

Jess wasn't exactly sure how she got to this strange board meeting. One moment, she was opening her bedroom door, the next moment she found herself in a black void, with the only thing in sight being an octagonal table with one empty chair and seven chairs filled with woman staring at her. Timidly, Jess approached the lone available seat and noticed that a placard with her name on it was sitting on the table in front of it.

No sooner had Jess sat down then a booming voice began to echo around the void. "Welcome ladies!" the masculine voice proclaimed, and while the voice may have said more, it was quickly drowned out by the concerned questioning of the eight ladies present. The noise of the ladies continued to escalate as each tried to have their voice be heard over the other. "ENOUGH!" The voice boomed, silencing the room and causing a bright light to encompass the area. As the light passed over her, Jess felt an electric shock run over her face. The light clearing, she tried to speak up once more, but after failing to say anything, she touched below her nose and came to the conclusion that her entire mouth was gone. Looking around the table, her theory was confirmed, as she saw that all the other girls' mouths had been stolen as well. "Now then, I guess some explanations are in order. My name is MADDUX, which stands for Multiple Alternate Disjointed Dimensions Official eXperiment. You all are currently in an experimentally controlled rift between multiple adjacent dimensions. My primary task is to run an experiment upon the viability of maintaining such a rift between dimensions. There is no need to fear, as I am monitoring the current rift to ensure a safe, controlled environment for you all. If you are to take part in this experiment, the general rules are as follows, and shall be broken under no circumstances:

1. You shall all not hurt one another.
2. You shall all get to know each other better.
3. Curfew will be at 9:00 on the dot.
4. Participation in group activities is mandatory.
5. Rewards will be given for the completion of certain tasks.
6. The rift exit will appear once I've gathered enough data, you will not be allowed to leave until this point otherwise."

The room looked collectively shocked at the voice's explanation. The voice, oblivious to their reactions, continued its detailed explanation, "You shall all be given a room based upon collected data from your respective dimensions, but if you wish to change anything please let me know through the intercom located in your room or in the common lobby. The common areas will include all the necessities you shall need to survive, and if additional materials are required you may request them in a similar fashion. Thus concludes my introductory statements. You shall all now be granted a single question starting with..."

Jess's attention was stolen from the center of the table by the sudden coughing noise emanating from the seat right from the seat across from her. The girl had dark red hair tied in a ponytail down her back, a pair of majestic violet eyes, and looked as though she were still in

college. She was wearing a black t-shirt with 'Metallica' written across the bust. The nameplate in front of her read 'Ruby'.

After Ruby composed herself, she asked, "So, what's in it for us if we decide to take part in this experiment?"

"Well, while we won't be offering you all a physical reward, you all can rest easy knowing that you will be compensated through the creation of new friendships and new experiences."

"Pssssh!" Ruby scoffed.

"And of course, once the technology for inter-dimensional travel has been perfected, you all will have free passes for life to visit one another's dimensions, or stay in this rift free of charge."

"But how lo—" Ruby was interrupted as her mouth disappeared once again.

"I'm sorry, but you have already used your allotted question. Next question please."

Jess watched as the girl sitting across from her's mouth returned. Unlike with Ruby, she was able to see the process clearly this time, with first a slit appearing where her mouth should have been and her lips plumping out afterwards. The girl had bright red hair, a pair of pink oval glasses around her green eyes, and was wearing a black shirt that said '10K subscriber special'. Her nameplate read 'Jamie'

After thinking for a moment, Jamie asked, "Is Eric okay?"

"Eric, and all your loved ones, are perfectly fine. This inter-dimensional space exists within what we call a time bubble. Once you all are ready to leave, you will all re-enter your dimensions at the same time you left them. Only you will notice you were gone at all."

"Thank you." Jamie said, her mouth disappearing first by her lips sealing together and then reabsorbing into her face.

"Next question."

The attention of the room shifted to the girl in the seat to the left of Jamie as her mouth reappeared in the same manner as the others before. The girl was a young blond with bright blue eyes. She wore a bright pink tank top and looked as though she had been pulled out of bed for the meeting. Her nameplate read 'Hayley'.

"What sort of 'group activities' will we be expected to take a part in?" she asked groggily.

"The group activities will occur randomly throughout your stay and will mostly be team-building exercises where you all will have to work together. We also expect you all to act as emotional support for one another when dealing with the stress of the possible side effects that may occur due to inter-dimensional forces."

"Wha—" Hayley got out before her mouth sealed away.

"Your question is now up, but do not worry about the side effects, as they will most likely be non-lethal. Next question."

Following the trend, the eyes of the room shifted to the left as the next girl's lip unsealed. The girl was the smallest of the batch, and seemed the youngest as well. She had ratty, dirty blonde

hair, and a pair of large circular glasses framing a pair of dark brown eyes that seemed to be filled with fury. She was wearing an old brown sweatshirt with some minor holes in it that did a good job of hiding her body's shape. Her nameplate read, 'Rosa'.

With her mouth back, it was even more clear in how bad a mood she was, as she nearly shouted her question of, "What did you do to me!?"

"Well, in-"

"WHAT DID YO-" Rosa's scream was silenced as her lips were prematurely sealed.

"As I was saying, it came to my attention that several of you ladies are in possession of a wide variety of skills, and in order to test this new environment with a degree of consistency, I performed my first test in controlling the inter-dimensional forces by neutralizing any powers or outstanding attributes that any of you might have. Thankfully, it was a success, and should be completely reversible when it comes to returning you all to your respective dimension. Next question."

Jess turned to her left, realizing that it would soon be her turn to ask a question. The girl was wearing a gray sweatshirt that contrasted against her hazel hair and eyes. Peeking around her corner of the table a little, Jess saw that she was also wearing jeans and a pair of brown Uggs. Her nameplate read 'Bernice'.

"You seem to be a pretty sophisticated AI, MADDUX," Bernice began, "So who created you?"

"Thank you for the compliment, however I've been programmed to not reveal the name of my creator or any accomplices they may have within this experiment."

"So you're saying there's an accomplice among us then?" Bernice managed to get out before her mouth disappeared

Despite everyone not having a mouth, the room seemed to get even more quiet with this revelation. "I'm sorry, but you have already used your allotted question. Next question please."

Jess was suddenly taken over by the intense feeling of her mouth returning. She wondered if anyone else was as shocked by the electric twinge of the transformation. She adjusted her brown hair out of her hazel eyes as she tried desperately to come up with a question. Despite having performed several times at the Salamangka, she still hated the feeling of eyes upon her.

"Umm..." Jess said stalling before finally figuring out what to ask, "If you don't mind me asking, why did you choose us specifically?"

"I do not mind answering at all. You all were chosen for a variety of reasons. First off, it just so happens that this inter-dimensional space is directly attached to eight alternate dimensions, which is the smallest amount we've seen connected to a space of this size, thus making it a perfect spot to test the creation of such a rift. This also means the experiment can have the lowest possible number of specimens while having the largest possible space to specimen ratio to work with in case we need to shrink the space to accommodate unforeseen events. As for why I chose each of you individually, you all met the parameters for test subjects in that you all seem

adaptable to changes that may occur to your bodies as part of this environment, and potentially similar backgrounds will allow for you all to make quick friends and thus act as better emotional supports for one another.”

“Okay, thank you.” Jess said, her mouth feeling similar to how it felt when it sealed up the first time.

“Next Question.”

Jess looked to her left to find a lady who was much older than anyone else at the table. She had jet black hair and the smallest of wrinkles around her green eyes. She was in a formal jade-colored dress, and peaking under the table Jess caught a glimpse of a pair of black stilettos. Her nameplate read ‘Cynthia’.

“Yeah... Do we have to do this?” she asked, clearly apprehensive.

“Oh, do you wish to not take part in the experiment and return to your dimension now?”

“Yes?”

“Oh. I respect your decision, as this is not a mandatory experiment, although you should know this may prevent me from connecting your dimension in the future. I will now send you back to your dimension. This should only take a moment.”

From the center of the table emerged a tiny device that looked like a web camera. A deep whirring sound came from underneath the room as the machine’s camera took aim at Cynthia. After a short amount of time had passed, a bright light shot out of the camera and hit Cynthia. As it hit, a scream was heard throughout the room, as Cynthia’s skin began to shine. Her skin continuously brightened to the point where Jess could not take it anymore and closed her eyes. When the light died down, Everyone saw that the originally octagonal table was now a heptagon.

“I’m sorry that you all had to hear that, I was planning on refining the return process over the course of the experiment, so it is currently a little rough. If anyone else wishes to leave the experiment now, please raise your hand or I will assume consent for the full experiment.” MADDUX proclaimed. Nobody in the room dared to raise there hand, and several of the girls shook their heads to show they were fine with taking part in the experiment. “Great, let’s move on to the last question.”

Jess turned to her right to see her new seat neighbor. While she was rather pretty, there was nothing noteworthy of the girl. She had long, curly, brown hair; gray eyes; and was wearing a simple gray sundress. Her legs were crossed, but Jess still got a peek of a pair of petite brown sandals. Her nameplate read ‘Laura’.

“Umm...” she began timidly, “How long is the experiment expected to last.”

“We are currently unsure. In your relative time, it could take anywhere from several hours to several months. However, with all of your cooperation the experiment will run more smoothly and you all can hopefully return home as quickly and efficiently as possible, and with as few incidents as we can.”

Laura's mouth sealed off again, bringing a silence to the room once again.

"Thus concludes the questions portion of this introductory segment, with perfect timing, as my processors have completed the generation of your living spaces for your time here. You shall all be teleported in. To set a standard time, you will all have an hour before lights out. I hope you all enjoy your stay, and please try not to be too prudish when we begin the group events tomorrow morning."

A bright light seized the room as Jess felt an electric current flow through her entire being.

As Jess's eyesight returned to her, she was surprised to find herself in her bedroom back in her shared apartment. Every detail seemed to be exactly the same, right down to the contents of her drawers and the order in which her shirts were placed. Needing to confirm whether she had just lost her mind briefly or if the strange board meeting actually happened, Jess opened the door to her apartment.

