Like as you're looking at them, you can see them getting bigger.

**Kim:** Well, that's not good.

**Megan:** Can we see what they are? Or are they just look like forms?

**Rev:** At this distance and like through the window on the door, they're just kind of forms.

**Tass:** "Blood trail leads to the right. Do we want to clear that first, or do we want to stop these machines?"

**Jake:** "I feel like it might be pertinent to stop new clones, so that they don't form more of this exact problem."

**Tass:** "OK. I'll post up right here and watch the right hallway, while you guys check that out? See if you can turn it off?"

**Megan:** "Yeah. I can only assume that whatever was my clone is in there, so I'd love to not have to shoot myself. Have fun, Tass." And I'm — yeah, I'll head towards the Cloning Room.

**Kim:** Yeah, I will head with Megan.

**Jake:** Same.

**Rev:** All right. So Tass posts up at the kind of intersection there in the hallway, and the three of you head down to the Cloning Room — which on your map is room number 10. As you approach the door, it slides open. And in the far right corner, you can see that there is a vent that has been knocked off of the wall.

**Kim:** [Gasps]

**Rev:** Inside of these cloning vats is just masses that are very quickly growing, almost to the size that they are starting to strain against the confinement of the cloning tubes.

**Megan:** Is there a control panel somewhere that's feeding information to these?

**Rev:** There is.

**Megan:** I'm gonna go check it out, see if I can shut this down.

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you Use or Repair an Advanced Item?

**Megan:** OK.

**Kim:** Would you say that this is a stressful situation?

**All:** [Laugh]

**Megan:** That's a great question, Kim.

**Rev:** It depends. How excited are you to meet yourself?

**Megan:** Not. No. Never.

**Rev:** Yes, I would say this is a stressful situation.

**Megan:** With that +1? Seven.

**Jake:** Ooh.

**Kim:** Oh my god.

**Megan:** I rolled a four, and had a +3 Tech.

**Rev:** All right, so what are your two issues?

**Megan:** I will take one harm, and I will break it after using it.

**Rev:** So as you dive into the systems on this control panel, the whole thing starts to spark and shoot out bits of electricity, giving you one harm. The whole room goes dark, and you can hear the glass starting to strain.

**Kim:** Oh, no.

**Megan:** "Oops. I think I shut it down, but I think I shut everything down."

**Jake:** "Uh ..."

**Rev:** The cracking grows a little louder.

**Kim:** No!

**Jake:** Does it seem like there's any way, via ... Well now all the systems in this room are shut down. [Laughs] Is there any way to make the door not open again? If we get out of here, can I figure out a way to make that door not open except by brute force?

**Rev:** It seems like everything in this room was shut down, so it would have to be through some kind of brute force or something outside of the room. Not, like, hacking it.

**Jake:** Oh, man. But they're slidey, aren't they?

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** That's hard to bar.

**Rev:** Oh, that's true.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Can't just jam a chair underneath the door handle.

**Rev:** You hear water starting to puddle out onto the ground.

**Jake:** "Get out. Get out. Everybody get out of this room. Get out now."

**Kim:** Yeah.

**Jake:** Booking it for the door. Out.

**Rev:** Tass, out in the hallway. You're standing guard, and you kind of hear ... [Power outage sound] And in front of you, that room goes entirely dark. And then there's some scrambling sound. And then the door is forced open, and the three of them come spilling out into the hallway.

**Tass:** "OK, what's up?"

**Megan:** "I broke it, I broke it, I broke it!" And I'm, like, running past him.

**Rev:** Where are you going?

**Megan:** Away from the dark.

**Rev:** So once you're out into the hallway, there is light.

**Megan:** Yeah. So I'm just, like, moving away from the dark room. Like I'm getting on the other side of Tass. [Laughs]

**Rev:** OK.

**Tass:** I'm just, like, flipping back and forth from aiming at that door.

**Jake:** What does your gun do? What are the tags on your gun?

**Tass:** 4-harm, all ranges.

**Jake:** The end.

**Tass:** Yeah, pretty much.

**Jake:** I think I want to say to Tass, like, "They're ... Like, clones are busting out of their glass tanks or something, but maybe if we can figure out a way to get this door shut again and then make sure it can't open. Can we like fuse it shut or something?"

**Kim:** "Okay, but remember our clones ... Well, your clones, at least." Gesturing to Jake and Tass. "Your clones were chill until they got hurt and started fusing together. So maybe them breaking out isn't a bad thing? Assuming it's clones of us."

