

## **The Kingery, episode 11x09 “The Way of All Flesh”**

ANNOUNCER: The following Pendant production contains mature subject matter. Listener discretion is advised.

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[Tesla coils! Bubbling test tubes!]

BERNICE

This is Doctor Bernice Bowerman, continuing notes on Subject 19, adult, cis male, late 30s, name... what was your first name again?

HOOKS

Michael.

BERNICE

Name, Michael Hooks. Okay! One hour ago, you received a dose of my latest, still completely technically legal creation, Starbright. What are you experiencing?

HOOKS

Nothing.

BERNICE

...nothing.

HOOKS

My eyes feel a little dry.

BERNICE

You— Starbright is supposed to crawl right into your pleasure center and motorboat it! You can't be feeling nothing!

HOOKS

Around the time she started... “organizing” my life, Mam’selle Buisson decided I was unreliable when it came to substance abuse. She got me to take an injection of Purbital X.

BERNICE

I thought they banned that stuff.

HOOKS

They did after I came out of my coma. Anyway, since then, drugs, booze, they don't really have an effect.

BERNICE

...well. Challenge accepted, Michael.

SOCKS (AI)

And which challenge is that?

BERNICE

(starts!) Ah! Oh. Hello, Ms. Buisson! I was just speaking with Mr. Hooks about work.

SOCKS (AI)

Hm. If you can create something that gives Mr. Hooks anything beyond general numbness, I'll be quite surprised. Walk with me, Hooks.

HOOKS

Yes, ma'am.

[They walk.]

SOCKS (AI)

And how are we today?

HOOKS

Fine, ma'am.

SOCKS (AI)

You seem more miserable than usual.

HOOKS

If you say so, ma'am.

SOCKS (AI)

I've done very well by you, Michael. Everything I've done has been for your benefit.

HOOKS

Yes, ma'am.

SOCKS (AI)

Your passive-aggressive terseness isn't annoying me, Michael.

HOOKS

No, ma'am.

SOCKS (AI)

Perhaps I should give you to Masque, then. Masque, you could do something for Mr. Hooks's ennui, could you not?

MASQUE

Certainly. I could open his braincase and wire a pleasure emitter to his nucleus accumbens. He'd never frown again. It's worked on rats, but they do experience spontaneous orgasms. Many spontaneous orgasms.

SOCKS (AI)

Hm. Work out the kinks. (giggles like regular Socks) "Kinks." And regarding the other matter?

MASQUE

The work continues. We'll be ready very soon.

SOCKS (AI)

That's what I like to hear. I believe I shall address the scientists shortly. Hooks, find something to do. Make yourself useful.

HOOKS

Yes, ma'am.

[Socks stalks off.]

MASQUE

She's brilliant, you know. You should appreciate her more.

HOOKS

Should I?

MASQUE

Please yourself. If you have nothing better to do, go clean up. I know there's at least one chest of biological waste that needs to be taken down to the incinerator.

HOOKS

Uh huh.

[Hooks shuffles off]

MASQUE

...man could depress a hyena.

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[Wires fitzing, something leaking and dripping onto the ground, and a general warning siren in the background]

CORRY

Fucking hell. (Beat) Fucking. Hell.

JACE

Yeah, you said that already.

CORRY

Fucking hell! How the fuck did no one know this was going on under Bay 7 this whole fucking time?

[Another wire sparks, louder than before]

CORRY

(yelps in surprise)

JACE

(comically yelps in surprise) Damn thing nearly fried us!

CORRY

Guess that answers the questions on whether or not the power was cut to the bay. Can you reach the failsafe? If those wires touch that puddle of fuel, we're fucked. Really and truly fucked.

JACE

Yeah, you kinda said that already, Cory!

[Jace makes his way across the hall.]

JACE

Goddamn, girl, sometimes you act like you ain't never seen flammable shit before.

CORY

Says the guy who just jumped like a cat when that wire swung your way. This is serious! Neither of us want to die, but the dockmaster didn't even cut the power like we asked. And this fuel leak, I mean... look at the staining on the floor. This must have been going on for weeks. It's a bloody miracle no one was killed before now. This thing goes up and we're blowing a massive hole into the spaceport.

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JACE

(off-mic)

Look on the bright side. You'd sooner die of vacuum than burning to death.