Clearly not the only one to wish to confirm they hadn't imagined things, Jess was greeted to an unfamiliar hallway with a star-filled, black carpet and beige walls, with the six other girls peeking out of their various doorways as well. After staring at each other for a little while, the girl named Ruby left her doorway, saying, "Might as well explore this place a little bit before going to bed," before going down the hallway and around the corner into the unknown. One by one, the other girls followed suit, with Jess leaving her door second to last.

Looking towards the only girl who was still in her room, Jess realized it was the small, bespectacled girl named Rosa. Jess gave her a little smile before asking, "You coming?"

"*Hmphh*" she snarked, "I'm going to bed. Exploring is just going to be a waste of energy." She slammed the door.

'Oh well, might as well explore without her then.' Jess thought, turning and leaving the small girl to her own devices and making her way down the hallway. The starry carpet continued around the corner to a staircase. Climbing down the stairs, Jess found herself in a room with several couches set up around several coffee tables. On the opposite side of the room was another door that was wide open, revealing what appeared to be a kitchen. The sound of clattering indicated there must have been several people in there.

Sitting on one of the couches were two girls from the meeting. With some concentration, Jess remembered their names being Hayley and Jamie. They seemed to be in the middle of a conversation.

"So what's the name of your web show?" Hayley asked.

"Well, it's called Weird Retro Toy Reviews, but most of our fans call it WRTR."

"Do you host it?"

"No. I'm usually behind the scenes. It's mostly Eric who handles being the face of the channel."

"Eric?" Hayley asked, a slight gossipy tone in her voice.

"Yeah, he's my boyfriend." Jamie responded.

“That’s hilarious! My boyfriend’s name’s Eric too!”

“Really? Small multiverse, huh?” The two girls chuckled at the coincidence.

“Hey girls.” Jess said, making her presence known to the two girls on the couch.

“Oh, hello,” the one named Hayley addressed her, “your name’s Jess, right?”

“Yes, and you’re Hayley and Jamie?” She said, pointing to each girl to confirm their identities.

“Yeah,” Hayley said while Jamie nodded, “we were just talking about what we used to do back home. I’m a hostess at this little Italian restaurant and Jamie here apparently works on this famous web show.”

“I wouldn’t really say ten thousand subscribers makes it famous,” Jamie blushed.

“It’s more than anything I’ve ever done. But what about you Jess? What did you do back home.”

“Umm... Well, I’d love to talk about it, but I’m kind of bounded by secrecy.”

“Oh come on. You can dish at least a little bit. It’s not like any of us are from the same dimension.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you all... It’s that I’ve literally been sworn to secrecy. I physically can’t tell you what I do.”

“Really?” Jamie asked, her curiosity overcoming her shyness as she was suddenly piqued by this oddity, “What caused this?”

“Well, it’s basically a part of this contract I signed with my boss.”

“Wait, was it a magic contract?” Jamie asked enthusiastically. Jess was taken aback by how nonchalantly this random girl from another dimension talked so freely about what she had done her best to hide. “We’ve had a couple of things on the show that could force someone to keep a secret, so I might be able to help you get around the rules.”

“Are you saying you’ve had experience with magic?” Jess asked almost reflexively, covering her mouth in shock with the words she just spoke. She had somehow managed to break the contract she had signed with Paul.

“Well, Eric and I aren’t exactly sure if the stuff on our show is magic, per se, but they definitely do have magic properties.” Jamie explained, a little confused with why Jess seemed to be so freaked out by the word.

“Really? You two also have magic in your worlds? That’s crazy! A little while ago my Eric brought home this magic kiddie pool that could change my consistency.” Hayley chimed in.

“That’s awesome! Hey, do you think that’s why we’ve all been brought together? That we all have experience with magic?” Jamie asked.

“It’s possible. But I have no clue.” Jess answered, more certain than ever that she needed to figure out what was going on here.

Suddenly, the room went dark. When the lights came back on, Jess realized she was in her bedroom once again, now lying in her bed. The voice of MADDUX echoed through the room, “I’m sorry girls, but it is currently 9:00 in Rift Time, and so curfew has begun. You all will not be allowed to leave your rooms until morning, so I would recommend that you try to get some

sleep.” Not really knowing what else to do, Jess decided to go to bed, dreaming of what could possibly occur in this weird space between dimensions.

“Jess! WAKE UP!”

Jess was awakened by a unfamiliar cry outside and a banging against her door. Getting out of bed in a haze, Jess opened the door to an unexpected sight. In the doorway stood Jamie and Hayley from last night, except it appeared as though they were both missing their arms. Rubbing the sleep out of her eyes, Jess confirmed they were definitely unarmed.

“Jess! You need to come to the lobby right now.” Hayley said, getting behind Jess in order to shove her out the door.

“No need to push!” Jess said, closing her door behind her as she made her way to the lobby.

In the lobby, Jess was shocked to find the four other girls from last night sitting on the sofas. All four of them also seemed to be missing their arms.

“Oh good, everyone’s here now!” MADDUX proclaimed, “Thank you for waking her Jamie and Hayley. Now, for today’s group activity. You may have noticed that the only one with arms between you seven girls is Jess. For today, Jess will act as your arms if you need assistance. I hope that this experience will be a great chance for you all to learn more about one another and maybe focus on working with a different shape.”

“Why does Jess get to be the one with arms?” shouted Ruby, but no other announcements came from MADDUX. “*Tch* Fine. Jess, if you’re going to be our arms, do you mind cooking me breakfast? I’m starving.”

“Um...”

“Yeah, me too!” Rosa added.

“I would love some eggs and toast, please.” Bernice asked.

“If you’re offering, would you make me some too?” Laura timidly asked.

“Fine... I guess I’ll make breakfast for 7 then.” Jess said, making her way in to the kitchen and looking through the refrigerator.

After Jess had finished cooking, she walked back into the lobby, only to realize that it had changed drastically. There was suddenly a large dinner table in place where all the tacky sofas had been, allowing Jess to walk between the two rooms and place the finished meal of various breakfast foods and coffee down. “Okay everyone. Dig in!” Jess exclaimed, taking a seat at the table.

“Um... Jess? One problem.” Hayley said, nudging her head toward her lack of arms.

“Oh. Right.” Jess sighed, getting up from her seat in order to help Hayley before realizing, “Oh wait, I’m going to have to help all of you.”

“Don’t worry about me Jess, I’ve had some experience without arms. I’ll manage.” Bernice said, lifting her leg up onto the table in an impressive display of flexibility and grabbing her coffee cup between her toes before bringing it to her lips, taking a sustained sip. The rest of the girls stared in awe.

“Y-yeah. Well, I don’t need your help either.” Rosa said, awkwardly lifting her leg up onto the table and barely managing to get the fork between her toes. She managed to stab the fork through a bit of scrambled eggs and clumsily got it into her mouth.

“Okay then. I probably should have cooked these one at a time.” Jess said, realizing the predicament she had managed to get herself into. “So, uh, Ruby, Jamie, Hayley, and Laura, since you’re all sitting near the same end, I’ll just feed you all a little bit at the same time.”

Jess moved over to the opposite side of the table, passing by Rosa and hearing her mumble under her breath, “Why is this so much more difficult than usual?”

“Sounds good,” Ruby said, “just feed me first. I’m starving.”

The next half hour was filled with an annoying and constant shifting of silverware as Jess did her best to feed the four girls (later five, as Rosa gave up on trying to imitate Bernice’s unique style of eating with no arms). Somehow, the conversation at the table managed to shift to boys.

“So Jess. Do you have a lucky boy at home?” Ruby asked.

“Sadly I don’t. My job’s a littl-“

“Well that sucks. I just got back together with this guy from high school I used to know. He’s the sweetest. What about the rest of y’all?”

“Well, me and Jamie both are dating guys named Eric.” Hayley said.

“*Mh-hm*” Jamie consented, her mouth filled with a spoon of oatmeal.

“I’m actually married to my high-school sweet-heart,” Bernice said, lifting her foot to reveal a diamond-encrusted toe ring, “and before any of you ask, I woke up with that. It appears to be the same as my normal ring, just crafted for a toe instead.”

“I-I’ve dated a couple guys,” Rosa said, trying her best to sound confident, “but right now I’m just between guys.”

“Ooh. Looks like we have a little player.” Ruby teased, causing the small, frumpy girl to blush intensely. “And what about you Laura?”

The attention of the table shifted to the girl who had been sitting quiet for most of the meal. “Oh! Well, I was engaged to this guy named Dave for a while, but it’s a little complicated now...” She trailed off, her face reddening slightly as it looked like tears were about to form.

“Don’t worry Laura. We’re not going to ask you to go over anything traumatizing,” Jamie said in a reassuring tone, giving Ruby a glare to communicate to not push the subject.

After Breakfast had been eaten, and a few of the girls had returned to their rooms, Jess feared that she would have to do the entire process of clean up by herself, but thankfully MADDIX chimed in, explaining, “Don’t worry about clean up. I shall take care of any janitorial duties for the duration of your stay here.” The table began to sink into the floor, the starry carpet giving off ripples as more of the table disappeared. Once the table had been completely absorbed, the tacky sofas from earlier began to rise up, returning the room to its original layout.

“Well, that’s a plus,” Hayley said, “so anyways, what are we gonna do now?”

“I don’t know about you girls, but I’m going to take a shower,” Bernice said, walking back out the hallway with impeccable posture for someone who had only recently lost their arms.

“Do you find it strange that she seems to have adapted really well to this change?” Jamie asked.

“Not really. One of my friends loves to just lounge around our apartment armless. She’s gotten so good at being armless that I’d argue she probably could do some stuff faster without arms than with them,” Jess said, fondly remembering Kayla showing off to her.

“I guess...” Jamie said, still uncertain to whether her newfound friend was correct.

“Ooh! I just thought of something we could do!” Hayley said, leading the group back down the hallway.

“Wow Hayley. Your room sure is... pink,” Jamie commented. Hayley’s room was wall-to-wall with pink stuff. Pink carpeting was held down by various pieces of pink furniture with the only things covering her pink walls being a mirror, a pink cork board, and pink shelves that held various books (most of which were pink).

