

Crosswired - Episode 3

INTRO:

Simon speaks to the listener

SIMON I just witnessed the house my mother was in, the home I grew up in, go up in a giant fireball. Any normal human being would be shocked, or grieving. Gretchen is a wreck. Me? I don't think numb is the right word. Even that implies some emotional response. I feel... nothing.

All my memories of that home, that person I called mom, they now... I don't know, lack a sense of truthiness. I can't be sure if my past is real or not. But my future is real. And it's at risk.

SCENE 1:

Simon and Gretchen have parked the car in a tree-covered park. The sound of helicopters are in the distance.

GRETCHEN What do they want?

SIMON How should I know?

GRETCHEN Can't that robot brain of yours figure it out?

SIMON Gretch. Stop. You're upset.

GRETCHEN Don't tell me--

SIMON And it's understandable! I get it.

GRETCHEN That was your mother! Your home!

SIMON I'm not so sure. Oh, and my brain is organic - it's everything else... The bottom line is someone is trying to kill me. Us, if you stick with me.

GRETCHEN You think I should leave?

SIMON Of course!

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GRETCHEN How can you--

SIMON But I don't want you to. Okay? You're in danger as long as you're with me, but I really need your help. And your support.

GRETCHEN Okay, then.

SIMON Look, as soon as those helicopters go away we need to get out of here and find another car.

GRETCHEN How?

SIMON Use your phone. Google how to hotwire a car.

GRETCHEN My phone?

SIMON I'd rather not trust mine. I'm thinking it's compromised.

GRETCHEN But you're like this security wiz!

SIMON And the guys I work with are just as good. And been doing this for a lot longer.

GRETCHEN You've always danced around those details. Who...

SIMON Guess it doesn't matter now. NSA.

GRETCHEN Shit.

SIMON Yeah, offensive cyber strategies. Anyway, at some point we'll need to pick up a burner, but for now, yours will do.

GRETCHEN So you think the NSA is in on this?

SIMON I don't know. Probably not. But right now paranoia needs to be standard operating procedure.

GRETCHEN In which case...

SIMON What?

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GRETCHEN This Professor Hadoop. Should we assume he's been, what do you call it, compromised?

SIMON Definitely. Better safe than sorry.

GRETCHEN So let's not go to Cambridge.

SIMON Where else can we get answers? Garvin is dead. Someone got to my mother. They've mobilized helicopters, for crying out loud.

GRETCHEN Those might just be news copters. Or police. It was a big explosion.

SIMON Paranoia. Remember?

GRETCHEN Right. Fine.

SIMON No, we have to see Hadoop. We won't tell him everything. Not right away. Let's see what my EWS says.

GRETCHEN EWS?

SIMON Early Warning System. That feeling I get when there's a threat.

GRETCHEN You govvie and your acronyms.

SIMON Do you have a better term?

GRETCHEN Spidey senses?

SIMON I love it when you talk geeky to me. C'mon, let's make a break for it. I remember a used car lot around here that specializes in older cars. Easier to hotwire if you're not dealing with advanced electronics.

GRETCHEN So you're saying when this is all over I won't be able to hotwire you and take you for a joy ride?

SIMON For you? Key's already in the ignition.

GRETCHEN I like it. Let's go.

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HADOOP Still complaining about the A- on his advanced caching algorithms paper?

GRETCHEN A *minus*?

HADOOP He always was lazy about citations.

GRETCHEN Lazy, huh?

SIMON Doctor, you haven't changed a bit. Still trying to ruin my life.

HADOOP (laughs)

Seems like you made out alright. I understand you've done very well with your current employer.

SIMON You know?

HADOOP You think they wouldn't consult me as part of your clearance process?

SIMON Right. Yeah.

HADOOP But you're not here for a social visit.

SIMON No. I need to pick your brain a bit. What can you tell me about the current state of human computer convergence.

HADOOP Convergence, huh? Like robotic arms and legs?

SIMON No. I mean the entire body.

HADOOP Cyborgs?

SIMON Yeah.

HADOOP Is this some kind of research project?

SIMON You could say that.

HADOOP You realize most of my work is classified? Government grants and all?

SIMON I see. Gretch. Can you wait out in the hall for a bit?

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GRETCHEN What? Why?

SIMON Because the good doctor can't talk about this stuff in front of someone who hasn't been cleared.

GRETCHEN But...

SIMON Please. Keep an eye on the hallway.

GRETCHEN And spidey?

SIMON So far so good.

GRETCHEN I won't be far. Shout if you need me.

Gretchen rises and exits.

HADOOP A charming young lady. Girlfriend?

SIMON Almost two years.

HADOOP Even with her out of the room I can't speak to you about much. Clearance isn't the same as need to know.

SIMON I can assure you I need to know.

HADOOP Simon. Be reasonable.

SIMON Let's just talk in generalizations, then.

HADOOP (sighs)

SIMON Can a human brain be fully integrated with a robot body?

HADOOP Android body, you mean? Fully human in appearance?

SIMON Yeah.

HADOOP Human technology is still a long way away from doing that.

SIMON You're sure?