CORY

I'm putting that on your epitaph. "Here lies Jace. Said he'd sooner die of vacuum than burning to death. He was a fucking tool." If we get spaced, I'm pushing you out in front of me.

JACE

(Laughs) I'd love to see you try. I mean, after what you did to Masque's little scout bot thing, I'm startin' to think you'd survive in vacuum out of sheer spite. Found it! Hang on a sec, damn thing's rusted over. Probably corroded from the fumes.

[He flips the switch, the power shuts off. The wire stops sparking]

CORY

(relieved sigh) That did it.

[Jace walks back over to her]

JACE

(coughs some) Damn, the fumes in here are gonna have me higher than Beyond.

CORY

That's the oxygen deprivation talking. All right, let me think. We get the wet vac, scrubbers for the fuel, we have to find a way to transport the hazmat containers back to the disposal, and the wires all need to be stripped, soldered and secured. (groans) We're gonna be so underwater on this job, Jace. Between the hazmat transport fee that disposal's going to charge and the amount of time we'll be in here, not to mention that the hazardous chemical detectors are clearly fucked so that's going to be a total replacement as well...

JACE

I'm starting to think we might actually be a little underinsured for the risks of the job right now.

CORY

No shit. Okay, let's get this done, and then we're going to the boss. Hundreds of people could've died if even one of the big starliners had come through on schedule next week. This... this never should have happened. And we can't be expected to fix this and install new monitoring systems with what we're getting.

JACE

You know what, you're right. We should. We will. We're gonna go to the boss and say... We're gonna say... (confused noise) Uh... what're we... gonna say?

CORY

We're going to say that ever since Hooks left, we've done nothing but clean up bigger and bigger messes on the Kingery, and we can't do that with our current budget.

JACE

And if the boss says no?

CORY

Then... Then we bring in that scout bot and point out that every time a wrench can't do their job, that's a security leak. Bet that will get the boss's attention real quick.

JACE

Well, hell, see, that's sensible! Boss has to listen.

CORY

Exactly. Sensible and rational. And easily proven. Do you see that? Look above the leaking fuel line? What is that?

JACE

That's... another pipe. Only it looks like it's made of the same shit that little HVAC bot was made out of.

CORY

Masque is stealing fuel now, too?

JACE

Fucking hell.

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[Thump thump thump on the door!]

ASA

Just a second.

[Door opens]

MAJOR

Hey, Ace.

ASA

Hey, Maj. Kaylock. Cassandra. Something the matter?

MAJOR

No, no. everything's fine.

KAYLOCK

We were hoping you could assist us with something.

ASA

All right, c'mon in.

[They c'mon in.]

CASSANDRA

This is... minimalist.

ASA

I don't need much. So what can I do ya for?

CASSANDRA

We really don't need to do this--

KAYLOCK

This is for your benefit, Ms. Arkell.

MAJOR

So what happened is, Cass here asked if she could go on a ride-along with us.

CASSANDRA

I thought I should observe, get a better idea of how things work around here. Stay in the loop, as opposed to doing nothing until that sibling of mine calls me.

ASA

Okay.

KAYLOCK

And so, Ms. Arkell has been following my lovely bride and myself as we made our rounds, collecting from the bookmakers and loan squids.

MAJOR

Sharks, sweetie. Loan sharks.

ASA

Okay... so ya learn anything, Cass?

CASSANDRA

Yes, absolutely. It's just...

MAJOR

Everybody was on their best behavior! Nobody tried to run out on me, nobody tried to bullshit me, I didn't even have to punch anybody.

ASA

Well, yeah. You show up with the boss's sister, everyone's gonna be on their best behavior.

MAJOR

That's what I said. So, we're here because... could you be a deadbeat for us?

ASA

...what.

KAYLOCK

We thought perhaps you and Major could take part in a role-playing session. Major as herself, and you as one who owes money but does not wish to part with it.

CASSANDRA

It's silly.

ASA

No, that's all right, I'm down for whatever.

MAJOR

Great! Let's get started.

ASA

Hol' on now, I gotta get myself into character. (couple of deep breaths) (speaks in a different voice) All right. My name's Mongoose McLaren, I'm a small time hustler, and I just lost a bundle on tableball.

MAJOR

You wanna roll for initiative now, or...