“Thanks. There would be more, but Eric threw some stuff out. He said it would freak people out,” Hayley said as she kicked through her closet. Eventually, she found what she was looking for, pulling out a strange, ornate bottle with her toes. “Eric picked this up for me at a garage sale. Funny story, it accidentally turned a friend of mine into a genie.” She placed the bottle on the floor, which Jess picked up, gingerly rubbing it. When nothing happened, Hayley chuckled, “Looks like MADDUX really did get rid of all of our magic stuff. Anyways, that wasn’t why I wanted to find the bottle anyway.” Hayley awkwardly kicked some pink bean bags from around the room until they were all in the center of the room.

As Hayley invited the two girls to sit down on the other bean bags, Jamie asked, “So, what are we going to do?”

“We’re going to play a variation of spin the bottle. We take turns spinning the bottle, and whoever it lands on has to answer the question of the spinner.”

“Okay... and why are we playing this?”

“Well, besides some surface stuff, we don’t really know each other all that well. This way we can learn more about each other.”

“Well, that sound nice, but there’s only one good pair of arms between us three...”

“That’s fine, Jess can just spin for all of us. Jamie, you can go first.”

Jamie shrugged her armless shoulders, nodding her approval towards Jess. She spun the bottle on the pink carpet, which quickly stopped spinning, landing on herself. Thinking for a moment, Jamie asked, “Jess. You seemed pretty freaked out yesterday when you were talking about magic. I know you said that you’re bound by contract to not tell us anything, but since we’re from different dimensions, can you please tell us about magic in your world?”

“Normally I wouldn’t be able to, but since you do seem to have experience with magic anyway, and MADDUX seems to have broken the enchantment on the contract, I’m sure Paul wouldn’t mind anyway. In my world, magic has been outlawed and anyone who’s caught practicing it is immediately sent to death.”

“That sucks. Magic is so much fun!” Hayley commented.

“Yeah. Me and my friends got pretty lucky, though. One of my roommates, her name is Reilly, found one of the few safe havens of magic left in the world. It’s a little bar called Salamangka’s, and it’s owned by our mentor, Paul Perlack.”

“Mentor? Does that mean you know how to do magic?”

“Yeah, but my powers have been blocked since we got here. My friends don’t have any magic powers, but they’re still learning how to be Assistants.”

“Wow. I don’t know about Hayley, but magic in my world is still pretty underground. Eric and I have to go out of our way to get our hands on the magic toys we review on our show.” Jamie said.

“Yeah, it’s pretty much the same where I’m from too,” Hayley confirmed.

“My turn now!” Hayley jumped up slightly in her seat as Jess spun the bottle for her, it landing on Jamie. “Okay Jamie. Do you have any siblings?”

“Well... yes and no. It’s sort of a complicated and sad story.”

“Oh, you don’t have to tell us if it’ll be too much for you,” Jess said.

“N-no. It’s fine. In fact you two might be able to help me. You see, when I was a little girl, I used to have an older sister named Lily. However, I got a magic toy for Christmas called ‘The Ultimate Eraser’ which was meant to erase really big mistakes. Well, one day my sister got on my nerves, it happened so long ago that I’ve completely forgotten why I was so angry, and I thought it would be a funny punishment to try it on her. Well, I managed to erase her completely, and was planning on bringing her back afterwards, but I didn’t realize that this eraser didn’t bring things back. In fact, it seemed to have completely erased my sister from existence, and I was the only one who ever remembered her...” Jess and Hayley weren’t exactly sure how to respond to this information, but Jamie continued forward, “Anyways, do either of you happen to know any Lily’s because even if it were an alternate dimension version of her, I just want to find her and tell her I’m sorry.”

Jess and Hayley remained silent, given each other nervous looks, not wanting to upset their new friend. Eventually, Jess bit the bullet, “Sorry Jamie, I don’t think either of us know any Lilys.”

“But we’ll definitely be on the lookout from now on.”

“Oh...” Jamie looked extremely upset, before lightening up slightly, “Well, that’s okay. It was pretty much a long shot anyway.

“So, I guess it’s my turn now?” Jess said, grabbing the bottle and giving it a spin. It landed on Hayley. “Um... Oh gosh. I didn’t really think of what questions I was going to ask. Why don’t you just tell us a bit about yourself?”

“Sure, but that’s going to be a little boring. My life’s pretty normal. Nothing really exciting has ever happened.”

“Nothing? What about the fact that you had a pool that literally melted you, or an actual genie bottle?” Jamie chuckled, a bit of brightness finding its way back into her voice.

“Well, That’s not really as exciting as either of you two dimensions. This is just some random junk we found in garage sales that happened to do some cool shit.”

“Okay. What about how you and Eric met?” Jamie asked.

“Oh, that’s actually a pretty funny story. I found him at a garage sale too.”

“You see, that’s pretty interesting,” Jess encouraged.

“Yah, and it was pretty great too. Found him for only 45 cents!” The two girls stared and Hayley incredulously, “What?”

“What do you mean he was only 45 cents?” Jess asked.

“Well, I was at a garage sale, and I saw one of those little plastic pill things that’s said ‘Grow Your Own Boyfriend’ and it was listed as 50 cents but I managed to haggle it down to 45 cents. When I got home, I placed it in my bathtub and by the time I got back Eric was fully grown. That was about... 2 years ago now?”

“Does Eric know anything about this?” Jess asked.

“Nope. As far as I know, he thinks that he was abandoned at a young age and that we were high school sweethearts who moved in after college and he had recently been laid off.”

“But what about the fact that there were no male clothes in your house?”

“He thought I had accidentally donated them to a goodwill or something. He was rather cool about the whole thing.”

“What about the fact that he had no ids or birth certificates or anything?”

“Funny thing is, his box came with all that, completely pre filled out as though it knew I was going to be the one to pick it.”

“Okay, when I get back, I need to go hunting for one of these things. I’m sure an episode on it would be amazing,” Jamie commented, making a mental note to herself as the other two girls laughed.

The rest of the day was a blur of activity for Jess, who besides brief moments of rest seemed to have to constantly be on the move if she wanted to help everyone. Lunch came and went uneventfully, with Jess making some simple sandwiches so that she wouldn’t have to worry too much about actually cooking. After lunch, she had to help Ruby move the couches in the main room so that she could take a nap (because her room was getting too stuffy), played a few more rounds of their bottle game with Jamie and Hayley, and even had some help in making dinner from Laura and Bernice (who felt slightly bad that Jess had to do all the work). It seemed like the only one she (or any of the other girls for that matter) didn’t get to spend any time with was Rosa, who only ever left her room for lunch dinner. After dinner, Jess headed to her room early, collapsing on to the bed in a fit of exhaustion. ‘Hopefully tomorrow I’ll have to do less work,’ she thought, closing her eyes as she awaited what would happen next.

This time, Jess didn’t wake up to the sound of screaming, but rather because of the bright light shining through her window. Looking out, Jess was slightly shocked to see the normal view of the city. Rushing over, she tried opening it, but found the window stuck fast. “Hey MADDUX?” She asked, testing out the communications system he had explained on that first day.

“Yes Jess?” The strangely humanlike voice of the computer program echoed through her room.

“Was my window like this yesterday?”

“It was not. However, I felt that you would feel more at home if I could better emulate the world outside of your room. The window acts only as a simulation of what would be expected outside your room. Nothing more than a picture really.”

“Oh... thank you,” Jess said.

“No problem, now it would probably be best to head to the common room for breakfast.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right...” Jess rolled out of bed, landing on a mass of tentacles and slithering out of her room.

“Morning Jess,” Hayley said, the look on her face screaming for coffee. Her clothes seemed slightly damp, and several drops of pinkish fluid coated the table in front of her.

“Good morning Hayley. Where is everyone?”

“Probably asleep. Bernice is making breakfast though.”

As if on cue, Bernice exited from the kitchen sporting three sets of arm. Each arm was laid down with some different form of breakfast food. “Good morning, I thought I would make breakfast today, since you worked so hard yesterday.”

“Thanks,” Jess said, accepting a plate of scrambled eggs and toast. Hayley greedily began drinking her coffee, as Jess asked, “Hey. Does something seem... off?”

“What do you mean?” Hayley asked, the dark brown liquid visibly making its way down her throat, mixing in with her liquid body and slightly tanning her.

“I don’t know... I just can’t put my finger on it...” More people began sliding in. Laura came walking in, her feet walking below her, her hands floating by her side, and her head hovering above her torso. Ruby came in next, her pointed tail dangled between her legs as she clopped towards the table, her black horns contrasting with her bright red hair.

Next came in Rosa, who wore the same clothes as she did the day before. She took one look at the room, grabbed a cup of coffee, and left, muttering under her breath, “Nope. I’m not dealing with this.”

As she exited the room, Jamie walked by in shorts and a sports bra and Rosa bumped into her. “Gee what’s gotten into her?” The large mouth on Jamie’s stomach asked as she rubbed the sleep out of her eyes.

“Who knows with that girl?” Ruby said, drinking deeply from her glass of black coffee.

“Good morning girls!” The voice of MADDUX rang through the room, “I hope you’re all ready for today’s activity. After running some more tests last night, I’ve discovered an interesting property to inter-dimensional spaces. You see, unlike your regular dimensions, these spaces exist within a state of blurred reality. We hypothesize that individuals who experience changes to their reality in this blurred reality could theoretically be able to detect the changes that occur to them. To test this theory, I’ve changed all of you with reality-altering changes, and will be recording your process in adjusting to these changes and see if any of you can spot them.”

“Well, I’d say I’m shocked that such a thing is possible, but I should have expected this seeing as how most of us were armless yesterday,” Jamie said, her shyness all but gone now.

“Speaking of yesterday, because Jess did such a wonderful job doing everything you all told her to, I have been authorized to reward her with the ability to boss you all around today. You all must do anything she tells you to do.”

“Oh. You really don’t have to do that,” Jess said, blushing slightly.

“I’m sorry, but I’ve already given the ability to you, and it would take more effort than it’s worth to remove this ability. Anyway, if any of you need anything more, you know how to contact me,” MADDUX said, seemingly shutting down.

