

The Device

Jensen Vicks sat in his quiet office staring at the hunk of metal that was apparently some sort of machinery, though they had no idea *how* it worked. That was his job and Jensen, who usually loved his job as the science officer, hated working on that particular project. The problem came from dealing with absolutely new technology with no clue.

“Hey.” The voice of Jensen’s lab assistant Erika said as she walked into the room, “No breakthroughs?”

“Nothing. It would be easier if I had at least *some* past versions of it to work off of or something... *anything* besides it just sitting there, inert.” Jensen said as he glared at the piece of strange, almost alien technology, “We know it can render things invisible because that’s what *they* used it for. The question is *how*, but, of course, none of them are talking, leaving me with trial and error.”

“It wasn’t just himself that the Prophet hid, it was his whole army.” Erika replied while she checked out the strange machine sitting on the table before them.

“The Alliance *needs* this information. If we knew how this thing works then it would tip the scales back towards *balance* and not so much in the Prophet’s favor.” Jensen said as he sat down on a stool beside the table before he let out a frustrated sigh and stared at the machine, “If we can’t...”

“Don’t think about that.” Erika replied as she headed off towards the door, “I know, before you tell me, it’s a possibility, but focus on figuring it out so that doesn’t happen, alright? We already have a team dedicated to figuring out what we’ve seen it already do, just do what you can to figure out where it came from and how to start the thing so we can reverse engineer it easier.”

Jensen nodded at Erika as she left before he turned back to the strange technology, having pretty much no confidence that he could figure it out, especially with the lack of information from anyone else. He continued to test various machines on the technology, attempting to discover what its energy source was in order to even *start* guessing on what the thing did.

The first machine was testing to see if there was any sort of electrical charge to the tech and, although it registered, it was at such small levels that it couldn’t *possibly* be what powered the device. While he was testing it, the machine Jensen was using *shut down*. Confused, Jensen flicked the switch off, then on, but nothing happened. Jensen unplugged it, plugged it back in and

flipped the machine's power switch but all he heard was a slight tick sound as the machine failed to load energy in beyond the input plugin.

“What the heck? Did this thing just *sap* the energy?” Jensen thought before a far more dangerous thought crossed his mind, yet he couldn't help but try.

Jensen pulled two more tables together behind the table that was holding the technology and began gathering up as many electrical devices as he could. He stripped down various power supply cords and combined them into a strange hydra-looking multi-connector so he could connect multiple devices at the same time with a classic bus strip as his control for all of them at once. Jensen plugged in as many things as he could and plugged the device into the electricity scanner. Once Jensen flicked the switch, everything that was connected powered up at the same time, confusing him greatly.

“Dang, I thought they'd die like this thing... Maybe *this* just died.” Jensen thought as he studied the tech before he decided to try to start the electricity scanner while connected to everything else.

As soon as he did, the energy flickered in the *room*, causing Jensen to look around wide-eyed before he looked back at the technology, yet all of his devices were still on. Jensen looked at the electricity scanning machine and it was *on*, compounding his confusing greatly yet instead of putting him off, it only made Jensen even more intrigued and interested in discovering the cause.

“There *has* to be some sort of physics humans don't understanding that whoever made this *do*.” Jensen thought as he stared at the device when a sudden small white-blue ring of light emitted off of the side of the tech.

Instantly, Jensen was faced with the choice of pressing the apparent button and possibly starting the machine or not to. Instead, Jensen called a meeting so that the heads of the divisions could come together and put what knowledge they'd acquired in a collective pool. After all division leaders had read over the other divisions' reports and they were all briefed, Jensen let them in on something he had kept out of his report.

“The device is active.” Jensen said, causing the division leaders to look at him, each wide eyed with a mix of shock and horror, “However, after learning what I have in the past few minutes it's become increasingly clear that this is a cloaking device, but that doesn't mean that that's *all* it does. Before I came in here, during my experiments with it, it seemed to sap electricity out of the scanner, but then when I hooked up, a small circle of light shined. A button.” Jensen replied, looking around at the other division leaders.

“What are we waiting around for?” The mechanical engineer division leader Peter Phillips said, his head quickly shaking ever so slightly to the sides while his eyes emanated an expression that asked what was so tough.

“*Because*, Peter, we don’t know what would happen. The device may turn invisible, but it might also cause it to pass *physically* through the table it’s sitting on. We don’t know *what* it could do.” Erika said as she looked over at Peter.

“I say we turn the thing on.” Peter replied.

“And what if it’s a *beacon* and sends a message out to the Prophet’s alien allies telling them it’s time to stop in for a little chat?” Erika replied.

“Well, what if it’s a *map*? And we’re sitting here debating on whether or not to learn about the cosmos from another civilization?” Peter asked before Jensen cleared his throat.

“This brings me to the rather obvious question and that is, *do* we press that button?” Jensen asked, sitting back in his chair as the other four division heads began bickering amongst themselves, “We *were* looking for where it came from, but whatever happens if that button is pressed, humans will *still* learn from it. I say we do it. I just wanted to get all the information I could first.”

“I agree.” Peter said while Erika glanced a confused expression over at Jensen before she looked down at the table and then out the window.

“I say we press the button too.” Erika said, causing the three of them to outvote the other two division leaders, but they didn’t voice any disagreement.

As a group, the division leaders headed down to where Jensen had the alien technology hooked up to several other devices. As they walked into the room they all instantly shivered at how cold it was before Jensen stopped and stared at the table now holding *all* of the technology combined into one with a pulsating white-blue circle in the center.

“That might not be a *button*.” Peter said, his voice *quivering* as he spoke, “That could be an *eye*.”

“Why did it meld with the other things?” James Wedge, the quantum mechanics expert said before he pulled out a device and began scanning the combined technology when the light suddenly stayed steady and pulled the scanner out of James’ hand, yet the scientist stayed calm and motioned for everyone to stay back as he inched near to get a look at the screen on his device, “It says that they’re bonded on a molecular level. I don’t think there is anything



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we can do about it with our current level of technology, but this implies that it is possible.”

“Uh, the door is *missing*.” Erika said, causing everyone to turn around and see a wall where the door was while the surroundings began growing increasingly distorted, as if everything was starting to break into its wavelength.

Jensen’s eyes widened as he quickly began fearing that *they* would fall through the floor and it caused him to quickly spin around and poke the now pulsating white-blue light. The lights flickered but the machine stayed on, causing Jensen to quickly press the bus strip’s off switch, but, due to it being entangled with the on button, the technology stayed on. In a panic, Jensen pulled the power cord out of the wall and caused the lights to flicker quite a bit, but as they flickered reality seemed to solidify once again.

“Everyone out of here. We’ve got a *lot* more learning to do about this thing.” Jensen said as he urged everyone out of the room as it warmed up, “Do *not* power that thing up.”

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