

Verification Process

“Ugh, I hate doing these checks,” Hazel groaned to no one in particular as she stepped out onto the catwalk of her fifth packaging facility today. She ran a hand through her frizzy afro, letting the curls bounce back down around her chin as she looked down the conveyor belt. It was a nervous tic that she’d never been able to get rid of; touching her hair just made her feel safer.

Hazel was a petite black woman, her slender frame mostly concealed under her slim white jumpsuit. She worked in Verification, which *usually* meant having a quick look at the manifests that the London algorithm sent over to confirm that they matched what was supposed to be there and then confirm them for packaging. Which wasn’t much of a job, because the algorithm was delivering both sets of data *and* comparing that data itself. Verification was a Tier 4 position, about as low as you could get. Just something to do for a few hours each day before she went home to actually enjoy her life.

But once a week, everyone had to go and do an actual spot-check, making sure that the facilities were packaging the right things and none of the cameras were out. It took *forever*. In theory, people were supposed to do them in pairs, but today Evan was sick, which meant that Hazel had to do all six of the facilities that she and he had been going to inspect together, and she’d been on the job for five hours already. She just wanted to finish checking things off her list and go home and watch some TV. One of those *wild* Conglomerate game shows had just been approved for public consumption, and she wanted to see how awful it got for the poor drudges. Life in the Conglomerate was so terrible she could hardly imagine it. She’d heard a rumor that they worked *nine-hour days*.

Walking over to the edge of the catwalk, Hazel leaned on the safety rail and looked down at the crating process below. It was simple enough; goods bound for other locations were fed onto the belt, scanned, and boxed up before being redirected to their exit points. Today, the factory was preparing goods and tools for a charity deployment to the Cardiff Scraplands. Waste of good stuff, she thought. If they wanted Network stuff so bad, they could come to the Network. But it kept those Authority assholes from Manchester getting their fingers in the region, so the Algorithm had approved it.

As Hazel pulled out her pad to compare the conveyor contents with her records, she felt a tug at her wrist. Looking down, she saw that the arm of her jumpsuit was snagged in a tiny gap between the rail and its sidebeam. “Are you *kidding* me?” she yelped. “Come on!” She dropped her pad, pulling on the sleeve as hard as she could. It might get torn, but better that than having to call for assistance. She would *die* of embarrassment.

She took a half-step back, and her foot came down hard on the pad she’d just dropped. Hazel let out a squeal of surprise as the plastic object shot through the air, sending her tumbling to the ground as the sound of tearing fabric echoed through the space. Her legs kicked out wildly.

That should have been the end of it, but the spacing and railing for the factory was built to combine safety and efficiency, and had been automatically calibrated by the algorithm to ‘human dimensions’. Hazel was only 5’1”, and was thin to boot. She just barely fit between the safety rails, and slid right off the platform, falling eight feet onto the conveyor belt below.

“OOF!” The impact knocked the wind out of Hazel, and for a moment all that she could do was lie on her back, stars spinning in her eyes. She’d landed on something soft - a still-unpackaged collection of clothing, it felt like - and nothing was broken, but her head was aching and her lungs were heaving as she tried to catch her breath.

‘Damaged goods detected. Removing.’

“Factory,” Hazel started to say. “Pause production, I’ve - oww!” A pair of flying drones shot out of the wall, grabbing her jumpsuit. One claw closed around her ID bracelet, yanking it off, as the others began to tear the jumpsuit to pieces. “Hey! Stop it! Factory, halt! STOP!”

The drones ignored her increasingly-frantic demands, quickly and efficiently stripping the woman naked as she struggled to sit up. The constant buffeting kept knocking Hazel back down into the clothes, and soon she was entirely naked. She rolled off the clothes, bumping off the wall of the conveyor belt, and prepared to stand up. “This is ridiculous!” she shouted. “What are you doing?”

‘Loose goods detected. Securing.’

Hazel's eyes went wide, and she turned to look for where the loose goods might be. If she got pinned, she could be in real trouble. But she didn't see anything. "Okay, enough's enough. Verification operator ID 978-12W! Halt production!" She raised her hands to wave and catch the system's attention.

A drone came out of nowhere, grabbing her by the wrists. As Hazel overbalanced, falling backwards, another drone dropped down, easily evading her and wrapping around her ankles. Hazel shrieked in pain as the drones forced her to double over backwards, pulling her wrists down to her ankles and leaving her in a tight hogtie. "EEK! No! STOP! Owowow please..."