“*Burp* That was delicious Bernice, where did you learn to cook?” Ruby asked, sitting back in her seat.

“Oh! Thanks Ruby. Well, back home I do most of the cooking. The last time Nate tried to cook anything he nearly burned down the house.”

“That’s hilarious,” Ruby said, getting up from the table. As she passed by Jess, she whispered, “Hey. I need to talk to you. Come by my room when you get bored of this conversation.” As she walked away, the clapping of her hooves was in time with the swing of her hips.

“So your husband’s name is Nate?” Hayley asked.

“Yeah. We met in high school... after he cut my head off,” Bernice chuckled.

“So Nate knows magic too?” Jess asked.

“Well, some call what he does magic, but it’s actually just simple science. He’s one of the forefront scientists in the field of human biology and modularity using nano-technology. He cut my head off by accident while testing some laser technology that was supposed to cut through metal but not humans.”

“Really? Do you have flying cars in your world too?” Jamie asked sarcastically.

“Or course not. The airplane business lobbied against them ages ago,” Bernice said in complete sincerity.

“Actually, in my world technology is pretty close to reaching the point it’s in Bernice’s world,” Laura spoke up.

“Dang, I’m not sure if I should be jealous that you guys get cool tech, or sad that you haven’t gotten to see the cool stuff you can do with magic,” Hayley said.

“Oh, you don’t have to feel too bad for us. You know what they say, ‘any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic’,” Bernice said, getting up, “Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go back to my room so I can do some experimenting myself and try to figure out what MADDUX has changed.” With her lower set of arms, she pushed in her chair, while her middle pair grabbed her tea and a plate of biscuits and grits.

“Wait! Let me join you,” Laura said, getting up quickly and her various extremities chasing after her body, “I actually have something else I need to tell you.”

“Well, looks like we should probably getting going too,” Hayley said, her skin now a pleasant mocha brown after having drank several cups of coffee.

“Yeah,” Jess said, trying to stand up. However, she had forgotten to untangle her tentacle legs from her chair, causing her to awkwardly fall on to the floor.

“Are you okay?” Hayley asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Can you give me a hand, Jamie?” Jess asked, awkwardly trying to get her legs untangled. Much to her surprise, rather than helping her, Jamie grabbed her hand at her wrist, pulling it off as though it were a piece of jewelry, and tossing it at Jess. The three girls stared at one another in shock.

“Sorry! I didn’t mean to do that,” Jamie blushed, covering the blank patch of skin under her nose.

“It’s fine,” Jess said, managing to untangle herself and tossing Jamie back her hand, “Reattach this to yourself. It looks like I’m going to have to be a bit more careful with what I say today.”

After stopping by her room and taking a long hard look at herself to try and spot anything different (to no avail), Jess made her way to Ruby's room. Knocking, she heard a "Come in" from within. Opening the door, Jess was greeted to a rather standard room, a queen bed placed appropriately near a window looking down into a well-trimmed lawn. The room had an almost unnaturally clean quality to it. Every thing from the books to the random tchotchkes seemed to be placed meticulously to give off that this was the room of any average girl. Just staring around at the unnatural level of upkeep was causing Jess's stomach to curl slightly.

"Oh good, it's you, Jess. Please, sit down." Ruby said, putting down her book and patting the bed next to her.

"Sure," Jess said, maneuvering her tentacles and sitting down next to Ruby.

"Now, I take it that there's probably magic in your dimension?"

"Y-yeah. How did you know?"

"Back home, magic was a pretty common thing, and usually people who could use or came into contact with magic had a certain aura about them. Anyways, that's not important. I've got a lot of experience when it comes to magic, specifically the wording behind magic and the results they produce."

"Okay... So what?"

"Well, it's my theory that, based upon the wording MADDUX used, you should be able to order us to do anything, even things that shouldn't strictly be possible."

"Yeah. Actually, when you left something like that did happen..."

"Great! Then I have a really big favor to ask of you."

"What is it?" Jess asked, slightly put off by the intensity of Ruby's eyes. Her succubine looks did not help calm her down.

"Do you remember yesterday? When I was talking about how I got back together with a boy I knew in high school."

"Yeah."

"Well..." Ruby looked away, slightly embarrassed now, "we aren't exactly going out, yet."

"Okay," Jess said, not sure where Ruby was going with this.

"So. Back home it's spring break, and I managed to get him to come spend the week with me, because I got cursed."

"Oh no! What did you get cursed with?"

"That doesn't really matter," Ruby said, quick to brush off this query, "the fact that he said yes to staying clearly means he's into me, right?"

"Probably? I'm not sure. I don't say I know too many guys who would just choose to stay with someone over spring break unless they were really good friends or he's interested."

"Anyways, that's where you come in," Ruby said, looking up and directly into Jess's eyes, "you see, I want you to order me to be the perfect girlfriend."

"What!?" Jess said, suddenly getting up from the bed.

"I've gone out with a lot of guys, and I really don't want to mess this opportunity up. I can't afford to mess this up, so I really need you to just order this on me, and I'll hope that this charm or whatever stays on me when I go back," Ruby stood up too, easily staring Jess down.

"I can't do that, because then he wouldn't like you, he'd only like the magic on you."

"But I'd rather have him like me, even if it's not me that he likes."

“Even if I could force you, there’s no guarantee that you’d act that way when you got back.”

“That doesn’t matter! I just want him to like me!” Ruby shouted, grabbing Jess by the shoulders.

“Let go of me!” Jess shouted. Almost robotically, Ruby let go, stepping back from Jess, tears welling in her eyes. “Look Ruby. I don’t know what’s up between you and this guy, but it really sounds like you need to take a look at how your relationship works. Because it sounds like you two have a lot of things to work out, and it sounds like an issue I can’t fix with the snap of my fingers.”

Ruby, not sure how to respond to this outright rejection of her idea, pointed towards her door, only saying, “Get out.” not sure what else to do, Jess left, deciding to go back to her room for now.

As lunch rolled around, Jess finally decided to leave her room, heading back to the common room. She was slightly surprised to find that the only other person there currently was Ruby. As she locked eyes with her, Jess asked, “So about that thing in your ro-“

“Oh, don’t worry about it. I’m already over it.” Ruby said quickly, “Please don’t bring it up. It was just a little idea I had at the last minute.”

“Okay... But if you ever need anyone to talk to-“

“Yeah, yeah,” Ruby said, waving her hand and rolling her eyes, “I can always come to you. It’s fine. Just pretend I never even said anything.”

The rest of the girls began to mosey in to the lobby just in time, as both Bernice and Laura came out of the kitchen carrying plates of food between their eight hands. Unlike yesterday, there was a large variety of foods to choose from, including salad, pasta, sandwiches, fries, fresh fruit, and breaded fish. “We weren’t sure what everyone would want, so we made a little of everything,” Laura said, her head, feet, and torso staying at the table while her hands flew back towards the kitchen to get more food.

Once all of the food had finally come out, Bernice asked the group, “So does anyone think they’ve solved it?”

“I’ve got no clue,” Jamie said in between large bites.

“Solved what?” Rosa asked.

“The activity MADDUX has us going through. He told us at breakfast, remember?” Hayley said. Bits of her food were floating and bubbling within her, slowly being dissolved within her peach colored skin (which had returned to its original color sometime after breakfast).

“Oh, I was in my room, so I probably didn’t hear it.”

“Why not? Jess asked.

“Cause I told MADDUX not to bug me while I’m in my room. So what is this challenge?”

“Well, basically MADDUX has changed us all, and whoever can figure out all the changes is going to get some reward,” Bernice summarized.

“Oh, that actually explains a lot. Okay MADDUX, I have the answer.”

“What!?” collective gasps escaped from the other girls.

“So, Bernice has six arms now, Laura is basically Rayman, Ruby is a devil, Hayley is living liquid, Jamie’s mouth has been moved to her stomach and enlarged, Jess has squid legs, and I,”

she said, turning around to show her back to the group and revealing a zipper that ran down her back, “am now a living skin suit.” As she ran through the list of changes, it was almost as if a chemical reaction went off in the girls’ heads, making them painfully aware of the changes that had been made to them.

“Why didn’t I see this as a change before?” Bernice asked, looking down at her multiple arms.

“Congratulations Rosa on being the first to determine the changes! You will get your reward tomorrow, but for now, please enjoy the changes until the end of the day.” MADDIX announced.

After the food had been eaten Jess, Laura, Jamie, and Hayley sat in the common room, exploring their bodies. “I can’t believe Rosa was able to tell what changes had occurred so easily,” Hayley said, sticking her arms through her back to make them stick out of her stomach.

“Well, she seems to be the sort of person who’s very in tune with the world around her,” Laura said, holding her feet in her hands and bringing them up to her face to better inspect them.

“I just find Rosa a little weird in general, have any of us even said more than a couple of words to her the entire time we’ve been here?” Jamie asked, exploring the blank expanse under her nose and reveling in the strange pull of skin as her giant mouth moved on her stomach.

“Hey, if she wants to spend this time in her room rather than enjoying these changes with us, we can’t exactly force her to join in,” Jess said, sitting on the floor, her tentacles wrapping around each other and her arms.

The girls sat in relative silence, until Jamie stood up and headed towards the kitchen. “Hey Laura,” Jess said, breaking the silence once more, “I want to test something, if you don’t mind?”

“Sure,” Laura said, standing up and walking towards Jess, who had also stood up, “What do you want to test?”

“I want to see how far from you a part can go and still be under your control.” Jess then grabbed Laura’s right hand and began to walk away from her. After reaching about arm’s length, Jess encountered a bit more resistance, but continued pulling anyway. As she got farther and farther from Laura’s body, her other body parts began to slowly retract towards her torso. After going a bit further, Jess was on the complete opposite side of the room, while Laura’s other extremities were now pressing against the point her limbs would normally attach. Taking one more step, Laura fell onto the floor, her empty shoulder dragging her across the floor slightly until stopping a few inches further.

“I think that’s as far as it’s going to go,” Laura said, but not before Jess took another step and dragged her another couple of inches.