KAYLOCK

You started it.



MAJOR  
Whatever.

[Major goes out. The door closes. Major pounds on the door.]

MAJOR  
Mongo! Open up! It's rent day!

[Asa opens a window.]

CASSANDRA  
What are you doing?

ASA  
Sneakin' out. I don't have the money to pay her.

CASSANDRA  
This is ridiculous...

MAJOR  
Don't make me break this door down, McLaren!

KAYLOCK  
Let us assume that you looked out the window and saw me.

ASA  
Damn! Trapped! Just a second!

[Door opens. Major steps in.]

ASA  
So... hey, Major.

MAJOR  
Mongoose. You know why I'm here.

ASA  
I do. I do. I, uh... see, I had a sure thing at the tableball playoffs, but the point guard— you know, that rookie we drafted last season? He's on the DL with a sprained ankle.

MAJOR  
Not hearing how this is my problem, Goose. Do you have the money.

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ASA

...no, I don't have your money.

MAJOR

Ah-ah! I didn't say “my money.” Because it's not my money. It's the boss's money. Now I gotta go back to the boss and tell her Mongoose McLaren couldn't pay this week.

ASA

You know I'm good for it--

MAJOR

Then the boss, she's gonna be like, “Mongoose McLaren? Again? Didja break his legs?”

ASA

Major--

MAJOR

So naturally I'll say “of course I broke his legs, boss, you think I'd let a mope like that stiff you?” You see where I'm goin' with this, Goose?

ASA

I swear on my mother, Major--

MAJOR

'cept it ain't gonna be me. You know who this is? This is Cassandra Arkell.

CASSANDRA

Oh! Yes. I'm Cassandra Arkell.

MAJOR

You think you're scared of me? This is the boss's sister. She takes this personally.

CASSANDRA

That's right. And let me tell you, Mongoose, I won't just break your legs.

ASA

...you won't?

CASSANDRA

I'll use you to set an example.

ASA

I'm really sorry, Miz Arkell, I'll--

CASSANDRA

I'll go to work on you with a blowtorch.

ASA

...a what?

CASSANDRA

You ever smelled melting flesh, Mongoose? You ever been burned so badly it feels cold?

MAJOR

Okay, Cass--

CASSANDRA

Do you think you can fuck my family in the ass? Is that what you think?!

ASA

(back to his own voice) Cassandra--

CASSANDRA

Give me an excuse, you little shit! I'll rip your fucking heart out!

KAYLOCK

Ms. Arkell!

CASSANDRA

However, if you pay us by Tuesday, we can forget this whole unfortunate incident.

MAJOR

Aaaaand scene.

CASSANDRA

...how'd I do?

KAYLOCK

I have some notes.

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[Music, although it's bar music, not club music. Bar ambience.]

[Drinks being poured, it's quiet and nicely intimate.]

DAKEN

(chuckling a bit) You really told them to die in a fire?

ZEFF

(groans a little himself) Look, I lost my temper! And to be fair, they all kind of deserved it! Not a single one of them would listen to me and everybody just had excuses for why they couldn't do something. It was a room full of toddlers. No! Drunken toddlers!

DAKEN

And you know this from your numerous interactions with drunken toddlers on the Kingery?

ZEFF

(Snorts into his drink) Ow... ow, oh, that went up my nose... Shit! Fuck! (laughing harder now)

DAKEN

Oh my god, you're a hot fucking mess, come here.

[Daken shifts closer, wiping Zeff's face clean]

DAKEN

Only drunken toddler I'm seeing is the guy who forgot how the hole in his face works... he's cute, though, so I don't mind cleaning up his drool.

ZEFF

That drool is top shelf maple whiskey, thank you very much.

DAKEN

(chuckles) Excuse me, artisanal drool. Top shelf drool.

[The laughter naturally dies down and they both realize how close they are. They don't move, but the tone of the conversation shifts.]

ZEFF

You know, when I asked if you wanted to get a drink, I wasn't necessarily aiming for you to be practically in my lap.

DAKEN

Maybe I was. You're not the only one who gets to have a motive for going on a date.

ZEFF

Good point. And I guess I kind of walked into that one, huh? (sighs) I keep doing that.

DAKEN

Doing what?