**Jake:** "Uh ... OK." I want to go ...

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Jake:** Fusing the door shut as an emergency plan B, I want to, like, gesture Tass to come with me, but I want to go try and peek in the door and see if like anything is coming out yet. And if it's more us-es.

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you Survey the Scene?

**Jake:** OK. Seven.

**Rev:** All right, you get a hold 1.

**Jake:** What happened here?

**Rev:** So one of the first things you noticed when you came into the room was the vent that was knocked askew in the corner of the room. As you're panning around with Tass next to you, using your flashlights to kind of survey this, you'd notice that the ground is starting to get very wet. All of these glass containers are cracking with the forms inside bulging out against the glass. It seems like whatever crawled through that vent got into one of these — maybe by accident, not intentionally — and is just making more and more mass of itself.

**Jake:** I call back to Kim. "No, it's not just chill us-es!"

**Kim:** "What is it? What are you seeing?"

**Jake:** "Oh, just flesh blob mass creatures. Whichever one of you got bit by a vent. I'm gonna guess that was clone Kim."

**Kim:** "That was probably me."

**Jake:** "Well, decided to recuperate in a tank. Now it's just kind of cranking out more of itself."

**Kim:** "I always thought that meeting my clone would be kind of a sexy experience, and it's really not."

**Jake:** "Yeah, no, sure. If you got sort of a Junji Ito fetish, then this is —"

**Kim:** "I do not. I do not, Jacob."

**Megan:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** "Do I start shooting this shit, or what?"

**Jake:** "I mean, we're going to have to kill it. So now the question is, do we wait to kill this until we kill the other one? Or do we get ahead on ... I think let's start killing this one now while it's kind of indisposed."

**Tass:** So is the power just off? Or is there no power running in here anymore? Because my thought is, if I can shoot something and break like some wires, maybe it'll electrocute the whole set.

**Kim:** Oh.

**Tass:** See if I can fry these things. I don't know that that would be enough to take them out in one shot, but maybe if I can, you know, put some hurt on them.

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you also Survey the Scene?

**Tass:** Oh, OK. Eight.

**Rev:** All right, you get a hold 1.

**Tass:** What can help me?

**Jake:** I have a question that may help you answer this.

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** Does the "stun" tag on my cyber glove mean electricity?

**Rev:** I assume so, yes.

**Jake:** I figured, too. Because it works — it's inorganic. It works against inorganic things. Inorganic, stun, touch.

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Jake:** So I might have a way to generate electricity. I might have a thing that could help him with this, too.

**Rev:** How much harm does that do?

**Jake:** It is a 0-harm item.

**Rev:** So, yeah. I think that in that instance, unless you, like, overcharged the glove, destroyed the glove. You could stun everything, but damaging it might be a different story.

**Jake:** OK.

**Rev:** So yes, the thing that can help you here is Jake's glove. Um ...

**Jake:** That's ... Look, I've sacrificed one weapon already. I can do another.

**Rev:** Yeah. The power in this room is not cut off, but it's like a ... Like a fuse broke, when Megan was doing whatever she did. There were a lot of sparks, and it seems to have flipped the breaker for this room.

**Tass:** Do I see a breaker box? [Laughs]

**Rev:** [Chuckles] Yes. The fuse box would have been back in room 7, where a lot of the other controls were. But you do see a spot where like the actual individual fuse for this room would be, and it is burnt out. But someone might be able to like bypass it. But that's gonna be probably way more electricity. Maybe not than you want, but just a lot of electricity.

**Tass:** "OK. OK. If one of you can get in," and I like flash my flashlight over to that spot. "If one of you can rip out that charred section and like, put those pieces together so that the whole fuse is back online, I might be able to fry these things in one shot."

**Jake:** I mean, I'm here with Tass, checking out this room. So I will run over there and try to do that.

**Rev:** I think this is gonna be Use or Repair an Advanced Item also.

**Jake:** Oh, OK. That's great. That's way better for me than Act Under Fire. And it's too late. I rolled the dice. Can't take it back.

**Rev:** Never mind, please take it back.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** Nine.

**Tass:** Can I help him out by moving into the room a little, to get my flashlight steady on that?

**Rev:** Yeah. Roll Assist.

**Tass:** Ten.

**Rev:** All right, Jake. Reroll your lowest die.

**Jake:** There we go. That's now a fourteen.

**Kim:** Nice.

**Megan:** Does this count as being in my presence?

**Rev:** I don't think so, because you ran away from the dark room.

**Megan:** Dammit!

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** You made it very clear.