“I think you’re right,” Jess said, letting go of Laura’s hand. As soon as she did, it flew back towards Laura, allowing her extremities to extend back to their normal positions once more.

Hayley clapped her hands together, producing a wet, sloppy sound, “That was really cool!”

Laura picked herself off the floor, “It seems I can’t lose control of my parts, and that whatever is keeping them in my control is a finite resource.”

Jess walked back to the girls, “That seems about right. It also took about the same amount of effort to keep pulling on it, so whatever force is keeping your parts in place is extremely advanced.”

“Yeah,” Laura bent her torso backwards slightly, eliciting a few cracks, “Anyways, I’m going to take a nap. See you all at dinner.”

“Bye Laura,” Jess and Hayley said.

As soon as Laura was out of earshot, Jamie walked back into the room, holding a watermelon under her arm. “Hey girls! Look what I figured out I could do.” Jamie then began to open the mouth on her stomach, however once it reached normal extended proportions, it began to stretch even wider, forcing her upper body to bend backwards. Once her mouth was considerably wider than either of the two girls thought was possible, Jamie placed the watermelon in her gaping maw. She then closed her mouth, swallowing it whole and causing her stomach to distend. Jamie then burped very loudly, causing her slightly distended stomach to return to normal proportions. After wiping her mouth off, she said, “Ta-da!” and gave a slight bow.

Hayley and Jess, after a moment of shock, began clapping. “That was amazing!” Jess said.

“Yeah! I bet you’d be able to fit a whole head in their!” Hayley said jokingly. The clapping stopped, as Jess and Jamie looked at each other, then at Hayley. “What? Oh no! I’m not doing it!”

“Oh, come on Hayley! You’re just liquid right now. It’s not as if you even need your head,” Jamie said, licking her lips.

“I said no!”

“Please Hayley? Stick your head into her mouth?” Jess said, giving her best puppy-dog eyes. Both Jamie and Hayley began to move robotically; Jamie opening her mouth extremely wide once more, and Hayley sticking her head into the mouth. Once both girls were free from the mysterious force of Jess’s words, Jamie instinctively closed her mouth, her giant teeth easily severing Hayley’s watery head and accidentally swallowing part of her liquid friend. “Oh my God! Hayley!” Jess said rushing over.

Jamie burped, her stomach once more returning to normal proportion before commenting, “*mmm* strawberry.”

“Hayley! Can you hear me?!” Jess shouted at her headless friend. Thankfully, the liquid body shakily gave a thumbs up. “Oh. That’s good, can you see?” Another thumbs up. “Can you feel the parts in Jamie?” A thumbs down. “Okay. Um... Have you tried reforming your head?”

Jamie and Jess watches as the pinkish liquid that made up Hayley began to swirl around, concentrating around the location of her former neck. As the glob began to increase in mass, features began to form, including her nose and ears. The last thing to return to normal was her hair, as it changed from strands of skin-colored hair to its normal blond color. “That was a trip,” she said, moving a stray lock out of her face.

“What was it like?” Jamie asked.

“It felt super weird, until you swallowed and suddenly I lost all feeling from my head,” she said, adjusting her shirt, which seemed to be a size larger on her now.

“Sorry, about that. I forgot that you all have to do what I say for the rest of the day,” Jess offered.

“It’s okay, I’m just glad that nothing irreversible happened,” Hayley said.

“Well, since we know it’s fixable, do you mind if I have another bite?” Jamie said hungrily.

“No!” She shouted, running out of the room as Jamie gave chase.

Jess rolled her eyes, “Oh girls...”

Dinner rolled around without anymore incidents. With twice the pair of hands in the kitchen, Bernice and Laura were able to make a lot more food, producing a thanksgiving-esque feast of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, green beans, corn on the cob, the whole nine yards. Hayley had returned to her normal size, apparently a simple bath was enough to replenish her to her natural size. Jamie showed off her amazing trick with her mouth once more with a much more willing Hayley.

Once their stomachs had been satiated, all the girls sat on the reformed couches, conversation naturally drifted towards their transformations. “So, do you girls think the transformations have anything to do with our home lives?” Jamie asked.

“Hell no. I’m definitely not a saint back home, but I would be able to tell if I were a devil,” Ruby said sounding slightly miffed.

“Plus, how exactly would you explain some of these transformations? Like, no offense Laura, but I don’t really take you for the gaming type” Hayley said.

“I don’t mind. Plus, I agree with your sentiment,” Laura added.

“Anyway, who cares about the transformations themselves. What I’m more interested in how little Miss Stays-In-Her-Room was able to tell exactly how we changed so easily,” Ruby said, scooting in closer to Rosa and beginning to spin her hair in between her fingers.

“W-well, I’m just good at noticing changes. That’s all,” Rosa said, her face brightening several shades.

“Yeah, but you didn’t even know there were any changes until lunchtime. Among us six, we should have noticed at least one of our changes, but none of us noticed any changes,” Bernice said.

“Maybe it’s just one of those things that some people are better at than others?” Hayley added, once again playing with her liquid forms by making little water figurines and having them move around on her.

“Y-yeah! Maybe that’s it,” Rosa said shakily, still red in the face and trying to get Ruby to stop playing with her hair.

“Or maybe,” Ruby said sensuously, leaning closer, clearly aware of Rosa’s embarrassment, “This has something to do with Rosa’s dimension?”

“Oh! Speaking of that, I’ve been meaning to ask you, Rosa. What were you freaking out about on that first day?” Jamie asked.

“I was wondering about that too...” Hayley said, smoothing out her skin once more to sit more upright.

“Yes Rosa. Tell us,” Ruby said directly into her ear.

“U-um...”

Jess found herself back in her room once again. “It is now 9:00. You will not be allowed to leave your room until morning, so please try and get some rest. You all have a busy day

tomorrow.” As curious as she was as to why Rosa was acting so strange, Jess knew she wasn’t going to get answers until tomorrow, so she closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Jess woke up to a knocking at her door. Grabbing her alarm clock, she saw that it was seven in the morning, much earlier than she’s had to get up since she started working with Paul. Climbing out of bed, she opened the door, mumbling, “What?”

“Good morning Jess,” Bernice said, “sorry to wake you up, but it appears that MADDUX wants us up early so we can be ready for today’s activity.”

“M’kay,” Jess said, shutting the door on Bernice and changing into some jeans and a t-shirt.

Breakfast was rather uneventful, just the standard fair of coffee and eggs. While most of the girls were up, Rosa was still absent from the table. “She didn’t come when I knocked on her door, and her door was locked,” Bernice explained when pressed.

Eventually, nine o’clock rolled around and Rosa finally arrived and immediately headed towards the kitchen. “Do you smell that?” Ruby asked, crinkling her nose.

“Smell what?” Rosa asked, walking back in, a bagel in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.

“I don’t know,” Ruby said, “something stinks though...”

“Great! Everyone’s up!” MADDUX announced as Rosa began eating her breakfast, “I wanted you all up early so that I could give teams a chance to coordinate for today’s activity, but it’s fine. Coming up with strategies on the fly is a good skill to have.”

“Wait. Teams?” Haley asked.

“Yes. Today’s activities will have you seven split up into teams to face off against one another. Of course, since-“

“MADDUX,” Rosa groggily interrupted their host.

“Yes Rosa?”

“Would it be alright if I use my prize from yesterday to not do this activity?”

“Well, um... The prize was supposed to be advantageous to your team...”

“Please? I really don’t feel like doing this today.”

“Alright. That’s fine. I’ll just rebalance the teams. However, I ask that you please stay in your room then so that we can lower the resources used. I’ll serve you lunch and dinner at appropriate times.” MADDUX said as Rosa stood up and began heading back towards her room.

“Anyway, now on to the teams. Team number one: Hayley and Jamie,” MADDUX announced.

The two girls looked towards one another. “This should be fun,” Hayley said as she high-fived Jamie.

“Team number two: Ruby and Laura.”

Laura gave Ruby a smile, as Ruby looked her over and whispered to her, “Just try to not get in my way.”

“Finally, team number three: Bernice and Jess.” Bernice looked at Jess, although Jess couldn’t exactly place what type of look it was that she gave. “Anyways, the rules of the activity will be

explained once the game has begun. As long as there are no more complaints..." MADDIX paused for a moment to give the girls a chance to respond. Seeing as how there were no complaints, MADDIX announced, "Okay. Let the game begin!"

A bright flash momentarily blinded everyone in the room.

Jess was brought back by the voice of Bernice ringing in her head saying, "Bernice? Bernice? Can you hear me?"

"Bernice? Why are you calling me Bernice?" Jess said out loud.

"Wait. Who are you? What have you done to Bernice?" The voice rang out again.

Her vision finally returning to normal, Jess found herself in a metal hallway. The floors only barely discernible as a different material from the walls and ceiling. Despite there seemingly being no source of light, Jess could see just fine. She was just standing in the middle of the hallway, but despite her best efforts, she was not able to move her body. "Bernice, stop acting weird. It's me, Jess. I can't move my body."

"Jess? Um... I don't know how to tell you this Jess, but I'm not Bernice," the voice said once more, "Furthermore, I think I'm going to need your help, because I can't see anything."

Now Jess was more confused than ever. "Okay then. Well, I'll keep talking, just try walking over to the sound of my voice..."

"Okay," the voice that sounded exactly like Bernice's said. Suddenly, Jess's body began to shakily move forward.

"Wait! Stop moving!" Jess's body froze once more.

"What? What is it?" As if on cue, a mirror began to descend from the ceiling, confirming Jess's suspicions.

Looking back at them in the mirror was a girl that had Jess's head, but it was clearly attached to Bernice's body, as it was wearing the outfit she had been wearing during breakfast. As she looked at the strange combination, MADDIX's voice echoed throughout the hallway, "Welcome girls. Today's team activity is rather simple, although I expect it will take up most of the day. Each team is composed of two people, one being the body and the other the head. The head holds most of the senses, but cannot move, so they must assist the body by telling them what to do. This can be done either out loud, or telepathically. The goal of the activity is to capture the heads of the two other teams. However, just because you've lost your head doesn't mean you're out, as you'll still be able to communicate with your body, and if they can get your head back you're back in the game. Anyway, there are plenty of other surprises and more to find on the map, so have fun!"

