

We're all huddled in the southeast corner around the last of our bombs that is nearly set. Everyone is protecting Ego as she sets the bomb.

There are seven bots nearby, and the doors open and five more arrive, to make an even dozen trying to get through our blockade. The weaponry has been amped up and they're non-lethal nature has been turned off. As the bots approach, they've been wearing black helmets, and the visors now have the Knight Rider red light flashing back and forth on them, with instant-kill mode activated. They start unleashing electric blasts with arcs of energy jumping forth from their tasers. They get Hrothulf a little with one. Hayete and Fei take the brunt of the damage, as the primary guard coming from the west. Ego and Izar feel this sense of "Ouch" and "Why" and "Is this worth sticking around for?" and fight or flight. The energy arcs are lighting up the place, and more bots are rounding the corner. Five due west. Three right in front of us who have released themselves from their sticky bondage, and four more around the corner from the north. Two of those lock up in melee with Dorinda and Hrothulf, and their blows are parried with relative ease, though their night sticks now have razor edges on them.

Darnit has comms and Nilchi on site, listening in through head half-helmet gear. From his view in his station back at HQ, he can tell three bombs have been armed and the last is almost ready. Darnit checks in with everyone to see how they are. We report we're doing pretty ok after Nilchi's healing. Nilchi lands with Hayete and Fei and coordinates with them in attacking the encroaching robot menace.

Dorinda is shoulder-to-shoulder with Hrothulf, holding back four bots. She sees the three bots behind her have freed themselves from their sticky bomb. She has Serafina come beyond and try a grab-and-toss. She gets the grab, but he resists the toss. She takes her damage and lets go. Dorinda switches from sniper rifle to force blade, now in close combat, and slashes a bot.

Poyraz tries a grab-and-toss as well, with more success, slashing one as it dodges, and snatching the one behind, throwing it off the edge.

Hrothulf follows up on the bot Poyraz only slashed. It is thoroughly disabled and starts to flicker, shut down, and slump over. A bot next to it turns its hand into a disk and plugs into the back of it.

Ego sets the bomb.

The griffins, Hayete, Fei, and Nilchi coordinate to have Hayete and Fei flank the formation of five bots to try to squish them together while Nilchi stoneshapes them. Hayete gives *bardic inspiration*, singing "Everybody must get stoned" (or alternative, "We will rock you", or something by Sly and the Family Stone). Hayete and Fei both launch themselves out, cross in front of the delta formation in something of a feint, then open their wings for an immediate stop and flap themselves back to smash into the formation. Meanwhile the rock of the island shudders and stone rises and encapsulates four of the bots in a spidery cage of lava rock. The leading bot is

the only one left un-stoned. It looks back and sees the stony four and does a bot equivalent of a sigh as it turns back toward the griffins.

Izar turns to the bots flanking Hrothulf and Dorinda and *shocking grasps* them, coming forth from her ranseur and spreading the damage between two.

The bot remaining from the stoned ones takes a shot at Ego with the energy blast. The arc of electricity sprays between Ego and the bomb and hits into the ground *just* in front of Ego.

The bots in front of Dorinda and Hrothulf both put their focus on Dorinda. Dorinda takes damage and falls over the edge, tumbling off the island. Dorinda sees if she hits the ground she won't likely die, but she will be immediately surrounded by bots. Sefarina swoops down and scoops her up just after she hits the ground.

Dorinda, hurting but ascending on Sefarina, fires her sniper rifle at the antenna with bots nearest to it. She sends sparks flying, but sees no reaction among the bots.

Poyraz positions himself on the opposite side of Ego. He gives a bot that just finished healing himself the old snatch-and-toss, lifting it and giving a soft-pitch toss as it tumbles into the bot that just fired upon Ego, sending them both over the edge.

Hrothulf attacks the bots nearest him, which are looking over the edge just having pushed Dorinda off. The flaming Watermelon's Wail gives glancing blow slashing deep into their system, lopping chunks off.

Ego's bomb is set!

Darnit announces it to everyone and commands retreat. "Get to the griffin closest to you wherever you are and head back to base." Seeing Nilchi is closest to Ego: "Nilchi, get Ego." Darnit tells us he'll know when we're at a safe distance. "On my mark, detonate the bombs." He keeps an eye on any approaching dangers, and makes sure, if it's possible, the bots are heading toward the bombs. The bots seem more interested in the intruders than in what they brought though.

Ego hops on Nilchi and flies away. "Let's get out of here. But don't get *too* far ahead."

Izar sees Fei in the closest griffin, and he gets on her. "Fly away, ya wee faerie!"

Izar "Darnit, come in *czsht*"

"You don't have the do the *czsht*"

"I don't know what you're talking about *czsht*. How high do we need to get up and detonate the bombs?*czsht* What is the blast radius? Over."

"Yeah, you should be relatively safe within that 60-100ft safe detonation zone."

“Yes I’m glad they thought of that but I think I speak for all of us when I say it’s been hard to trust them when they overlooked bomb parachutes. Speaking of which we should start a Bombachutes company as a sort of tent-making business for ourselves.”

She goes straight up and says, “Let’s chant ‘Branch’ three times then detonate!” We are clear that it is *after* the third “Branch”.

Ego is also going straight up, near to Izar, only one degree off, ready to Branch, Branch, Branch, *boop* and Away!