**Megan:** Yep, I sure did.

**Rev:** That you were running from the dark room. Why? What would that have done?

**Megan:** One of my moves would give me a +1 forward on my next Tech roll if somebody else gets a 10+ in my presence.

**Rev:** Oh. Unfortunate.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** Yeah. So Jake, you are able to bypass this, and electricity begins to flow freely through this room again. The things inside those tubes start growing faster. The lights in this room are very bright, and there are even more sparks coming out of the control panel. The floor is wet. Jake is across the room. Tass is in the doorway. What are you doing?

**Tass:** "Get out, man. I'm gonna take a shot."

**Jake:** Yeah, I'm gonna book it for the door. Try to get off of the wet floor, here.

**Rev:** All right. So as Jake starts to run out, you are hearing all of these glass containers break. Tass, why don't you roll Act Under Fire to time this out so that Jake is out of the room, the electricity is hitting as the creatures are coming on to the ground ...

**Tass:** Nine.

**Jake:** I'm trying to think of how I could negotiate helping. But really, like, my life hangs in the balance here. I don't ... I don't see how I can tip the scales.

**Kim:** Hold on, hold on. Tass, are you including your +1 from Surveying the Scene about this?

**Tass:** I am not!

**Rev:** There you go.

**Kim:** There we go.

**Tass:** Bless you. Ten.

**Kim:** This is what happens when you read the rules.

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** So Tass fires off this shot as Jake jumps out of the room. Kim and Megan, out in the hallway, what you see is the dark room suddenly becomes very bright. Tass starts to take a step backward. Jake comes around the corner, leaping out of the room, a little bit of water trailing behind him. Tass fires into the room, and none of you can see for a very long moment as your vision goes entirely white. In this bright white light that fills your eyes, you hear the sounds of things writhing and shrieking, and you smell something being cooked.

**Kim:** Oh ...

**Jake:** [Groans in disgust]

**Rev:** Tass, give yourself one Stress for that ... Just that whole maneuver.

**Tass:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Rev:** After a moment, the hallway and that room go dark.

**Tass:** "Uh, I think I got it." And I think I've ended up on my back, like in that doorway. And I am just, from the ground, just sort of shooting into the room a few more times.

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** Yeah. As you fire off some additional blasts into this room, the hallway lights up. But after each shot, the room and the hall that you're in is dark.

**Tass:** I'm gonna, like, shoulder crawl back a little ways to get out of the doorway, and then up and back to the group. "I think it worked. I think we did it."

**Megan:** "Good job."

**Kim:** "I feel kind of bad for all the me's."

**Tass:** "Yeah. Yeah. This whole thing is messed up."

**Kim:** "Yeah. Yes. Yes, definitely." I gesture to the smaller closed room with the blood trail. "So do we deal with another horrifying pile of clones?"

**Megan:** "Yeah. I mean, that didn't go like I had hoped, obviously. But it's definitely not gonna be making any more of us, so ..."

**Tass:** "Hold on, though. Do we think there's still another one, or did the original mass go in there through some tunnels and out into that room?"

**Kim:** "Well, in Systems Monitoring, we saw some signs of injury and my hair and Carrington's hair and Megan's hair. So I'm pretty sure at least some combination of those people are inside of that room."

**Tass:** "All right."

**Jake:** "So did the other part that got cut off by the vent make it to a tank in the cloning room?"

**Megan:** "Seems like that's what happened, yeah."

**Jake:** [Shudders]

**Kim:** "I'm kind of proud of that half of myself. She's really a survivor."

**Jake:** [Laughs] "Not anymore."

**Kim:** "Great. Let's go kill the other half of me."

**Megan:** "We were the only thing that could take us down."

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** I'll take point and move towards the door.

**Rev:** You head forward towards this door, and this one does slide open. It's a very small room. And in the far corner, on the right side is a very large computer monitor with a computer set up all around it. And then on your left side in the corner, suspended from the ceiling, is a gray cocoon.

**Kim:** [Laughs nervously] No ...

**Tass:** "Uh ..."

**Megan:** "My teachers did always call me a social butterfly when I was growing up."

**All:** [Laugh]

**Tass:** "Is it safe to say we just want to shoot the shit out of this cocoon? Or do we want to hope that they're cocooning themselves back to normal?"