"Well, I guess that answers a lot of my questions, except for one. What did you mean when you said that you're not Bernice," Jess asked.

"First off, I'm not Bernice. My name is Juliet."

"Nice to meet you Juliet."

"It's great to meet you too. Now, to answer your question, and I don't really know how much Bernice told you, basically right before she and Nate started dating Nate accidentally cut off her head after testing a laser he was designing that was supposed to go through materials but not

human skin. one of the side effects was that her body, me, gained a mind of its own. When Nate was going to fix it, Bernice told him it was okay for me to keep my own consciousness, and we've more or less acted like sisters ever since."

"Wait, so what happens if she needs to go out?"

"Nate added a system so that when she attaches her head, she gets full control of her body back."

"Are you aware during this?"

"No, because there are certain... personal things that I would rather not know about that she would need her body for. But I'm fine with that because she usually lets me run headless unless she absolutely needs her body for something."

"So, do you even know where we are currently?"

"Well, the first night that computer program, I think it's called MADDUX, let Bernice take off her head so she could explain what was going on. So I know we're in, like, the space between dimensions, but I'm probably less clued than anyone else to what's going on."

"Okay then. Juliet, we're currently in some sort of hallway, so we might as well start exploring and see if we can find something to help get people's heads off."

"That sounds like a pretty good idea," Juliet said, as she began walking forward.

After wandering around various hallways that all looked the same for a while, the combination girl eventually came across a wooden door. "Wait! Juliet, turn left here and feel around the wall. There's a door."

"Okay," Juliet said, successfully veering towards the wall and finding the door with little difficulty.

Upon entering the room, Jess was a little shocked to see the room on the inside looked very similar to the rest of the hallway they had been in, the only difference being the various amount of red lasers pointing in multiple directions, and the pedestal in the center of the room that held a cylindrical device. "Okay, it looks to be some sort of treasure room. There's a bunch of lasers everywhere, and I'm not sure if they're cutting lasers or alarm lasers."

"Do you think it would be worth it?" Juliet asked, walking inside the room.

"Well, that depends. How good are you at navigating laser mazes?"

"I once cleared one when I was in 5th grade."

"Let's try it then. I mean, what's the worst that can happen?"

"Sounds good, what do I need to do?"

"Okay, so, you're going to lift your leg up high, and then take a wide step forward," Jess ordered. Juliet followed, barely avoiding the first laser. "Now, carefully lie down on the floor sideways, but be careful because there's a laser pretty close to your left." Again, Juliet followed, focusing leaning more towards her right to avoid the laser. "Roll to your right twice..."

After several complex movements, close calls, and lots of patience, Juliet and Jess successfully managed to get to the pedestal in the center of the room. Juliet picked up the cylindrical device and held it up for Jess to inspect. The tube had a single button and an opening. "What is it?" Juliet asked.

“I don’t know, but there’s a button on it and a hole. Rotate it forwards and press the button,” Jess instructed. Doing as she was told, Juliet pushed the button, causing a shaft of green light to extend from the hole in device. The light extended about three feet before abruptly stopping. “It seems to be some sort of sword made out of light,” Jess commented.

“Do you mean a lightsaber?” Juliet asked.

“What’s a lightsaber?”

“Wait. Do they not have Star Wars in your dimension?”

“What’s Star Wars?”

Juliet froze in shock. “Well, it’s this movie series about space and stuff. Lightsaber were basically swords made of light. If you ever come to our dimension, I really need to show you the original trilogy.”

“Okay...” Jess said.

“Never mind that, though. This lightsaber should be more than enough to cut off the other girls’ heads,” Juliet said, swinging the lightsaber around experimentally. What she did not account for was the fact that the extra reach was just enough to touch one of the still active lasers around the room.

Alarms began blaring around the room as the various lasers around the room disappeared. A large metal grate came down over the door. From around the room, various additional doors opened, revealing large, hulking machines that began to pour in. “I hope you know how to use the thing at least,” Jess said, as the machines began to surround them, “Because we’ve got company.”

After a grueling fight, Jess and Juliet managed to emerge victorious from their impromptu prison, only slightly worse for wear. “Ugh. That was tiring,” Juliet said, trying to calm down from the adrenaline high.

“Hey, at least it’s over...” Jess when silent as she heard the sound of shuffling around the corner. “Juliet, walk to the corner and let me peek around it.”

“*sigh* Okay,” Juliet said, placing her hand against the wall and walking forward. Once she reached the corner, she peaked Jess around the corner. Much to Jess’s surprise, she saw Hayley’s body, sans head, carefully walking down the hallway away from them. In her hands, she seemed to be carrying a lightsaber similar to their own, only colored green.

After explaining this to Juliet, Jess ordered, “Walk slowly down the hallway, we should try and grab that sword out of her hand. Try and be quiet though, I’m not sure if she can hear us.” Juliet did as she was told, slowly making her way down the corridor behind Hayley. However, just as she got behind Hayley and was reaching to grab the lightsaber out of her hand, Hayley’s body swung around, slashing wildly. It was Jess's quick warning and Juliet’s quick reflexes that helped them deflect the attack.

Now that Hayley had turned around, Jess could get a much better look at her current predicament. Around her headless neck was a golden necklace which had a green eye that was spinning wildly trying to focus on Jess and Juliet. She was also wearing a metallic gray jumpsuit that had several marks that made it look as though someone had tried to cut through it but failed.

Another swing by Hayley's body forced Jess's focus to return to the fight at hand, as Juliet instinctively took a middle blocking stance and asked, "Hey! This will go much smoother if you'd actually communicate with me."

"Sorry! Duck!" Jess shouted telepathically, Juliet complying as Hayley took a wild swing, barely missing the top of Jess's head. Jess shouted a few other commands as Hayley and Juliet swapped attacks. Despite the disconnect in actual control, Jess and Juliet managed to either dodge or deflect all of Hayley's swipes, while whatever few attacks the duo managed to land seemed to go through the outfit without actually slicing anything off. Eventually, their swords locked, allowing Jess a brief moment of relief to try and communicate. "Hayley! If you cut my head off, Ruby and Laura will win. If we team up, we can help you find your head and get her out first."

Jess was uncertain if Hayley could even understand what she said, and was fearful as she pushed the two back and appeared to be winding up for another strike. However, instead Hayley lowered her weapon, retracting the laser and making a thumbs up sign with her empty hand. "Okay," Jess said, "Can you still talk to Jamie?" Another thumbs up. "Great, can she tell us directions. The eye in her necklace seemed to look upwards, most likely because she was trying to communicate with Jamie, than focused once again on Jess and Juliet as she gave another thumbs up sign and began walking down the hallway she had been going down before starting this excursion. Jess explained the new plan to Juliet as she had her walk down the hall.

After several similar hallways in which they had to backtrack multiple times, the girls eventually began to hear the voice of Jamie shouting out. Going down several more hallways, they found Jamie's head laying on its neck stump, practically in tears at the sight of her friend's body. Hayley quickly embraced the head, before awkwardly putting it back on its neck. All the girls were slightly shocked to find it reattach easily. "Are you two okay?" Jess asked.

"Yeah," Jamie said, a smile returning to her face, "Thanks for helping us out, Ruby and Laura came out of nowhere and managed to slice me off before I could even fight back."

"No problem. Now, let's get out of here before they manage to find us again."

"Too late for that." Jess didn't have enough time to order Juliet to turn around before she felt a heat flash through her neck, her point of view quickly tumbling downwards. As her head landed on its side, it saw Ruby's head attached to Laura body holding a red laser sword. Laura's body looked more or less the same, except there was a red collar around her neck and a plain black collar attached to a chain linked to one of her belt loops. From her pocket, she pulled out a strange bolt shaped device which she stuck to the top of Juliet. Blue sparks came out of the device, causing Juliet to slump to the ground.

"Run Jamie!" Jess shouted as Ruby walked over and picked Jess off the ground, wrapping the collar on a chain on what little neck stump Jess had. Hayley and Jamie immediately began sprinting in the other direction.

"*pssh* That's fine," Ruby said, petting her newest acquisition, "Their time will come soon anyway, it was really you and Bernice that I wanted out first."

"Really? And Why's that?" Jess said, hoping that if she stalled Ruby enough, she could get her friends some extra time to run.

“Please, I wasn’t the only one to realize that Bernice has advanced experience with weird forms, I figured that if I let Jamie and Hayley get away, they’d probably get you two to help them and then I could take you out while your back was turned,” Ruby said, beginning to nonchalantly walk in the direction the girls ran, leaving the still unconscious Juliet behind.

“Okay, and what did Laura think of this plan?” Jess was doing her best to try and memorize the turns Ruby was taking so that she could direct Juliet if she woke up.

“Laura doesn’t think anything of it. See this collar?” She grabbed Jess and held her up to inspect it. The collar gave off a red glow and ran completely over the line separating the two girls’ skin tones. The collar also had small tendrils that seemed to stick out and pulse at odd intervals. “When we put on this collar, I got full control of her body.”

“Really? Is Laura safe?”

“Probably, but we won’t know until I win this thing,” Ruby chuckled, dropping Jess, who swung wildly on her chain.

‘Uggh, my neck,’ Juliet thought, as she reached up and scratched the source of her pain. Her hands ran against a strange metallic structure that seemed to be digging into the skin that now covered the top of her neck. Juliet managed to pry it off before it delivered another electric shock to her, and threw it on the ground. ‘Jess? Are you alive?’ Juliet thought out.

‘Yes Juliet! Ruby grabbed me. I’m fine, but you have to hurry. She’s caught up with Hayley and Jamie and is fighting them as we speak!’ Jess practically shouted telepathically.

‘That’s great, but how am I supposed to find you without being able to see?’

‘Well, we didn’t get too far away from you, and I remember the first couple of turns she took, so just start heading down the hallway. If you reach an intersection, tell me so I can give you directions.’

‘Alright, whatever you say...’ Juliet sighed, staggering to make her way to a wall and beginning to feel her way down the hallway.