The machines were relentless. Metal brackets were fixed over each ankle and wrist, forcing them tightly together, and a moment later Hazel heard the sound of a power drill as bolts were pressed down, affixing her to the ground. Her breath caught in her throat. The conveyor belt was made of plastic segments, designed to become the basis of transport crates. If she was locked in place, then... "NOO!" She raised her hand, shaking it fiercely. "I'm not cargo! I'm a citizen! A citizen!"

'Loose goods detected. Securing.'

Another drone dropped down in front of Hazel, and for a moment, she thought that it was looking at her. But as she opened her mouth to speak, the drone reached out with another long metal brace, pressing it over her neck and pushing the edges down to the ground. "Ahh!" There was just barely enough room to breathe, Hazel's head pressed down against her hair as the restraints forced her neck back against the floor. She was now completely trapped, back bent painfully and small breasts poking up into the air, wiggling helplessly against her restraints.

'Scanning.'

She felt, more than saw, the sides of the crate lowering down on around her. One piece brushed against the top of her head, and another one rested against her knees as the two on the sides pressed into her arms. Hazel began to breathe rapidly. This couldn't be happening. Someone had to notice something was wrong soon, right?

"I'm a human being!!" she shrieked at the top of her lungs. If someone walked in right now, it would be absolutely humiliating, but if they didn't, she was going to be shipped to Cardiff!

She could only imagine what this would look like on the factory cameras. The conveyor belt she was on was rapidly approaching final packaging, and anyone looking down would see her, bent over backwards, breasts jiggling as she struggled to pull even one of the metal restraints loose enough to slip an arm free. There were tears in her eyes and she couldn't keep the panic off of her face. Any minute now, the algorithm would scan her and recognize her as human, and then she would be okay. Please, please, scan her.

A red light passed over the crate, and Hazel let out a small sigh of relief as the conveyor belt halted. Now the system would signal an alert and someone could come and get her.

'Unfilled cavities detected.'

Hazel's thin eyebrows drew together as she tried to crane her neck. What the heck was it talking about? She could just see the edge of a pair of robotic nozzles inching over the edge of the box. Then her eyes went wide as she felt one nozzle begin to press gently against her ass. "No! Nononono - glumph!!"

She was so distracted by the threat to her rear that she didn't spot the other nozzle inching up beside her head. It dove into her mouth as the lower nozzles pressed into her asshole and pussy, and a moment later there was the horrible sound of pressure.

"Nnnnnn!" Foam sprayed down Hazel's throat at the same time that it filled her insides. Carefully designed, it sprayed up into her body, coating the inside of her throat, ass, and uterus as it began to set, layer after thin layer pressing on her from inside. It tasted horrible, and Hazel retched, head bucking wildly as she struggled to breathe. Fortunately, the nozzles didn't seem to want to push too deep; they were just 'sealing the exits', so to speak. The rapidly-hardening foam was only pushing about eight inches up her holes, leaving her struggling to breathe but not incapable of it, mouth forced open and drool dripping down her throat as the bitter taste of the foam overwhelmed her.

Moments later, she began to feel a terrible itch growing in all three places the foam had set. As it bonded to her flesh, it created a persistent, terrible itch that she couldn't do anything to scratch. Hazel moaned, her voice almost completely inaudible under the layers of foam blocking her mouth and coating her lips. Her eyes rolled wildly, tears forming as she stared up in search of salvation.

‘Heartbeat detected.’

Hazel’s tears turned to sobs of relief. This time, the system would recognize her. This time, it had to.

‘Deploying livestock protection measures.’

LIVESTOCK?! For a moment, Hazel’s panic was replaced by rage, but her expression turned back to panic as a new tube lowered down, pressing a clear plastic mask over Hazel’s eyes and nose. She coughed as a pair of breathing tubes slid out of the mask into her nose, feeding down past her blocked throat towards her lungs. It was deeply unpleasant, but it did make her breathing a bit easier. Her breasts heaved as she sucked in air again, twitching against her metal restraints.

Distantly, she tried to think of a plan. The system had mistaken her for livestock, but packaged livestock was supposed to be sedated for transport. It would be ensuring that she could breathe, and then applying more foam to protect her from getting bruised in transit...

Her breath caught, and her blood ran cold. More foam. More itching pressure all over her body. Trapped in a tiny box, shackled down, kept from even wiggling for as long as transport took. Livestock would be given priority for safety reasons, but it could still easily be twenty-four hours before she reached her destination. She couldn’t handle it. Not that, anything but that.

The crate was rumbling forward again, approaching the filling station. Hazel began to scream as loudly as she could, hoping against hope that someone could hear her. “Hmmp! Hmmp!”

Even to her own ears, the sound was pathetically weak. Against the noise of machinery filling the factory, she couldn’t imagine it was even audible ten feet away.