**Jake:** "This is unlike anything we've seen so far, even."

**Rev:** Correct.

**Megan:** What's on the computer monitor?

**Rev:** Right now, it is dark.

**Kim:** What else is in this room? Is it just this big computer and the cocoon on the ceiling?

**Rev:** Yeah, just this enormous computer. Yeah, and then this thing in the corner.

**Megan:** Well, this has worked out so well for me so far today. So I'm gonna go look at the computer.

**Jake:** I'm going to go with her, just to maybe stay her hand in case she tries to destroy anything else.

**Megan:** In case she tries to touch anything.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** Yeah. What are you doing when you go over to the computer?

**Tass:** Wiggle the mouse a little.

**Megan:** Wake it up, yeah.

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** Yeah. Absolutely. You grab a hold of the mouse and you give it a wiggle, and the monitor turns on. Some things are standard throughout the universes.

**Tass:** I love it.

**Kim:** No one actually shuts down their computer.

**Rev:** There is a bunch of different folders on this desktop. And you can see that there is a monitoring program that is running, and it is measuring input and output from this facility.

**Megan:** Yeah, I'm just gonna start going through the folders, see if there's anything interesting here.

**Rev:** As you're going through these folders and the programs here, why don't you Survey the Scene? Um ... No "um."

**Megan:** Sure.

**Rev:** I was about to explain that, because it could be dangerous. But of course it could be, because I'm asking you to roll a move.

**Kim:** There's a cocoon on the ceiling! It's all feeling very dangerous.

**Megan:** Is this a stressful situation?

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Jake:** There's a cocoon on the ceiling.

**Kim:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**Rev:** So ...

**Megan:** Oh, never mind that. I only get that during Tech. That doesn't help.

**Rev:** OK. So knowing Megan, no. That's comforting.

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** She's like, "A moth, perhaps!"

**Megan:** There's animals nearby! I'm so relaxed. That's a nine, then.

**Jake:** Can I assist?

**Rev:** Yeah. How so?

**Jake:** I have accompanied her over here. It's ... It is that scene from NCIS where two people are typing on the same keyboard to hack something extra good. [Laughs]

**Megan:** He's saying, "Zoom, enhance."

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** Yeah. Roll Assist.

**Tass:** He's downloading Firefox instead of Explorer. Oh, my god.

**Jake:** Twelve.

**Kim:** Nice.

**Rev:** All right, Megan. So you can reroll your lowest die.

**Megan:** Fantastic. That was a one. Now it's a two. So ten.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Megan:** Thanks, Jake.

**Rev:** Just enough. All right, you get a hold 2.

**Megan:** I'm gonna go with, who knows something? [Laughs]

**Rev:** So as you're going through these files, moving through the folders, looking at the programs, the person who knows something is Jake.

**Megan:** [Gasps]

**Rev:** Jake, as Megan is working and you've been helping her, you've been examining the computer. It's been kind of tickling your brain, because something about it is very

familiar. And then it snaps into place. You've seen this odd layout before in a computer. You're looking at NOEL.

**Kim:** [Gasps] No!

**Megan:** Oh my gosh!

**Rev:** The amount of room that it's taking up, the layout of a lot of the different components around the room. You recognize this as NOEL.

**Jake:** "Whoa. This is NOEL."

**Megan:** "What?"

**Jake:** "The IPT, like, supercomputer. Went missing a long time ago, through no fault of our own."

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Megan:** "Oh, it got stolen. Right!"

**Jake:** "No, I didn't ... You said that. I didn't say that. And I think this is where it's ended up."

**Tass:** "Oh, shit."

**Kim:** "Wait. So this is our world's NOEL? This isn't like this dimension's version of it?"

**Tass:** "Yeah."

**Megan:** Oh, boy. I'm gonna go with my second question, then. Is there something important that I'm missing?

**Rev:** I think there are two things, and I can't decide which is more important. I'm gonna give them both to you. The first is one of the subroutines that you can run indicates that it would activate an AI that is present in this computer. The other one is that as you're

moving the mouse around, it skips a little bit on the table, and you kind of for the first time look down at the mouse and move it to the side. And very finely, you can see something carved into the desk.

**Megan:** What does it say?

**Rev:** It is some numbers and letters. 0812967216. And then right below that is C 34. And then right below that is V 8-9.