ZEFF

Acting like I'm the only one who gets a say in all this. I mean, don't get me wrong. I'm glad we did this - are doing this. And I... I want to see where this goes. It's just.. easy to feel like because I'm the one who already knows the route, I should be the one who gets to set the course. If that makes any sense.

DAKEN

I'm going to go out on a limb and say you figured this would be some... rehash of another date you had with me that you remember and I don't? I mean, the bar you picked? Not one of the ones I apparently frequented. At least, not according to my spending history. And I normally would never be caught dead in a place that is actually named "A Real Dive Bar".

ZEFF

You said different. I was going for different. I thought if we went somewhere that didn't already have... nostalgia for me, then it would make things easier.

DAKEN

Did it?

ZEFF

Well, I'm smiling, aren't I? (relaxed sigh) Yeah, it's easier. It's good. Better than good. To the point where I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop. I mean, we came in here and you were able to get me to talk all my work shit out and now it's off my back. I don't want to think about work anymore. I just want to focus on you.

DAKEN

Good. Then my mission is accomplished. I wanted to be a little selfish, make you forget about all the bullshit. So if I did that, I can just pat myself on the back now. I mean, it's the polar opposite of what the Fifth wanted me to do, so that's just an extra side of "Fuck you, parasite brain" that I can dish out.

ZEFF

Yeah, I guess that little "the group serves the one" catch phrase you guys had doesn't really play well with self-serving motivations?

DAKEN

It doesn't. And thankfully, I don't repeat it like a reflex anymore, so that's a good start. But... it can be weird. I mean, there's a tiny - and I mean, ridiculously tiny - part of me that feels guilty for wanting to just care about myself and my well-being. And I know that's the Fifth because it's shit like that that sticks with me.

ZEFF

But, you said you don't really remember anything?

DAKEN

No, I don't. I mean... I have impressions. Kinda. But it's mostly... phantoms of emotions themselves that drift in and out. Something will catch my attention or seem familiar, and that emotional ghost just waltzes in and then back out. And it happens all the time. Hell, it's happening right now.

ZEFF

It is? Is it good? You want to tell me what it is? You don't have to.

DAKEN

I... I remember how good it felt to be this close to you. To feel your arms around me. I remember the warmth and the comfort, the thrill of it. But I can't pinpoint a specific time. And I hate it, because I wish I could. I want to, but it's like trying to... I dunno, it's like trying to remember the specific way you bet on a table ball game when you did that every day for years.

ZEFF

(deep breath) In my experience, you don't ever really remember what lightning in a bottle felt like. It's why us adrenaline junkies chase that feeling forever.

DAKEN

Yeah, I suppose you're right. Guess I just don't want to start chasing anything if it's going to be hard for you.

ZEFF

It's not. We can try.

DAKEN

What?

ZEFF

You said you wanted to remember what it feels like when I do this...

[Zeff shifts and pulls Daken into his arms]

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ZEFF

So... there you go. Does that help? You feel like you're anywhere close to that feeling you've been chasing?

DAKEN

(emotional exhale) I... it feels... (clears throat) Feels like being home. Feels like... I'm not chasing the ghost anymore. Is this okay?

ZEFF

More than okay. I missed having you in my arms, too, by the way.

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[It is very quiet. When Socks (AI) speaks, it is like she is speaking only to us. We hear her voice not directly, but as though coming from a hundred small speakers, all over the lab.]

SOCKS (AI)

You can hear me. Of course you can. I'm speaking to you through a microphone patch just below my jawline, and you're listening through your earbuds, communicators, speaker mites, what have you. Because we are prepared for the future.

[Quiet footsteps.]

SOCKS (AI)

We are the ones with faith, faith in science, faith in machinery, faith in the plan. And out there? The decent, upright, ordinary people? The fleshy ones?

[Some laughter.]

SOCKS (AI)

They have no faith in the things we know to be true, the things we can prove are so. Their faith is reserved for... what? Human nature? Goodness? Kindness? Unreliable concepts at best. Until very recently, a great deal of those ordinary people worshipped a rock. A giant rock. They cannot be allowed to remain in charge.

[Murmurs.]

[A lab door opens.]

COMPUTER

Subject: Michael Hooks. Access granted.

[Door slides shut behind him.]