Popping fireworks of crackling flechette explode behind Ego and Izar from the towers. The loud buzzing of the island stops for a second as the doors open and another ten bots file out on the north side and on the south side. They would have come on the east side where Hrothulf is, but Dorinda’s antenna attack kept those doors from closing. The bots fire on Hrothulf and Poyraz with all they’ve got. Poyraz takes some of it but Hrothulf takes the brunt, finding himself dazed and on his knees, vision kaleidoscope.

Dorinda sees Hrothulf swooning on the ground. She swoops in and shouts to Poyraz to get Hrothulf out of there. She holds for a moment to see how they do.

Hrothulf puts out a hand doing Luke Skywalker on Hoth calling, “Poyraz” with his last gasp of strength. Poyraz takes a low trajectory over and grabs Hrothulf’s outstretched hand and rolls Hrothulf off the islands, then taking him in his talons and scooping him in air. Poyraz heads east back to where the headquarters is.

As Hrothulf flies through the air under Poyraz he thinks, “I’m supposed to be doing something... and it has something to do with grilling sausages I just know it.” He starts going through the various sausages he would make with a basic bratwurst.

Dorinda flies Sefarina under Hrothulf and sees where the detonators are on his belt. She stands in her griffin saddle, pushing Hrothulf’s dangling legs out of the way and reaches for the detonators. She gives Sefarina a little spur and Sefarina bucks just a bit. Dorinda in midair grabs the detonators and lands in saddle as Sefarina takes off, sky-rocketing away. And Hrothulf exclaims, “Honey barbeque!”

Darnit says, “Detonate now!”

We all chant “Branch, Branch, Branch!” then we hit our detonators. They all make a high-pitched sound.

Darnit and everyone in HQ is shocked that nothing happens.

Darnit locks eyes with Sgt Arrow.

Arrow: “I don’t understand. It’s a sonic detonator because they were coming with emps so we have audio sensors. We have an audio frequency that should set them off. We could hear the sound, it was loud, they were certainly in range. I don’t know what happened.”

Dorinda's drone scans for interference.

Ego asks about the Doppler effect, but Arrow says it was accounted for.

Dorinda asks about sabotage, but Arrow is sure there was no sabotage.

Izar asks whether the robots could have turned them off, but Arrow says no, once they're set they're set. Arrow says while they were surveilling the bots were not interested in the bombs.

We consider more possibilities. The mention the hum and Arrow says, "What hum?"

"The electric hum that's been going this whole time, other than right before the emps are fired."

"There was no hum in our recon."

Dorinda's bot gives a readout that there are 22 bots repairing each other and the antenna systems that were broken on the island.

Arrow says to Darnit, "We need to hurry. If they're doing repairs and they find those bombs they're going to recognize them as something that should be there."

Darnit: "Ego, since you're the best bet at figuring out what happened, if you and Nilchi can go down and check out the bombs, and I wonder if you can go to ground in closer range, I'll have Nilchi meld to stone if the bomb goes off."

Arrow thinks this is too dangerous though and we shouldn't do it.

Dorinda will instead go invisible and go to the southwest tower, where some bots have been damaged, and try to find where she might turn off the hum.

Hrothulf readies his plasma rifle to take a shot at any bot that is coming at Dorinda. He's seeing twice as many bots as anyone else.

Ego suggests the rest of us go toward the same tower to draw attention and fire from bots in the tower.

Darnit and Izar agree with the strategy.

As we execute the plan, we're helped by Darnit's guidance with extra vision, even as he hears Arrow, "This isn't going to work. We gotta pull the plug on this it isn't safe". Ego is focused on evasion, passively perceiving like a mother. Izar is on Fei, who always has advantage on dextrous activity.

Hayete, Fei, and Nilchi are flapping wings, making themselves big targets, flying in and out amidst each other. Hrothulf sees the bots are firing, though they've abandoned the cannon, and he fires. He hits the second bot (the one his double vision is imagining) and is surprised when it doesn't fall. Nilchi gets a little too close to one of the gunners, but as the shot goes off Fei swoops from underneath and they going into an upward spiral to dodge the gunfire.

Dorinda sneaks and sees EMP is available, and no one has noticed her at all.

Ego has noticed that we have about a ten second window of silence once the EMP goes off.

She instructs that we need to fire the EMP then race in range of the island.

Dorinda fires the EMP at the island and jets out of the tower toward the island. The hum stops as the orb approaches.

Ego and Izar see the orb launch and turn to fly toward the island. The spray of the flechette hits them and Ego almost drops her detonator but she catches it before it falls. Darnit lets us know as soon as we're in range. "Branch Branch Branch!"

Boom!

Boom!

pause

...

Boom! Boom!

Sefarina, in her zeal, overshoots a little bit and as the cloud comes up she's clawing her talons away from the fire, but flying away.

The island tilts like the hindenberg. It tilts, falls, and every bot in the entirety of the Whidmore Operations shuts down. Many more explosions go off as construction equipment burst into flames. The area had been cooled since it was all rock, but the explosions have broken through and magma bursts forth, engulfing all of Whidmore's equipment and the area.

Back in HQ, cheers erupt! Arrow is surprised all the bots shut down. Darnit says, "So you still want to cancel the operation?" And to the group, "Get out of there!"

Izar: "We're definitely starting that bomb parachute business."

The explosions fall as we all fly home to base.