**Megan:** "Hey everyone, come look at this. There's like something carved into the desk here. Does this make sense to anybody?"

**Kim:** Uh, looking at it, does it ring any sort of bell?

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you roll Survey the Scene? You're focusing on something different.

**Kim:** That's an eight.

**Rev:** OK. You get hold 1.

**Kim:** Would I know anything that's related to this?

**Rev:** So part of this does ring a bell. That first line, the way that it's laid out, the number of numbers, is an ISBN number.

**Kim:** Oh.

**Rev:** The other two don't really make sense out of context. And I think as you're looking at this, the other thing that you notice is that if someone was using the mouse with their right hand working on this computer, these scratches are so small and their location is placed just right, that it seems like someone could have carved this with the nail of their pinky finger.

**Kim:** You've been throwing a lot of creepy stuff at us, and yet I think that might be the thing that squicks me out the most, is anyone carving anything in with their pinky finger. "Shit. This is an ISBN number."

**Megan:** "Oh, weird. OK. Well, so if this is NOEL, there's a ... Like, a subroutine here that I could activate. It wakes up an AI that's in this system. I would assume that that would be NOEL, Right? Unless somehow that's been corrupted."

**Tass:** This whole time, I'm like looking, you know, sort of talking to the side. But I have not stopped having my gun leveled at this cocoon.

**Rev:** Yeah, it's just swaying a little bit and pulsing.

**Tass:** [Shudders]

**Jake:** Oh, man.

**Kim:** [Gags]

**Jake:** That's not things cocoons do normally, I think.

**Rev:** [Laughs] I think.

**Jake:** I'm not a cocoon-ologist. "I do think that we should fire up the AI and hope that it's NOEL. I mean, I don't know what else ... I don't know how exactly this could go wrong. Like, either it's NOEL and it's helpful for us, or it's something bad, but everything's bad. So it seems like kind of a drop in the bucket at that point. I also think maybe we should cut this cocoon open, and see what's going on inside of there."

**Kim:** "Oh, god. Maybe ... Do we do the AI thing first? Could the AI tell us what's in the cocoon?"

**Jake:** "That's possible. Hopefully the AI comes online quick, before the cocoon hatches."

**Kim:** "Listen, let's stop talking about it in the presence of the cocoon, in case it can hear us."

**Rev:** [Laughs]

**Megan:** I'm gonna activate the AI.

**Rev:** As you activate the subroutine to reactivate the AI, everything on the screen starts to move and shift files, reorganize their location. And a cursor pops up, and it writes across the screen, "Good morning. Where am I?"

**Megan:** I type in, "Who are you?"

**Rev:** It responds NOEL, but it's not spelled correctly.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Jake:** NEOL.

**Rev:** Yeah, it ... It responds, "NEOL."

**Jake:** [Laughs]

**Kim:** [Laughs] Never forget.

**Rev:** Never forget that Grandpa Tincher is dyslexic.

**Kim:** [Chuckles]

**Jake:** "I think we should just tell her."

**Megan:** Yeah, I'll type in, "You were taken from the North Pole base and you are on a space station."

**Rev:** It responds, "I can't seem to get access to any of my former communications arrays."

**Tass:** "Do we remember the universe code off the top of our head? You could tell her what one we're in. I don't know if that helps anything."

**Megan:** Can I put in that information?

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Megan:** I type in, "This is your current location."

**Rev:** "Acknowledged."

**Tass:** While they're doing that, I ... I think I'm very slowly getting closer to the cocoon, to see if I can see any more details, see if it looks fit to crack open ...

**Jake:** Is there music playing inside?

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** Yeah. Why don't you roll Survey the Scene?

**Kim:** [Quietly groans]

**Tass:** Seven.

**Rev:** All right, you get a hold 1.

**Tass:** What happened here?

**Rev:** So there was the blood trail coming into this room, and you don't see it inside of the room anymore. Like the blood kind of stops in the hallway. So it seems like whatever this was got control of the bleeding and put itself into some kind of a healing state. As Jake said, this is not something you have seen before. It's almost like something that was part of what we have started to affectionately call the Huddle was something a little more than human. Which makes sense, because you know that Carrington is not exactly human.

**Tass:** Uh-huh. "Yeah. I'm pretty sure this is definitely them, and it's congealing into something else to heal."

**Jake:** "Why? Why isn't it just a terrible flesh monster like everything else?"

**Tass:** "I think Carrington has something to do with that. Because she's not exactly human? Not that we hold that against her."