HADOOP We still haven't perfected self-driving cars. You think we could--

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SIMON Doctor. The stuff I've seen at the NSA, I know we're way beyond what the public even imagines.

HADOOP You're still talking science fiction. I can get a monkey to move a robotic arm, sure. But you're asking about full integration.

SIMON What if I told you it's not only possible but it's been done?

HADOOP Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.

SIMON What's your middle name?

HADOOP My...?

SIMON Middle name.

HADOOP I don't have one. What's this all about--

SIMON Okay. Now, tell me a lie.

HADOOP A lie?

SIMON Tell me something that is clearly a lie.

HADOOP I find your girlfriend completely unattractive.

SIMON Right. Now I'm going to ask you another question. If I gave you proof of an actual cyborg, would you seek to do it harm in any way?

HADOOP Come now, Simon. Let's be realistic.

SIMON I'm serious. Please answer the question.

HADOOP Very well. No, I would not want to do it any harm. I would want to study it, for sure. But not harm it.

SIMON Spidey says good.

HADOOP Excuse me?

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SIMON Never mind. I need to show you something.

Simon unwraps the bandage covering the wound.

HADOOP That's... My god. How did this... This is a prank, isn't it. Is there a camera?

SIMON I wish it were, Doctor.

ALARM TONE SOUNDS

The door opens quickly as Gretchen rushes in.

GRETCHEN We need to go.

SIMON What is it?

GRETCHEN Someone said bomb threat.

HADOOP Damn. Probably a prank. It happens this time of year. Better head outside, just in case.

SIMON No. We need to hide.

HADOOP What?

GRETCHEN Simon, what's wrong?

SIMON I hear helicopters.

GRETCHEN I can't hear a thing.

SIMON Trust me.

HADOOP What's this all about?

SIMON Gonna have to explain this later. Short answer, someone's trying to kill me. Is there somewhere we can hide?

HADOOP No. Whenever there's an emergency they always do complete floor sweeps.

SIMON There's got to be somewhere. We just have to avoid their sweep. Make them think we got away.

HADOOP I know a place but...

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SIMON Doctor!

HADOOP Shit. It's top secret. If we get caught my career is ruined.

SIMON Pretty sure if we don't get out of this you'll have a lot less than a career.

GRETCHEN He means we'll be dead.

HADOOP Okay, come with me.

Simon and Gretchen follow Dr Hadoop out the door as they run down the noisy but now deserted corridor.

SCENE 3:

In a secret laboratory.

GRETCHEN What is this place?

HADOOP Government funded lab. Top secret stuff.

GRETCHEN Like what?

HADOOP I said we can hide here. I can't tell you more than that.

SIMON You guys are building a satellite?

HADOOP Please. Just close your eyes and hide.

GRETCHEN How will we know when they're gone?

HADOOP We can use the security cameras to monitor them. Here.

SIMON You got sound on these things?

HADOOP Not on all of them, but a few.

SIMON Turn it on. We need information.

A tinny speaker begins relaying the sounds of men with guns sweeping the floor outside the hidden lab.

PETERS I want you to check every air duct, every nook and cranny. Got it?

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BREWER (hesitant)
Sir, they may have gotten out already. (pause) There was a gap in coverage. Briefly.

PETERS For all of our sake let's hope not. We need to find him first.

BREWER We will, sir.

PETERS Remind the men to watch their backs. No slip ups.

BREWER Move it! Delta Ten! Check your marks!

The voices fade as they move away from the mic'ed camera.

GRETCHEN Find us first?

HADOOP Who's after you?

SIMON I don't know.

GRETCHEN What kind of guns are those?

SIMON I've never seen anything like them.

HADOOP Oh my.

SIMON Doctor, what is it.

HADOOP I can't.

SIMON You've seen those before?

GRETCHEN You know what they are?

HADOOP Very advanced. Very. I didn't think they'd gotten beyond the design stage.

SIMON What are they?

HADOOP Microwave - directed energy weapons. Designed to destroy electronics without harming living tissue.

GRETCHEN So they wouldn't do anything to me or you but--

SIMON But to a cyborg...

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HADOOP Everything but your brain would be fried beyond recovery.

SIMON Well, I guess that means you two are safe.

HADOOP We'll get you out of here.

GRETCHEN Where to?

HADOOP You remember Dr Warkovsky, Simon?

SIMON She worked with biological and computational learning.

HADOOP Director, now. Anyway, we're pretty good friends and she owes me a favor.

SIMON You trust her?

HADOOP My son married her daughter. She's family now.

SIMON Can we get there unseen?

HADOOP We'll take the T. Blend into the crowd. We might want to put together some disguises, though. Just in case.

GRETCHEN Disguises?

HADOOP Pocket protectors, for one. Come on.

SCENE 4:

Simon speaks to the listener.

SIMON This is getting muddy. Too many people involved. Too many chances for things to go wrong. I'm being chased by more than one enemy. At least I have to assume they're all enemies. Microwave weapons? This isn't the IRS looking to recover some back taxes. If Dr Warkovsky can tell me more about what I am and where I came from... I'm going to have to get out on my own. Gretch will kill me. Better her than these thugs.