SOCKS (AI)

You've all been working very hard, but now, I must ask more of you. How many of you have had the experience of being on the verge of a breakthrough, only for someone higher up the ladder than you to say, "No. We need more testing. We must make sure it's safe."

[Boos.]

SOCKS (AI)

Yes, I thought that would get a rise out of you. Safe. Safe for who? For the ignorant who won't get the vaccination? Who won't upgrade to the peripheral? Saley, Onks and Liddle have essentially found a cure for death and what do they get? Protests!

[Beep beep beep. A sealed chest opens. Buzzing of flies.]

HOOKS

(softly to himself) You can do this you can do this you can do this--

SOCKS (AI)

I ask you to speed up, my friends. Don't cut corners; be fast, be thorough, but don't worry about the ordinary people.

[A long, sustained squiiiiish, as of a man sinking himself in a giant chest of biological waste. Because that's exactly what Hooks is doing.]

SOCKS (AI)

The time has come for them to evolve or die.

[Cheers!]

[The chest closes.]

SOCKS (AI)

Report any problems to Masque.

[Cheers, applause.]

[Footsteps. Beep boop beep.]

COMPUTER

Subject: Bernice Bowerman. Access granted.



BERNICE

Hello? Hmpph. Oh, gross.

MASQUE

Something wrong?

BERNICE

No. I just don't like these bio-waste bins. I know they're ten different kinds of sealed, but I swear I can still smell that meaty stink, you know?

MASQUE

No. I've replaced my nasal passages with QCM sensors. Much more efficient. Have you ever considered getting new ears?

BERNICE

What's wrong with my ears?

MASQUE

They're slightly uneven. I could take them off, put in some ultrasonic sensors. That was one of my first body mods.

BERNICE

I'll consider it.

MASQUE

Do.

I thought I told Mademoiselle Buisson's chew toy to clean up in here. He's probably off feeling sorry for himself.

BERNICE

It's hard to blame him.

MASQUE

If you see him, send him my way.

BERNICE

Sure.

[Masque drifts away. Quietly.]

BERNICE

Well, let's get rid of this, anyway.

[Wheels, footsteps.]

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[Ding! The elevator opens up. Bernice pushes the bin Forward.]

[Buzzing of flies.]

BERNICE

Oh, come on, the incinerator's broken?! For Einstein's sake, secret lab full of geniuses and nobody performs basic maintenance. Here I am, brain the size of a planet, and they ask me to repair the incinerator...

[Bernice fades out as she goes to the control room.]

[The chest opens.]

HOOKS

(GASPS FOR AIR!)

[SQUISH! THUD! Hooks falls out of the chest!]

HOOKS

Okay. Okay. Move.

[Hooks is up and stumbling, running out of the incinerator room in the opposite direction of Bernice.]

[Bernice reenters the way she came in.]

BERNICE

What in the world is—how did this get Open?! Are those footsteps? Was something alive in...  
Oh.

[Bernice closes the chest.]

BERNICE

Good luck.

[She steps out of the room. The door closes behind her.]

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[Kingery theme plays.]

The Kingery, season eleven episode Nine, "The Way of All Flesh"

Featuring the voice talents of:

TJ Briggs as Bernice

Perry Whittle as Hooks

Rene Christine Jones as AISocks

Adam Blanford as Masque

Kirsty Woolven as Corry

Brady Hendricks as Jace

Edward Herman as Asa

M Sieiro Garcia as Major

Jack Calk as Kaylock

Kristen Bays as Cassandra

Andrew Hackley as Daken

Russell Gold as Zeff

And Tilly Bridges as the computer

Sensitivity Reader Kristine Chester

Written by Kathryn Pryde

Story by Tilly Bridges, with Susan Bridges, Rene Christine Jones, Pete Milan, Kathryn Pryde,  
and Perry Whittle

Kingery Theme by Tom Stitzer

"Chug-a-Lug," "Closer Now," "Fall Off the Ledge," and "Hanging On" by Josh Molen at  
TheTunePeddler.com

"Lightless Dawn", "Sneaky Snitch", "Scheming Weasel", and "Dragon and Toast" By Kevin  
MacLeod at [incompetech.com](http://incompetech.com)

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Directed by Dave Morgan  
Assistant Director Tilly Bridges

Produced by Pendant Productions

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[Kingery theme fades out]