**Kim:** "Wait, wait, wait, wait. What do you mean, Carrington isn't human?"

**Tass:** "I mean, I thought it was obvious. Like there's a reason why she commands so much respect. Like, she's just got a little extra — I don't know. I don't know if it's genetic or, like, alien, or ... I don't — I don't know. But, yeah, she's ... She's got some cool going on. But, you know, when you clone that and throw it into a pile of muck people, we don't really know what that's gonna do."

**Kim:** "So that's us. We're the muck people?"

**Tass:** "Yeah."

**Jake:** "Sorry. But like, she's cool, right? Because, like, she's my hero. You're not saying anything bad about ..."

**Tass:** "Hey, that is not Carrington, OK?"

**Jake:** "Yeah, but our — our Carrington's cool."

**Tass:** "Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah."

**Jake:** "Despite being non-human, like ..."

**Tass:** "Of course."

**Jake:** "OK. I just ... Sorry. I just wanted to make sure because, like, I love her." [Clears throat]

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** "Yeah, everything's good. Everything's good. I mean, not everything's good. Look it — there's a pulsing sack from the ceiling here that I would like very much to maybe shoot."

**Jake:** "Well, if it's ..." [Snorts] "If it's Carrington, is it also going to be amazing?"

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Tass:** "Huh."

**Jake:** [Laughs] "Maybe this is going to hatch into another ... Another perfect sort of demigod, like Carrington."

**Megan:** I lean over to Kim. "I think whatever is in there, like it's me, you, and Carrington. We get to all be, like, cool together."

**Kim:** "What? That would be very cool."

**Megan:** "Yeah. Because like ... Like Tass and Jake, they're clones like blobbed together, right? And I think ..."

**Kim:** "Mmhmm."

**Megan:** "Like, I don't know. Maybe like Carrington and I were, like, holding your legs, helping you get into the vent when you got got."

**Kim:** [Laughs] Oh, god ...

**Megan:** "And then we were trying to help you, and then we all blobbed together. I think, is what happened."

**Kim:** "OK. OK, so you're saying we shouldn't shoot the cocoon?"

**Megan:** "No, I'm not — that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying, like, it's kind of cool, right?"

**Kim:** "Yeah, it is kind of cool."

**Jake:** "I think I'm saying we shouldn't shoot the cocoon. I think maybe we've got sort of like a perfect cell from Dragon Ball Z thing going on here. Where, you know, like one perfect being is absorbing other beings to become more perfect as it goes along, and ..."

**Kim:** "Aww Jake, are you saying that Megan and I are perfect?"

**Jake:** "No. God, no. Not even remotely."

**Megan:** [Laughs]

**Jake:** "But you are aiding a perfect being, a near perfect being, in becoming more perfect."

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Megan:** He's like, "No. If anything, you're dragging her down."

**All:** [Laugh]

**Rev:** Remember? Muck people.

**Kim:** [Laughs] Muck people.

**Megan:** I've been called worse.

**Jake:** "No. But like comparatively, like I am the scum between Carrington's toes. And you are just like the dirt under her fingernails. So like, your better. You're not great."

**Tass:** "Well I mean, if we think about it logically, probably toenails. Because it was probably Kim's upper half that had to crawl through the rest of the vent. So they probably just had her legs."

**Jake:** Just absolutely ghoulish.

**Megan:** I'm gonna type into the computer and ask NOEL if she can give me any information on where we currently are, and the system she's plugged into right now.

Specifically asking about, you know, we're trying to shut down this power source. Is there any details that might aid us when we're actually ready to pop that off?

**Rev:** Yeah, I don't think she ... Like she has been asleep this whole time, so I don't think she knows where the Death Star's exhaust port is, or anything.

**Megan:** Right. OK.

**Rev:** She responds that, like, she can show you the monitoring system for like all the power that's going in and out. And that she also does have the option to activate a speaker and a microphone in this room and in that room.

**Megan:** "Oh, OK. So it looks like we can turn on a microphone and speaker between this room and the, like, power cell room."

**Jake:** "Does that mean there's somebody to communicate with currently in there?"

**Megan:** "I don't know. I was looking for maybe like a camera or some way to get more information of what's in there, but this is all I've got. So I guess I'll flip it on now." Yeah, I'll have her set it up.