Hayley and Ruby were really going at it now. Hayley was playing slightly more on the offensive, seeing as how the armor she was wearing did a good job at protecting her from any errant blows. Despite her best efforts, Ruby’s more defensive stance and precise movements meant that she had yet to be hit a single time, while still taking slices at Jamie’s neck when she could afford it. Jess had a hard time focusing on giving Juliet directions as she swung wildly. “Is that the best you’ve got,” Ruby huffed, her hair slightly unkempt from the large amount of energy she was expending.

“Please *huff* We could go all day,” Jamie taunted as Hayley took another wild lunge toward Ruby, who ducked out of the way.

‘Juliet, that’s all the instructions I’ve got memorized, you’re going to have to figure out the rest of the way by ear,’ Jess thought, screaming as the lunge Hayley took came dangerously close to cutting her head in half. Thankfully, Ruby’s movement only caused the blade to cut through the chain, dropping Jess onto the hard metal floor.

“Yeah? Well, we don’t have to go all day, only until I chop off your head,” Ruby taunted back, swinging styles and taking the offensive as she forced Hayley to take a step back by taking

several quick slices in a row at Jamie's neck. The fight continued on down the hallway as Ruby continued an almost endless barrage of attacks.

The next couple of events occurred in almost a blur of activity. From out of the corner of her eyes, Jess spotted Juliet as she sprinted down the hallway, laser sword in hand. 'I'm on the floor to your right!' Jess projected, and in a single movement Juliet had scooped her up and attached her back to her neck. Ruby, meanwhile made an unexpected downwards swipe, cutting off Hayley's right hand before slicing horizontally once more and successfully cutting through Jamie's neck once again. A feeling of elation rose through her as she achieved her goal, which switched to confusion as the sound of something barreling towards her caught her attention. Sadly, she did not have enough time to act as Juliet caught up to her, slicing through the collar in a single action and sending Ruby flying.

As Ruby hit the floor, a holographic display dropped from the ceiling in front of Juliet and Jess reading, 'Congratulations to Jess and Bernice! For winning the game, you get to choose who shall be a head and body pairing for the rest of the evening!' The screen transitioned downwards as the bodies and heads of all six participating girls filled up the screen, a large blue submit button below them.

'Okay... I'm thinking if we keep me as the head and you as the body, I can introduce everyone to you,' Jess told Juliet telepathically.

'That sounds good... but I have a better idea,' Juliet replied back, making her selection and hitting 'submit'. The lights around the hallway flashed as Jess felt a pulling sensation all around her.

As the lights dimmed, Jess realized that she was now sitting down in the lobby with all of the other girls. The nearby digital wall clock read '4:00 PM'. To her surprise both she and Bernice were in one piece. "Oh dear," Laura voice sounded off. Turning, Jess saw that Laura's head was resting in the hands of Ruby's body. "Ruby's really not happy about this..." Laura said, the slightest hint of a smile on her face.

"Well, not to worry Laura, as I've made it so Ruby will have free will until you order her to do something. A luxury that she did not afford you during the game," MADDUX announced, the slightest hint of a smirk in his synthesized voice. The girls began picking themselves off the couches, content to get a little bit of rest before it was time for dinner.

As Jess got up to leave, Bernice grabbed her hand, whispering, "Can you stay here a bit?" Jess sat back down, waiting for everyone else to make their way out (including a stumbling Ruby who was carrying Laura's head roughly by her ponytail). Once the room was clear, Bernice began, "So, seeing as how I'm suddenly sitting here, I'm assuming you've met Juliet?"

"Yeah, she seems like a pretty nice sister to have," Jess said, using the phrase Juliet had used to describe their relationship.

"She is, and I was planning on telling everyone about her... eventually. So, can you do me a huge favor and not tell anyone about her?"

"Sure, but why is it such a huge deal?"

"It's just... Well, it's kind of obvious that some of the group sees me as the weirdo perfect chick who has no faults."

“That’s not true,” Jess cringed, knowing full well of the people she was talking about.

“No, I can understand why they would see me that way. I’ve had a lot of experience with weird things and different forms from testing stuff with Nate. I’m pretty sure that saying I also got to bring an extra person from home, even though I can’t communicate with her, would not be the best way to try and bring my popularity back up,” Bernice explained.

“I really don’t think they will act that way,” Jess began, but after looking at Bernice’s pleading eyes, “but if it really means that much to you, then my lips are sealed,” Jess finished, Bernice perking up.

“Thank you Jess!” Bernice cheered, helping her stand up and hugging her.

“No problem,” Jess said, breaking the hug and hoping she had made the right decision as she made her way back to her bedroom to wait until dinner.

Dinnertime rolled around and the girls were in a jovial mood. During the recess, MADDUX had announced that the activity the following day would be the last one. To celebrate, Bernice had cooked a wonderful dinner of honey-baked ham with green beans, mashed potatoes, and grilled pineapple (Laura had offered up Ruby’s body to assist, but Bernice said it would be fine). The only girl who seemed to be absent from the celebrations was Rosa.

“Should someone go get her?” Laura asked from her location on the table in front of Ruby.

“She’s usually good about coming out for dinner,” Hayley commented, eyeing the food.

“Oh wait! I think I hear her coming now,” Jamie said, as shuffling was heard coming from the stairs leading into the lobby. As soon as she actually reached the bottom of the stairs, the room seemed to reel back in collective shock at the sudden stench that seemed to fill the room. The smell of garbage only intensified as Rosa approached the table, taking a seat and cutting a slice of the ham as she began to dig in.

“What?” Rosa asked, looking up from her ham as she saw that everyone was staring and holding their nose.

“Rosa? When is the last time you took a bath?” Jamie said, her voice slightly strange as she kept her nose plugged.

Rosa, not expecting such a question, stammered, “W-what do you mean?”

“You stink!” Laura shouted, gasping for air until Ruby reached over and plugged her nose, who was glad that she didn’t have any nose to smell with.

Rosa, not sure how to handle this situation, stood up and ran away from the table. “Wait! Rosa!” Jess shouted, chasing after the girl.

When Jess came to the hallway, she noticed that Rosa’s door was opened. “Rosa?” Jess asked calmly as she crossed the threshold into Rosa’s room. Unlike any of the other rooms Jess had been into thus far, the room was an alleyway. The stench of garbage was much more noticeable here, as a light rain came down from the sky. “Rosa?” Jess asked again, as she heard a gentle sobbing coming from the sole dumpster. “Rosa? Are you okay?”

“Does it look like I’m okay?” Rosa asked, her face covered in garbage as several opened bags of filth lined the bottom of the dumpster.

“Not really, but you know, misery loves company,” Jess said, jumping the dumpster wall and landing on the pile of trash next to her, “Now, what the hell is going on?”

“Oh, you won’t believe me anyway,” Rosa whined, slamming her face back in the garbage.

“Rosa, back in my dimension I literally had the power to do almost anything. I’ve been transformed into a diad, had my arms pulled off, broken apart and reassembled in a number of different ways. Literally. Try me,” Jess said completely deadpan.

Rosa nervously whispered, “Well... back home... I can change reality,” Rosa cringed, expecting Jess to not believe her like almost everyone else she’s told.

Instead Jess began to chuckle, “Really? That’s all?” Rosa, glad to finally find someone else who understood her, began to laugh too. Once both the girls calmed down, Jess said, “C’mon, I think both of us need a bath.”

Once both Jess and Rosa were soaking in the communal bath, Rosa began telling the story of her entire life. “It all started when I was about 5. It just seemed that anytime I ever wanted something or wanted something to change, I would immediately get it. Nobody ever seemed to mind, so I thought it was fine to just change whatever I wanted, but it was only when I was older that I realized that something always felt off with always getting my way. Eventually, I figured out that I was changing reality, but whenever I went to try and return to my regular reality, it was always so much worse than the fantasy I had left. Not to mention, that I have almost no skills when it comes to actually taking care of myself, which was a lesson I learned when I came home and had to have my Mom explain what a shower was. Usually things turn out fine, because my body sort of ran on some sort of autopilot in my main reality, but I didn’t realize that my actions in the alternate realities had consequences in my main reality.”

“I had a massive crush on this kid in my senior year in high school, so I started making him my main love interest in my fantasies, so I took the opportunity to try and get him to fall in love with me in the mainline reality, and it worked for a while. But then... I started slipping in other love interests and eventually lost him. And by that time I had moved out, and I guess my zombified self couldn’t get into a college, and moved out. The last time I actually returned to my true reality, I was living in an abandoned alley, and I haven’t returned to it since...”

“Wow... That’s pretty heavy stuff for someone right out of high school to deal with,” Jess said, rubbing Rosa’s messy hair with shampoo and soap.

“Yeah... That’s kind of why I was freaking out when we got here. Bad things tend to happen when I don’t have my powers,”

“Is it also why you’ve been spending most of your time in your room?”

“Kind of, but it’s also because of the whispering.”

“Whispering?” Jess stopped rubbing in the shampoo and spun Rosa to look at her.

“Yeah, the whispering in the hallways and lobby. Do you not hear them?”

“No, what are they saying?”

“I can’t really hear what their saying, there’s usually too many whispering at once to understand them, but sometimes I catch a couple snippets like ‘emptiness’ or ‘darkness’ or ‘hunger’” Rosa said, dunking her head under the water and removing the suds from her hair.

“Well, thanks for telling me all this,”

“Thanks for letting me just vent, I’ve been holding this all in for a real long time,” Rosa said back, tears welling in her eyes again.

“But seriously, you are not sleeping in that alleyway tonight. You can sleep with me, but only if you promise to try and fix your main reality when you get back.”

Rosa looked at Jess skeptically before saying, “You’ve got yourself a deal.”

Jess woke up with Rosa wrapped around her. The petite girl had gathered the rest of the group and told an abbreviated version of her story before everyone was sent off to bed. Jess felt awful about waking her up, so she laid in bed a little while longer, until it was about 9:00 and her stomach rumbled. Jess lent Rosa a pair of sweats and a pink hoodie as the two of them went down for breakfast.