“Nnn, plsss...”

She watched as her newly-assembled crate slid to a stop. She tried to bang her head against the side of the crate to make more noise, but she couldn’t do more than lightly tap it. Her palms beat a desperate pattern on the bottom of her container, her calf muscles strained as she tried to move her legs. Two more

nozzles began to inch their way over the side, painfully, hopelessly slowly as Hazel watched her doom gradually approaching.

“Hmmp!!”

And then the foam began to spray down on her.

It was exactly what she'd imagined. Nearly-liquid foam began to fill the tiny gaps between her body and the ground, pressing against her arms as it sloshed over it. It expanded rapidly, pushing down her chest against the other set of foam pushing her back upwards, pressing her knees into the floor and pushing her ankles inwards. Hazel's scream was just a faint gurgle as she watched it sloshing over her.

She felt, more than saw, the foam filling her hair, catching in her curls and adding weight that pulled her back, and she sobbed as she imagined what it would look like when it was cut loose. But even that imagination quickly faded as she realized that the foam was cascading down between her breasts towards her face. Rivulets ran over the foam already clogging her mouth, covering her chin and muting her protests even further, curling around the edges of the thin mask protecting her breathing and running lines over the edges of the plastic that protected her eyes.

Worst of all, everywhere that the foam splashed over her, the itching followed. Hazel's skin was reacting to the acrid stuff, and it felt like a thousand tiny bug bites running rampant across her body. She tried to press her legs together, to give herself the ability to at least rub against herself, but the foam slipped through every crack, forcing her body stiff and immobile, wrapping around her fingers and her toes, leaving no room for even the slightest resistance. It was slow work, the pressure growing with every new gush, and with every moment that passed Hazel felt her options growing dimmer.

Then, with a jerk, the foam stopped foaming. There was a hissing sound, and the mask pulled its way up into the ceiling, leaving a tiny space around Hazel's eyes and nose as the only part of her that was visible. Every other inch of the crate she was packed in was filled with solidified foam; an outside observer might spot the hint of her breasts rising slightly above the rest of the material, two foam-covered nipples poking up as the terrible, incessant itch covered even that sensitive spot. Otherwise, there was nothing to distinguish her from any other fragile package. She tried to struggle with all of her might, but all that she managed was to twitch her nose and wriggle her eyebrows a bit.

“Well, this is where the signal went dead.” Hazel went still as she heard the voice on the catwalk, and then she began to scream. “...!” Or at least... she tried to. Between the multiple layers of foam over her mouth, her contorted position, and the heavy pressure on her stomach and lungs keeping her from drawing in a deep breath, she could barely manage a squeak.

“I don’t see her.” The conveyor belt was starting up again, and Hazel could just see two people standing on the catwalk, wearing technician clothing. One of them knelt down. “Her pad’s here, but no ID bracelet. Must have dumped it and done a runner.”

“You really think so?” the younger man asked doubtfully. “Why would you run in the middle of a factory inspection?”

“Bad work ethic,” the older person said with a shrug. They looked out over the factory floor. “You see it all the time. Verifiers are flaky. If they were good citizens, they wouldn’t be assigned to verification. It’s a low-priority task.”

The younger man looked at the safety railing, and down at the conveyor belt. “What if...” he said hesitantly. “What if she fell on the conveyor belt and her bracelet broke? Hypothetically?”

Hazel couldn’t hear him well over the foam in her ears, but she tried to scream agreement. Her crate was inching to a halt directly underneath the two. If they just looked down, they might see her and save her!

“Couldn’t happen,” the older one said. “Algorithm would detect a human on the belt and stop the process.” They looked the younger man in the eyes carefully. “And you wouldn’t suggest the algorithm could be wrong, would you?”

The younger man took a deep, suddenly frightened breath. “No, of course not,” he said quickly. “Just a hypothetical. Thanks for the explanation.”

Above Hazel, the top of the crate was slowly lowering. She could feel her last chance to escape fading away before she was carted off forever.

“It’s a shame,” the older technician said, looking down. For a moment, their eyes met Hazel’s, and Hazel shivered at the cold dispassion staring back at her, and she

realized that no help was coming. “Log her as Absentee, and let’s move on. If someone finds her, it’ll up to them to punish her.”

The lid slammed shut between them, and the last traces of the two technicians’ muffled conversation were replaced by the pounding of Hazel’s heart in the darkness, her body on fire with itching, breathing shallowly and feeling the claustrophobic confines of her prison. For the first time, in a horrified, abstract way, she wished that no one found her between now and Cardiff. Whatever terrible fate the Scraplanders would put her to, it would be better than being logged as Absentee and then recovered for punishment...