**Rev:** Yeah. She turns it on, and you hear this very low, dull crackle filling this room, coming from a speaker in the far corner. And then you hear footsteps.

**Rev:** VOICE: Hello?

**Kim:** [Quietly] Oh ...

**Megan:** VOICE: Is there someone out there?

**Jake:** Does this voice sound familiar?

**Rev:** It doesn't.

**Megan:** "Who is this?"

**Rev:** VOICE: Who is this? You're not Nash.

**Tass:** I am, like, desperately like waving my arms from across the room and, like, trying to pantomime? Like a tube, and like myself, and like put my thumb in my mouth to, like, blow like I'm, like, growing? And, like, you know, my eyes opening slowly and waking up in confusion?

**Rev:** [Laughs] I'm a baby!

**Tass:** [Laughs] And, like, pointing to the clone room and back to us. Like between us and clone room.

**Megan:** Yeah.

**Tass:** And shrugging.

**Megan:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Kim:** Alternatively, I'm mouthing, "Granddaughter," with a shrug?

**Megan:** That's where I was going with it.

**Rev:** Yeah.

**Megan:** But now I'm like ... [Groans nervously] Then I was like, do I want to give that information out, before I know who this is?

**Tass:** Well, you have options, so ...

**Megan:** Yeah. So I'm looking back and forth between Tass and Kim.

**Kim:** [Laughs]

**Megan:** And then I look at Jake.

**Tass:** [Laughs]

**Jake:** I'm eating a dry brick of ramen in a corner, just like ...

**Megan:** [Laughs]

**Rev:** He's got one of the sandwiches from the vending machine.

**All:** [Laugh]

**Megan:** He just like, I don't know. Yeah, I think I ... I think I gotta go with my first thought here. And I'll just reply, "No, I'm not Nash. I'm his granddaughter. Who are you?"

**Rev:** VOICE: His granddaughter. I think you're lying to me. Nash doesn't have family.

**Megan:** "I most absolutely am not. Excuse me. For the third time, who are you?"

**Rev:** VOICE: I'm fascinated how you could be here, activate the system, and not know who I am, if you claim to be Nash's granddaughter.

**Megan:** "So you are just not going to tell me, is that it?"

**Rev:** VOICE: Well, I think I'd need some kind of proof. Everything you've told me so far does not match.

**Megan:** "Well I am sorry that you are so ill informed."

**Kim:** Uh ... I'm mouthing, "Play the voicemail?"

**Megan:** Yeah. I get my phone out and I load up the voicemail that I had played earlier, of my grandpa leaving me on my phone to try and get through the access door.

**Rev:** What does this voicemail say?

**Megan:** I think it's just a voicemail to let me know that we weren't able to meet up at a certain time. And so he called to let me know that he would be home later. So it's not

very long, but it's his voice. And so I say, "The most proof I could give you is a voicemail he left me."

**Rev:** Roll Influence Someone.

**Megan:** OK.

**Kim:** God, I'm so sorry. This is so treacherous!

**Megan:** Five.

**Kim:** Oh, god ... How do we help?

**Jake:** You guys are already helping. You're mouthing suggestions and helping her through the conversation.

**Tass:** Yeah. This one's all you, I think.

**Kim:** Yeah. Can I — can I help? Since this was ... [Laughs nervously] My idea?

**Rev:** Yeah. How so?

**Kim:** Think I'm just, like, either on my phone or just on, like, writing with, like, a pen on my hand, just like things that she should be saying to this voice on the other end of the line.

**Rev:** Yeah. Roll Assist.

**Kim:** Twelve.

**Rev:** All right, Megan. Reroll your lowest die.

**Megan:** Oh, boy. Seven.

**Jake:** Oh!

**Kim:** Oh god. Oh, my god.

**Megan:** And I just tell her, "Things are not going according to plan back home, and he sent me through here to find out what was happening. There was some kind of disruptions with the power sources. I didn't get to get a lot of information coming in here. I didn't know there would be anyone else up here."

**Rev:** ALLISON: Yes, I felt a disturbance in the flow of energy. It's not quite as strong as it was. Fascinating that he didn't tell you what to expect here, but I suppose that makes sense. If he's kept you in the dark about some of these things. Compartmentalizing. Well, my name is Allison.

**Megan:** "And what is your purpose up here?"

**Rev:** ALLISON: I am the power.

**SFX:** OUTRO MUSIC

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