Everyone else was already situated and practically done breakfast by the time Jess and Rosa came down to join them. Some light bantering was spoken, but everyone was silent in the anticipation of MADDUX’s announcement for the next challenge.

When Jess and Rosa finally finished, MADDUX spoke up, “Good morning ladies. Today’s test will be rather simple. During your stay here, I have been working hard to maintain the greater effects of the unstable dimensional forces at play. For this test, we’re going to turn this stuff off for an hour. Now, I’m mostly certain that no permanent ill effects or death will befall you, but will understand if any of you wish to back out now. Please speak up if you wish to do so.” The group of friends, having survived through so much already, remained silent. “Great, then let the test begin.

Darkness. That’s what Jess saw in her immediate area. As for what she felt, it probably could also be described as darkness, because it felt like she was floating in emptiness that was slightly thicker than it should have been. Jess was content to stay put, but she suddenly began hearing Rosa shouting for help somewhere in front of her. “Rosa!” Jess shouted, trying to move forward by flapping her arms through the darkness. She began to move, but as she continued, new, foreign sensations began to arise. She tried to turn her head back, but her vision blurred as she turned her head. She closed her eyes, moving forward as the sensations only seemed to grow. Opening them once again she now had a good view of what was going on.

As she was moving forwards, it was almost as if her body were acting like an error from windows, or when she won at solitaire, as whenever she moved forward copies of her body seemed to remain still behind her. The only problem was, she could still feel all these copies, which explained why her brain was becoming more and more overloaded with sensations. ‘Oh God!’ she thought, ‘what if this becomes too much? Will my brain explode?’ She couldn’t think about this, all she could do now was keep moving forward and hope to find one of the other girls. She closed her eyes, repositioned her head and kept moving forward.

Eventually, the young girl came into view. At least, she hoped it was the young girl, because the thing she was approaching was most definitely not anything that could be described as human. The ‘thing’ was a mass of flesh that seemed to pulsate and stretch outwards that screamed out in pain with Rosa’s voice. Around the edges of the amorphous blob, Jess caught the faintest glimpse of the darkness seemingly stretch out and attach, trying to pull the blob towards it. “Rosa! Don’t Worry! I’m coming!” Jess shouted, flapping more vigorously to approach the blob.

It was as Jess got closer and closer that she realized the blob she was heading towards was much bigger than she had initially anticipated. The blob was already as big as a motel, and it still seemed like she wasn't even close to it. Not only that, but her screams seemed to have fallen upon deaf ears, as the blob continued to shout out in agony.

Eventually, Jess got close enough to realize the blob must have been practically as big as a planet. Not only that, but she began to hear whispers in the darkness that had not been present prior to being this close. Just like Rosa had described, there were so many voices that she could only pick up a few phrases, most noticeably "Punishment", "Retribution", and "Atonement".

"Rosa!" Jess shouted once more. She had, by this point, entered Rosa's apparent gravity and was moving much quicker than her simple flapping before. As she approached, her mind grew more and more hazy as the sensation overload started to become too much to handle. At this point, she couldn't change her direction, so she continued shouting Rosa's name as she approached, eventually impacting the large fleshy mass of Rosa and passing out.

Jess wasn't sure if she was awake, or even where she was. She felt like she was laying down on someone, and when she looked up she could see the screaming form of Rosa as clear as day. She was stuck in a flesh colored wall and screaming her lungs out in pain. Jess closed her eyes once again.

"And thus concludes my experiment! Thank you all for participating, we will allow you two hours to recuperate and say your goodbyes before you can leave." Jess opened her eyes, she and all the other girls were sitting in the lobby once more. No-one dared to speak, in fear that this was another illusion, but eventually someone had to break the silence.

It was only natural for Ruby to try and break the silence by saying, "Well... That was messed up." The girls nodded in silent agreement. "But hey! At least we all got out alive!" Ruby said, trying once again to bring the mood up in the room.

"That's true," Jamie said, brightening up slightly, "and besides, now that it's over, we can go home!"

"Oh c'mon Jamie, are you that excited to get rid of us?" Hayley teased.

"It's not like that! It's just I have important things to do and -" her protesting fell on deaf ears as the group began laughing, both at Hayley's joke and out of relief of surviving the ordeal.

All except for Rosa, who still looked in shock. Jess leaned in, "Hey. You okay?"

"I'm... mostly fine... it's just," Rosa looked seemed to penetrate Jess's sole, "I heard the whispers. Loud and clear this time."

Everyone had successfully calmed down (even Rosa), and as MADDUX instructed them to enter the hallway with their doorways, everyone was preparing to say their goodbyes. "Oh gosh. You all have to swear to come to my dimension whenever this inter-dimensional travel stuff is finished," Jamie said.

"Most definitely, but only if you all promise to go shopping with me when you come to my place."

“No doubt,” Jess said, “and you all can have free drinks anytime you come to my bar. Just... try and show up normal so you don’t get sent to jail forever.”

“I’ll give you guys some tech from my home too,” Bernice threw in.

“And I’ll try and control myself if any of you show up at my place... but no promises,” Rosa grinned.

“Uggh. Y’all sicken me,” Ruby said, a grin spread across her face as almost everyone came in for a group hug.

“What about you Laura?” Jess asked, noticing she had not made any comments on the heartfelt goodbyes.

“Well... I was just wondering if... Mr. MADDUX, could I stay in the rift?” Everyone stared in shock at their friend’s strange request.

“I can accommodate If you promise to stay confined to your room, it shall only take a fraction of my processor to keep the rift open small enough for it,” MADDUX replied.

“I would like that very much. Thank you MADDUX,” Laura said.

“Laura!? Why do you want to stay here?” Jess asked.

“Well... It was going to come out sooner or later. But... I’m not exactly... human,” Laura said, reaching up, pressing something on the back of her neck, and lifting off her head. The group of girls stared at her speechlessly as she continued, “Back home... Laura, or at least the real Laura, died of cancer in 2013. Her boyfriend worked tirelessly on creating me, an android replica with all of her memories intact. However, in 2014, he was a fool and tried to steal me away from the company that was working on me. When they finally caught him, they put me in permanent storage, which is where MADDUX picked me up from and explained everything to me...” She sighed heavily, reattaching her head and not looking up at them, “if I go back, I’ll just go back into storage and... essentially cease to exist...”

She sniffed slightly, “I can understand if you all don’t want to hang out w-“ she was interrupted as the girls surrounded her in a group hug. “So... you’re not all mad?”

“Laura, Rosa literally came out yesterday and said she was practically a God in her dimension. How in the world could we dislike you just because you’re a robot?” Bernice said.

“Yeah. Do you really think we’re that shallow?” Ruby smirked.

“Besides, that just gives us an excuse to try and get back here as quickly as possible,” Jess smiled, the hug breaking.

After several more goodbyes, the girls were ready to finally get back home. “Okay girls, to return home, simply go to your rooms door, and when you open them, you will be back exactly where you were.” The doors to each girls’ room glowed bright white (except for Laura). The girls gave one lass wave goodbye to one another, before counting down.

“Three...

Two...

One...”

Jess opened the door and entered.

The world Jess entered was most definitely not her own. For starters, the entire room looked as though it were a futuristic laboratory. Secondly, the fact that Bernice in two pieces and a relatively tall man in a lab coat were standing feet away from her. “Oh shit! Nate! What did you do!” Bernice shouted at him.

“Sorry! Sorry! You know our dimensions were the closest! I probably messed up one of the axis!” A familiar voice yelled. It was then that Jess realized-

“Oh my God! Nate was MADDUX!” Jess shouted, her mind completely blown away by this fact.

“Shit. Cat’s out of the bag,” Bernice said, only mildly upset. Bernice and Juliet walked over to where Jess was standing, where they began to explain, “Firstly Nate is not MADDUX. MADDUX is an AI we both created and used a voice synthesizer based upon Nate’s voice. Secondly, Nate and I were the ones who discovered the rift... with some help from a certain other individual.”

“Who?”

“Bernice remained silent, as her voice emerged from a collar on Juliet, “We were going to wait to show you this... but since you’re here, you should probably read this.” Juliet reached in to her lab coat and handed her an opened envelope. Pulling the letter out, she began to read the message in her handwriting,

‘Dear Bernice (& Juliet) Woodward,

You may not know me, but trust me when I say that I know you, and what I have to say is of the utmost importance. In a few years time, the greater multiverse as we know of it currently is going to end. The only slightest shred of hope of us being able to save it is if you, following these instructions, create a device to allow traversal between a rift in dimensions. Lucky for you, most of the hard work has already been done (by you! Hooray!) so just send out a probe to these coordinates (-3E42,95413,0,12E7,831,1E99,13556) and await further instructions and correspondence.

Your Best Friend, Jessica A. Kincaid’

Included was a photo of Jessica, Bernice, and Juliet significantly older, Jess holding Bernice’s head as Juliet hugged her. “There’s other letters too that prove the letters are legit,” Bernice said, “but I think that if we’re going to continue this, you need to know what’s at stake...”

Jess stood in silence for a while, absorbing all this new information. Eventually, she smiled at Bernice, “Well, this is a lot of stuff,” Bernice look slightly rejected at these words, “but coming from you two? I’m all but certain we can stop whatever calamity will come our way.” Bernice smiled, and after being reattached to Juliet, hugged Bernice.

“Aannnnddd that should be everything,” Nate said, coming out from beneath the desk, “Now, we should probably get you going. We’re still not exactly sure what will happen if people from other dimensions stay in someone else’s for too long.”

“Okay! Well, I guess this is goodbye for real this time...” Bernice said.

“Guess so...” Jess said, a melancholy tone filling the room. As she waved the lovely couple goodbye, a light flashed.

“Jess! Dinner will be ready in 15 minutes!” Kayla shouted through the door as she rushed by. Jess found herself standing in her doorway just like she had been nearly 4 days ago. She would probably have to tell her roommates, not to mention Alan, of the life changing journey she just had. And the fact that there were multiple different dimensions where magic wasn’t illegal. And that these dimensions were going to be at risk of destruction in several years time. And of the new friends that she just made, despite no time having passed.

Then again... Why make them worry?

The End